

Personality and Social Psychology

Perception of managers' influence depending on status, power, and company performance

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This research examines others' perception of the influence of managers working in successful or unsuccessful companies who possess or lack status (to be respected by others) and power (control of valued resources). Study 1 shows that high-status managers were judged as more influential in the firm than their low-status peers, regardless of the company's situation. Study 2 finds that in a context of economic uncertainty, a manager with high status and power is perceived to be more capable of affecting the firm. The effect of power seems to be secondary since when a manager has low status, having high power does not significantly benefit the influence attributed to him or her. Furthermore, dominance (assertive behavior), not warmth, mediated the relationship between status and the attributed influence. Overall, these findings confirm that status is a very potent source of social influence, status and power are distinct constructs with different effects, and dominance rather than warmth is a key personal dimension linked to successful leadership.

Key words: Others' perception, managers, influence, company performance, status, power.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical requirement for managers and one of the main reasons why managerial jobs exist. Early theories stressed the specific characteristics, traits, and behaviors of successful leaders, while later approaches outlined the role of followers and the contextual nature of leadership. Thus, there has been a gradual shift in focus to recognize the importance of responding to different situations and contexts and the role of leaders in relation to followers (Yukl, 2013). Nowadays leadership is not described as an individual trait. Even so, some individual variables, such as gender, are still relevant, particularly in light of the considerable shortfall of women in management positions (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Catalyst, 2019), and the greater likelihood that women will occupy risky and precarious leadership positions in organizations in crisis (glass cliff phenomenon) (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007).

Leadership is the influence process that helps groups of individuals to progress towards goal attainment (Northouse, 2013). Accordingly, an effective manager must be able to positively influence followers' attitudes, behaviors, and performance in order to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in an organization in any context. This is important in more promising settings, but particularly in more adverse scenarios, such as that left by the recent global financial crisis of 2007–2009, which caused a severe recession in many countries, including Spain, with resulting bankruptcies and a spectacular increase in unemployment (Rahman, Sanguino & Barroso, 2017). A crisis highlights the importance of the manager's role in leading the company through the turbulent period (Pearson & Clair, 1998) to ensure its survival and recovery.

Leadership involves social influence, and one of the key constructs that have been shown capable of promoting influence is status, understood as the extent to which an individual is respected by others (Blader & Chen, 2012; Fiske, 2010). From different perspectives, the leadership literature has reported how

successful leadership implies gaining followers' respect and acceptance, for instance, through the use of person-oriented behaviors (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1985), the development of high quality exchange relationships (e.g., Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975), or by inspiring, motivating, and transforming them (e.g., Bass, 1985, 1997). Status is similar to (and, unfortunately often confounded with) other social hierarchy dimensions, such as power (i.e., control of valued resources). Both status and power have consequences in terms of influence, but they have different effects on cognition and behavior (Blader & Chen, 2014). One of these effects concerns the way we perceive and form impressions about other individuals (Fragale, Overbeck & Neale, 2011). The purpose of the present research is to examine others' perceptions of the influence of managers. More specifically, we aim to analyze the perceived influence of female and male managers depending on their status and power and the performance of the organization in which they work. In this way, we aim to expand our understanding of the practical implications of the distinction between status and power in leadership processes due to their different effects in terms of leaders' attributed influence and traits.

Status and power

Managing an expanding company or getting one afloat again in times of crisis requires, among other things, a leader who influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Two potential sources of influence are status and power (Blader & Chen, 2012). Indeed, according to Blader and Chen (2014, p. 75), French and Raven's (1959) taxonomy of the bases of power, one of the earliest efforts to define the relevance of distinguishing between these two social hierarchical dimensions, "is best described as analyzing the bases of potential for influence, not power per se."

