ORIGINAL RESEARCH

How and When Does Visionary Leadership Promote Followers' Taking Charge? The Roles of Inclusion of Leader in Self and Future Orientation

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between visionary leadership and taking charge. The authors also aim to test the mediating effects of employee inclusion of leader in self and the moderating effects of future orientation.

Methods: This paper tests the theoretical model across a multisource, time-lagged field study with 234 leader-follower dyads as data. SPSS 25.0, PROCESS 3.4 macro and Mplus8.3 were used to test the theoretical hypotheses.

Results: We found that visionary leadership stimulates followers to include leaders in self, which in turn enhances their taking charge. Additionally, the relationship between visionary leadership and follower include of leader in self is strengthened by followers' future orientation. Furthermore, the mediation effect of follower include leader in self between visionary leadership and followers' taking charge is established only when followers' future orientation is high.

Conclusion: Based on self-expansion theory, this study explained how and when the effectiveness of visionary leadership may be optimized from a follower-centric perspective. These results contribute to the visionary leadership and self-expansion literature by introducing inclusion of leader in self as an underlying mechanism and future orientation as a boundary condition.

Keywords: visionary leadership, taking charge, inclusion of leader in self, future orientation, self-expansion theory

Introduction

With the rapid development of emerging technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing, as well as the acceleration of economic globalization, organizations are required to constantly change to obtain competitive advantages.[1] In this process, employees taking charge behaviour may play an important role,[2] which focuses on positive or constructive change.[3] However, COVID-19 has had an unexpected impact, not only producing inestimable global health and economic disruptions[4] but also increasing the sense of helplessness and uncertainty among employees in the workplace,[5] which greatly reduces the likelihood that employees will implement taking charge behaviour.[6] Therefore, improving followers certainty and initiative consciousness is crucial for the development of enterprises.[7] As a future-oriented style of leadership, visionary leadership may play an important role in triggering followers' taking charge, which can lead them to discover opportunities together and encourage them to voluntarily approach their common vision.[8] However, we still know little about how and when visionary leadership stimulates employees' taking charge from a follower-centric perspective.

The favorable effect of visionary leadership has been demonstrated in different domains,[9,10] especially for enterprise development at the organizational level.[11] However, there is no consensus on the effectiveness of visionary leadership on followers' cognitive and behavioral reactions. On the one hand, most scholars propose that visionary leadership can stimulate followers to pursue the same vision,[12] engage in citizenship behavior[13,14] and improve their evaluation of the leader's effectiveness.[15] It can also improve followers' job outcomes.[16,17] On the other hand, some scholars believe that visionary leadership produces negative effects, demonstrating that it does not result in followers' emotional commitment

and may even reduce their sustainable commitment.[18] According to these inconsistent conclusions, it is necessary to conduct a deeper analysis of how visionary leadership affects employee taking charge behavior.

A possible reason for these contradictory research conclusions is that leader-centric factors have been overemphasized in studies exploring the effectiveness of visionary leadership,[19,20] and thus, the deeper psychological mechanism and conditions of a follower-centric perspective may be ignored.[21] As a future-oriented style of leadership, visionary leadership may play an important role in triggering followers' taking charge behaviors through vision communication (eg, taking charge), which can encourage followers to collaborate on opportunities and voluntarily approach their common vision.[8] Self-expansion theory provides an appropriate theoretical perspective to explain how and when visionary leadership influences followers' taking charge behavior from a follower-centric perspective. According to Dansereau et al[22] the ability of visionary leadership to positively impact followers depends on whether it can meet followers' needs for self-expansion. In self-expansion theory, individuals will selectively incorporate the resources, concepts, and identities of their intimate partners (eg, leaders) into themselves to achieve the goal of self-development.[23] Therefore, self-expansion theory can reasonably explain the change in followers' self-concept in response to visionary leadership. Inclusion probability and inclusion desirability are two important factors affecting an individual's decision to inclusion of leader in self. Inclusion probability refers to whether an individual can establish an intimate relationship with another and is willing to include them, while inclusion desirability refers to the experience of whether the individual can grow and develop after including the other.[24] Visionary leadership communicates future development directions to members of the organization so that followers are motivated to include the