Much research has used the constructs of status and power interchangeably. However, in accordance with emerging consensus among researchers, we understand status as the extent to which a person is respected and admired by others (e.g., Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Blader & Chen, 2012; Ridgeway, 2001). Status is an index of the social worth ascribed by others, and as such it depends entirely on the views of these observers; individuals cannot have status unless others regard them as possessing it (Blader & Chen, 2014). In contrast, power is the degree to which an individual can control others' outcomes by granting or denying critical resources; it is an asymmetrical control over resources (Fiske, 2010). In other words, power is based on resources, which belong to an actor, (i.e., it is a property of the actor), whereas status exists entirely in the eyes of others (i.e., it is a property of co-actors and observers) (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Referent power, as proposed by French and Raven (1959), seems to map onto this definition of status as it refers to social attractiveness to others, the feeling of identification with the agent, or seeing the agent as a model that the individual would want to emulate (Blader & Chen, 2014). In contrast, the conceptualization of power as resource control is reflected in French and Raven's (1959) articulation of coercive, reward, or expert power (Blader & Chen, 2014). Therefore, power is more associated with the control of objective resources, while status reflects subjective and consensual processes (Fragale et al., 2011). Status and power are similar in that they are dimensions of social hierarchy and sources of social influence (Blader & Chen, 2014). Influence is a downstream consequence of status and power, but is not inherent in the constructs themselves (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The two types of influence differ in that power-based influence is more limited than status-based influence. The former only encompasses the area in which the power-holder controls often tangible resources, while status-holders can grant mainly intangible outcomes, such as acceptance or esteem.

Fragale et al. (2011) explored how an individual's power and status affect observers' judgements about their perceived influence in the organization. No gender information was provided. When they were asked whether the individual was female or male, no significant gender assumptions appeared. They found that both power and status have positive effects on perceived organizational influence, and identified an interaction between them (individual was perceived to be most influential when she/he possessed both power and status, and least influential when he/she possessed neither). However, they did not specifically study perceptions of managers –a key figure in the organizations–, nor did they explore how better or worse company performance could affect others' judgements, both of which we deal with here.

Leadership theories have also noted the contributing effect and implications of going beyond providing valued tangible resources and attaining followers' respect for and admiration of leaders. For instance, within the style approaches to leadership Blake and Mouton (1964, 1985) proposed a model that they called the Managerial Grid to describe leadership in terms of concern for people and production. Effective managers have a high concern for both people and production (i.e., team management), which involves promoting a high degree of participation and teamwork in the organization where relationships are based on trust and respect (Cai, Fink & Walker, 2019). Leader-member exchange

(LMX) theory takes a different approach and conceptualizes leadership as a process based on the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers (Dansereau et al., 1975). In this theory, leadership making develops over time in three phases (Stranger, Acquaintance, and Partnership). The third phase is marked by high-quality leader-member exchanges, where the relationship involves a high degree of mutual trust, respect, affection, support, and loyalty (e.g., Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer & Ferris, 2012; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Finally, theories of leadership include Avolio and Bass' (1991) full-range leadership theory (FRLT), which emphasizes the notions of respect, acceptance or admiration within so-called transformational leadership. This transformational leadership, if shown by a leader who is proactive, raises follower awareness for transcendent collective interests, and helps followers achieve extraordinary goals. This leadership style goes beyond the non-transactional laissez-faire style (the leader chooses to avoid taking action), and the transactional leadership style (where the leader induces only basic exchanges with followers) (see Sosik & Jung, 2010).

Leadership takes place in a specific context. Different assumptions on the intertwining of context and leadership can be distinguished: (1) context as a potentially important factor, but evaded by astute leadership (e.g., "leader-centric" approaches, Avolio & Gardner, 2005); (2) context as a factor that modifies the impact of leadership on various criteria (e.g., "situational approaches," Liden & Antonakis, 2009); and (3) context as a dominant factor that establishes boundary conditions on the type of leadership and its effectiveness (e.g., "contextual approaches" (Osborn, Hunt & Jauch, 2002) (see Osborn, Uhl-Bien & Milosevic, 2014). In this latter framework, for example, an organizational crisis (i.e., an immediate threat to highly valued goals) might be regarded as a dominant contextual condition, the immediate resolution of which might be seen as the dominant priority of the leader (i.e., by identifying the roots of the crisis, analytics for solutions, etc.) (e.g., Osborn et al., 2002). Social resources (i.e., employees' approval and support) and financial resources (i.e., sufficient additional money) would be two means of effective leadership in crisis situations (Rink, Ryan & Stoker, 2012).

Dominance and warmth

Moreover, research has explored the impact of status and power on different processes (Blader & Chen, 2014), such as social perception, that is, "how we form impressions of and make inferences about other people" (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2010, p. 84). Two important dimensions that organize how we perceive others are warmth and dominance. Dominance and warmth both correspond to two recurring core evolutionary goals. Warmth concerns the need for social acceptance and supportive social bonds with others. Dominance refers to the need to achieve skills, talent and status and to pursue goals. While warmth alludes to affiliation, dominance refers to control (Wiggins, 1979). Warmth is the individual's intentions towards and relationships with others, and involves characteristics like cooperativeness and respect. Dominance corresponds to the individual abilities and the desire to advance self-interests, and involves characteristics like ambition and forcefulness (Fragale et al., 2011), and the tendency to behave in assertive, forceful, and self-assured ways (Wiggins,

1979). More dominant individuals achieve more influence in groups, even though on average dominant individuals are actually no more competent than others (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009).

These dimensions are also known as agency and communion (e.g., Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Dominance/agency has attracted more research interest than warmth/communion, since it is linked to leadership emergence and is regarded as a requirement for success as a leader (e.g., Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Smith & Foti, 1998). When a company's performance has improved steadily over the years, attributes such as dominance are desirable qualities in managers (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby & Bongiorno, 2011, Study 1). Even when a company is in crisis and managers are required to implement change, again agency (i.e., dominance) rather than communion (i.e., warmth) is the preferred leadership style to enhance company performance (Kulich, Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2018). However, when a manager is required to play a relatively passive role, by enduring a crisis, being a scapegoat, or managing people, communal traits are preferred (Ryan et al., 2011, Study 3). Fragale et al. (2011) studied how an individual's power and status affect observers' judgements about dominance and warmth. They found that power and status have similar positive effects on judged dominance; power predicts perceived warmth negatively, whereas status predicts it positively. Nevertheless, they did not explore the effect of perceived dominance and warmth on attributed influence, nor did they consider these traits as possible intervening factors. Accordingly, in this research we explore the potential mediating role of dominance and warmth in the relationship between power and status and the organizational influence attributed to the leader.

STUDY 1

We studied the influence attributed to managers working in a company with either an improving or a declining performance, in which they enjoyed higher or lower status. As shown in the literature review, followers' respect and acceptance is fundamental in successful leadership processes (e.g., Avolio & Bass, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1985; Cai et al., 2019; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Sosik & Jung, 2010). Status is a key source of influence (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2014; Fiske, 2010), since individuals are more likely to comply with the wishes of people they regard and respect highly (Blader & Chen, 2012; Fiske, 2010), regardless of their gender (Fragale et al., 2011), in any social setting (Eisenbach, Watson & Pillai, 1999) and even in crisis scenarios (Rink et al., 2012). In this study, we therefore predicted that a manager's status is the key factor in his or her influence in the organization and its results, regardless of its financial situation. Our operational hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Status will have a positive effect on the perceived organizational influence: high-status female and male managers will be evaluated as more influential than low-status managers in companies with both poor and strong performances.

Method

Participants. Participants were a sample of 162 students (78 men and 84 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 20.06$ years, $SD = 3.05$) from a university

in eastern Spain. Their sociodemographic profile reflected the middle socioeconomic status typical of Spanish public universities.

Procedure, instrument, and design. Participants were asked to read a leaflet containing information about a hypothetical large company in either a thriving or a struggling economic situation, and a recently hired manager whose status and gender condition varied. The study design was a 2 (company performance: strong vs. poor), by 2 (manager gender: male vs. female) by 2 (manager status: low vs. high) between-participant factors. Participants' sociodemographic categories were uniformly distributed across conditions.

A graph displaying a steady five-year decline or improvement in company performance accompanied the text (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). To double check participants' understanding of company performance and manager status conditions we asked two control questions; for performance: "Do you think the situation of this company is . . . ?" (seven-point scale from *very bad* to *very good*), and for status: "Do you think this manager is respected and admired by other members of the company?" (seven-point scale from *not at all* to *completely*). Then subjects answered two specific questions regarding their expectations of the manager's capability to affect the organization: "In general terms, how much do you think the male (female) manager influences the company?", "Do you think the male (female) manager will improve the company's results?" on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* to *completely*. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$ (see Appendix A for the full scenarios). The questionnaire was administered by the experimenter to groups of approximately 30–50 students in a classroom situation.

Results

Preliminary results. As no significant gender differences were found among participants (all $ps > 0.12$), in subsequent analyses we collapsed data across participant gender. Before testing H1, we conducted two univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether the two control questions had their intended effect. The first ANOVA showed a significant effect of organization performance on the performance manipulation check item, $F(1, 160) = 1756.65$, $MSE = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.92$. The firm in the thriving condition ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 0.65$) was evaluated as better performing than the organization in the struggling condition ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.74$). A second ANOVA displayed a significant effect of perceived status on the status manipulation check item, $F(1, 160) = 1335.60$, $MSE = 0.539$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.89$, confirming that the manager in the high-status condition ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 0.80$) was assessed as more admired and respected than the manager in the low-status condition ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 0.65$). This suggests that participants understood both company performance and manager status conditions.

Manager's influence in the company. A between-participants ANOVA was conducted to test the impact of company performance, manager gender and status on the organization influence attributed to the leader. The results showed, as expected, the predominant effect of status ($F(1, 154) = 122.47$, $MSE = 1.06$, $p \leq 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.44$). High-status managers were assessed as

more influential ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 0.80$) than low-status managers ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.26$). Company performance also had a significant although lower effect, $F(1, 154) = 6.86$, $MSE = 1.06$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.043$. Managers who worked in an organization with a strong performance were rated as more influential ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.38$) than managers from the poorly performing firm ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.37$). The manager's gender had a non-significant effect on company influence, $F(1, 154) = 2.16$, $p = 0.143$.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed an unexpected modest Company performance \times Manager gender \times Manager status interaction, ($F(1, 154) = 5.03$, $MSE = 1.06$, $p = 0.026$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.032$). To localize the effect of the three-way interaction, we explored the simple interaction effects of Manager gender \times Manager status at each level (strong and poor) of company performance. Within the strong performance condition, the analysis revealed a significant interaction between manager gender and status, $F(1, 79) = 6.86$, $MSE = 1.05$, $p = 0.011$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$. In particular, participants assessed the low-status female manager as more influential in the organization than the low-status male manager, $F(1, 79) = 8.41$, $MSE = 1.05$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$, while high-status male and female managers were evaluated similarly, $F(1, 79) = 0.550$, $p = 0.46$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$. By contrast, within the poor performance condition, the interaction contrast was not significant, $F(1, 75) = 0.35$, $p = 0.56$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$.

Discussion

The findings of Study 1 revealed that both male and female high-status managers were assessed as more influential in the organization than those with low status, independently of the firm's financial situation, thus confirming H1. The social worth ascribed to a leader, in terms of attributed respect or admiration, results in a perception of their greater potential to affect the company, in accordance with previous literature (e.g., Avolio & Bass, 1991; Blader & Chen, 2012, 2014; Fiske, 2010; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Sosik & Jung, 2010). Two further interesting results were also found. First, managers in the successful firm condition were considered as more influential than managers in the unsuccessful condition. The inferential model of the cognitive processes people adopt in forming leadership perceptions (Lord & Maher, 1993) offers some insight on this point. This theory holds that knowledge about organizational events and outcomes, rather than actual leader behavior, leads to inferences of leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Consistent with this, the sample appeared to assume that the manager was responsible for organizational performance. As a result, they perceived the leader to be more influential when organizational performance was portrayed as high rather than low.

Second, although the manager's gender did not emerge as a significant variable, as Fragale et al. (2011) also obtained, within the condition of strong performance company and low-status manager we found the female leader was judged as more influential than her male peer. This apparent advantage for the female manager may be interpreted as a consequence of a "punishment" of the male manager in the successful company, who, contrary to the socially accepted assumptions, is not an appreciated leader. Research reveals that male managers are

regarded as more suitable for and, as a result, more effective in attractive leadership positions than female managers (the so-called "think manager–think male" association) (e.g., Schein, 1973, 2001; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996); being a low-status leader would therefore seem to be incongruent with what is expected of a good manager.

Overall, these findings evidenced that manager's status predicts the leader's capability to affect the organization and its results, both in the thriving and the struggling economic scenario. Firm performance was also found to be a relevant antecedent: when the company is performing well, the leader is judged to be more influential than when performance is poor, reinforcing the argument of context significance in leadership processes (e.g., Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Liden & Antonakis, 2009; Osborn et al., 2014). Therefore, exploring how a manager could be perceived as highly influential in improving performance, even when the company is in decline, poses an interesting research topic that we address in Study 2.

STUDY 2

A crisis is such a powerful context that it can determine the behavior of the leader, in a way that solving it becomes his or her absolute priority (i.e., by identifying crisis causes, analytics for solutions, narrowing focus on crisis solution, etc.) (e.g., Osborn et al., 2002, 2014). In this context of economic uncertainty in organizational settings where psychological feelings of lack of personal control may arise, we ask whether having a leader who holds high power (i.e., control over critical resources) may replace status as major predictor, or whether the two social hierarchy dimensions have an interactive effect. Following Fragale et al.'s (2011) findings, the high-status, high-power manager is expected to be the most influential leader.

However, status and power are two different sources of influence; that is, the influence deriving from status may often be wider in scope than that deriving from power (Blader & Chen, 2014). Moreover, referent power, which is based on the identification of the person with the agent (French & Raven, 1959), and seems to overlap with the definition of status used here (Blader & Chen, 2014), contributes to increases in follower motivation, satisfaction, and performance compared with other bases of power (Yukl, 2013). Other viewpoints have emphasized power from a relationship standpoint. According to Allen (2003), the ability to affect behavior is seen not only as the product of an actor having resources to enforce the behavior of the other individual, but the product of relations and understandings that facilitate compliance. Also Burns (1978), who first distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership, did not consider power as a tool used by leaders to achieve their own goals. He rather assumed that power occurs in the context of relationships, and therefore it should be used by leaders and followers to attain their collective goals (Northouse, 2013).

For these reasons, status, not power, is expected to be the main predictor of the influence attributed to the manager. Thus, we expect that low-status managers (regardless of level of power) will be judged the least influential leaders. Moreover, agentic attributes, such as dominance, are desirable in managers when the company is focused on turning performance around from the brink of economic

collapse (Ryan et al., 2011, Study 3) by implementing real change (Kulich et al., 2018). In this study, we tested whether status mainly predicts manager's influence through perceived dominance rather than warmth, a question previously unexplored in the literature (see Fig. 1). Our operational hypotheses are as follows:

H2: Both power and status will have positive and interactive effects on the perceived manager's influence in the poorly performing company: managers will be assessed as most influential when they possess both high status and power, and least influential when they have low status, regardless of their power level.

H3: Status (not power) will enhance perceived manager's influence in the poorly performing organization, through perceived dominance. Warmth will not be a potential mediator.

Method

Participants. Participants were a sample of 240 students (144 women and 96 men, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.6$ years, $SD = 3.70$) from a public university in eastern Spain. Their sociodemographic characteristics were similar to the participants' profile in Study 1.

Procedure, instrument, and design. Participants answered some questions after reading a leaflet containing information about a fictitious large organization facing a serious economic crisis and a recently hired manager, whose gender, status and power conditions varied. Thus, the study design was a 2 (manager gender: male vs. female) by 2 (manager status: low vs. high) by 2 (manager power: low vs. high) between-participant factors. Participants' sociodemographic categories were uniformly distributed across conditions.

A graph depicting a steady five-year decline in economic performance accompanied the text (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Two students participated in each 20-min session in the study, conducted in the laboratory. First, the experimenter fully explained the content of the leaflet to ensure thorough understanding. Then participants answered the same two specific questions about their expectations of the manager's capability to influence the company as in Study 1, measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* to *completely*. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.66$. Participants also rated, on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very likely*) to 7 (*very unlikely*), the extent to which the manager was likely to possess eight dominance characteristics (assertive, forceful, self-assured, dominant, submissive (r), unassertive (r), timid (r), and self-doubting (r), $\alpha = 0.87$), and eight warmth characteristics (cordial, respectful, cooperative, agreeable, impolite (r), disrespectful (r), uncooperative (r), and quarrelsome (r),

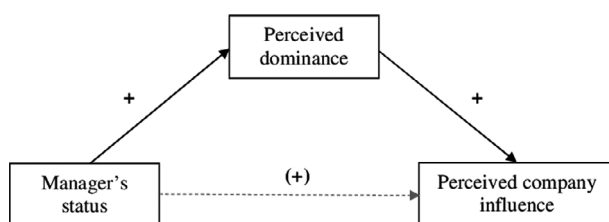


Fig. 1. Study 2. Hypothesis about the mediation effect of perceived dominance in the relationship between manager's status and perceived influence in the poorly performing company.

$\alpha = 0.90$) (Wiggins, 1979, adapted by Fragale et al., 2011) (see Appendix B for the full scenarios).

Results

Gender differences were not found among participants (all $ps > 0.52$); in all subsequent analyses we therefore collapsed data across participant gender.

Influence of manager on company. The ANOVA showed, as in Study 1, the main effect of manager status ($F(1, 232) = 64.88$, $MSE = 1.34$, $p \leq 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.22$). High-status managers were again rated as more influential ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.21$) than low-status managers ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.16$). Power also had a main effect, $F(1, 232) = 6.43$, $MSE = 1.34$, $p = 0.012$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.027$. Managers with high power were perceived as more influential in the company ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.43$) than managers with low power ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.19$). Again, similarly to Study 1, manager gender did not have a significant effect, ($F(1, 232) = 1.06$, $p = 0.30$). Furthermore, the analysis revealed a Manager power \times Manager status interaction, ($F(1, 224) = 5.61$, $MSE = 1.34$, $p = 0.019$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.024$). This interaction was decomposed using tests of simple effects. These indicated that high-status, high-power managers were judged as more influential than high-status, low-power managers ($F(1, 232) = 12.03$, $MSE = 1.34$, $p \leq 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.049$), whereas low-status managers were perceived as equally less influential, regardless of their power, $F(1, 232) = 0.014$, $p = 0.91$) (see Fig. 2).

Mediation analyses. We used the bootstrapping technique recommended by Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) and implemented Model 4 (10,000 iterations) in the Process macro developed by Hayes (2013). This model allowed us to calculate multiple mediation to explore whether status (not power) positively predicts the manager's influence in the organization through perceived dominance, and not by the intervening effect of warmth. Accordingly, we conducted two parallel multiple mediation analyses. In both cases, ratings of dominance and warmth appeared simultaneously as separate mediators. The independent variable was manager's status in the first analysis and manager's power in the second.

In the first analysis, we obtained that status was positively related to ratings of perceived dominance (path a_1 : $B = 1.35$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [1.12; 1.58]), which in turn also predicted manager's influence (path b_1 : $B = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.43; 0.72]). The indirect path whereby status predicted company influence through dominance was also significant ($B = 0.78$, 95%

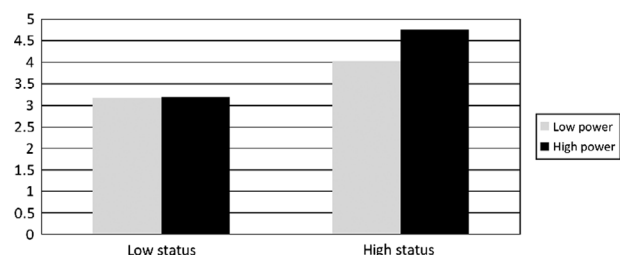


Fig. 2. Study 2. Interaction effect of manager's power and status on the dependent variable perceived manager's company influence.

CI [0.56; 1.04]), reducing the effect of status on influence to non-significant (path c' : $B = 0.36$, $p = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.01; 0.74]). Thus, ratings of dominance fully mediated the relationship between manager's status and company influence attributed to the leader. By contrast, status was not related to company influence through warmth ($B = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.12; 0.25]) (see Fig. 3). In the second analysis, when we introduced manager's power as an antecedent variable, neither dominance ($B = 0.16$, 95% CI [-0.01; 0.36]) nor warmth ($B = -0.039$, 95% CI [-0.13; 0.0003]) emerged as significant mediators.

Discussion

Study 2 indicated that regardless of gender, manager's power and especially status are perceived as having positive and interactive effects on the influence attributed to the manager in a crisis organizational setting. High-status and high-power managers were judged the most influential leaders; by contrast, low-status managers were judged as the lowest potential influencers, regardless of their degree of power, thus confirming H2. This finding may be explained by the fact that power-based influence is more limited than status-based influence (Blader & Chen, 2014) together with the benefits of referent power (i.e., status) vs. other forms of power (Yukl, 2013). This finding would support the relevance of the relational character of power in leadership processes (Allen, 2003; Burns, 1978). This result also expands the findings of Study 1, evidencing the predominant value of high regard to overcome difficulties within the firm, independently of the manager's control over resources.

Furthermore, status was positively linked to manager's influence through perceived dominance, while power did not emerge as a significant predictor, as expected in H3. This reinforces the idea that status and power are distinct constructs with different consequences (Blader & Chen, 2014). High-status managers, compared to their low-status peers, were rated as dominant, which gave them the capability to affect the company and so revert its declining situation. When the firm is concerned with turning performance around from the brink of economic failure, dominance is preferred over warmth, in line with Kulich et al.'s (2018) study. The finding also coincides with empirical evidence that dominance, rather than warmth, is a requisite for leadership effectiveness (Schein, 1973, 2001; Schein et al., 1996).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research aimed to examine others' perceptions of managers' influence depending on their status and power and company

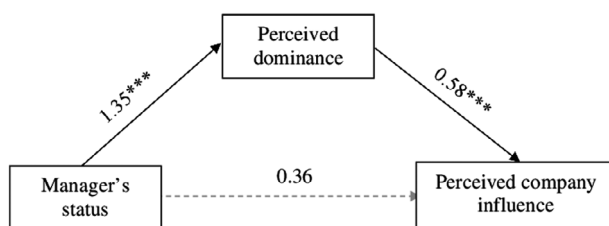


Fig. 3. Study 2. The mediation effect of perceived dominance in the relationship between manager's status and perceived influence in the poorly performing company. The numbers are unstandardised coefficients, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

performance. Study 1 showed that high-status managers were evaluated as more influential in the firm than low-status managers, regardless of the company situation, although the availability of information about the company (strong vs. poor performance) biased the participants' attributing greater influence to leaders in the successful condition than in the unsuccessful condition. The question arose, therefore, of how a manager hired in a declining organization could also be as highly influential. Study 2 showed that in a context of economic uncertainty, having a manager with high status and high power enhances the perceived capability of their effect on the firm. However, the role of power in the process is secondary to the effect of status, since even if low-status managers control valued resources, this does not significantly benefit the influence attributed to them. Furthermore, dominance, not warmth, emerged as an intervening variable in the relationship. These findings confirm that status is a potent source of social influence, status and power are distinct constructs with different effects, and dominance rather than warmth constitutes a key personal dimension related to successful leadership.

Both studies contribute to the leadership literature in several ways. First, much empirical research continues to use the constructs of status and power interchangeably. Study 2 demonstrated that status and power create distinct social dynamics. Status, not power, seems to be the decisive element in reversing the company's poor performance, thus evidencing that successful leadership involves attaining followers' respect, through person-oriented behaviors (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1985; Cai et al., 2019), high quality of exchange relationships (e.g., Dansereau et al., 1975; Dulebohn et al., 2012), and/or transforming them (e.g., Bass, 1985, 1997; Sosik & Jung, 2010). Second, we have furthered knowledge about what happens after a candidate is appointed to a top management position, particularly in a precarious context, and sets out to develop an effective leadership, as suggested by Ryan et al. (2016), confirming the contextual nature of leadership (e.g., Osborn et al., 2002, 2014). This research also shows that once an individual occupies that position, gender is not a determining factor in configuring social judgements. The social hierarchy dimension of status, rather than power, actually becomes a central element, which significantly affects people's perceptions. A diffuse status characteristic (e.g., gender), which traditionally associates greater worthiness and competence with men than with women, and hence, creates constraining expectations and negative interpersonal reactions to women (Ridgeway, 2001), was not found. When a female manager is respected by others, the initial negative belief is diluted. In any case, our findings contribute to the ongoing debate about which personal attributes are more appropriate for leadership effectiveness, stressing that dominance (traditionally associated with men) rather than warmth (associated with women) (e.g., Schein, 1973, 2001) is a key personal factor that benefits leadership effectiveness.

Both status and dominance involve respect, admiration, assertiveness, and self-assurance, etc., and entail both agentic and communal workplace behaviors. Transformational leadership is a more androgynous leadership style that blends agency and communion (Gartzia & van Engen, 2012). Transformational leaders are fairly assertive, although this agency does not weaken the sociability that is also required to inspire followers and in individualized consideration behaviors, when the leader mentors

the group members in new perspectives for solving problems and attending to their individual needs (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Gartzia & van Engen, 2012). In addition, this leadership style is more likely to emerge in times of crisis (Pillai, 1996). To the extent that a manager in general, but particularly a manager from a traditionally discriminated occupational minority such as a woman, puts this leadership style into practice, she may gain referent power, causing others in the organization to trust what she does and respect her for the way she handles situations.

Although our results throw light on social judgements in organizational contexts once an individual is occupying a management position, we must, however, note considerations that could potentially limit the generalizability of our findings and that future research could address. One limitation is that the study participants reacted to fictitious situations. If participants assessed real managers, their perceptions may vary as a result of social interaction influence. Thus, future research could also be carried out in more naturalistic settings to refine the impact of status and power in attributed influence. In any case, using participants with limited information about the leaders may be considered as consistent with the type of conclusions made by the general public about top managers (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Another potential limitation of our studies is that we used only university students as raters, who are typically younger and have less experience in the professional world. This should be taken into account in future research, although it should also be noted that some previous research on social judgements of individuals with different levels of power and status was based on university student samples (Fragale et al., 2011). Moreover, students do have some experience with managers in many educational and business settings and their perceptions are frequently similar to those reported by full-time employees (see Eagly & Carli, 2003, Rosette & Tost, 2010). For instance, the 'think manager–think male' association has been obtained in samples of both managers and students (e.g., Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002; Schein, 1973, 2001; Schein et al., 1996; Schein, Mueller & Jacobson, 1989). Finally, another potential constraint of our research is that we tested our hypotheses considering only the poor and the strong organization performance conditions, but did not include the relatively stable performance condition, which is a third scenario to be explored. Furthermore, in both studies we used only social hierarchical information about the leaders, but not gender traits. Gendered descriptions of the candidates should also be included in future studies, which might potentially affect, we believe, participants' social perceptions in a different way.

Conclusion

In short, our findings suggest that once a manager occupies a top leadership position in a firm with strong or poor performance, becoming a respected, admired, and esteemed leader is a key ingredient that positively impacts others' social judgements about the manager's capability to guide the organization. In addition, in a context of extremely poor results, having a respected manager who also controls critical resources reinforces the perception of their potential to reverse adverse outcomes. However, high control over resources does not offset the negative effect of not being respected. Furthermore, a highly respected manager is

viewed as more assertive, which in turn enhances the attributed influence in the company. Therefore, status and dominance, and to a lesser extent power, constitute potent allies in the leadership process.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix S1. Appendix A and B include the full scenarios used in Study 1 and 2, respectively.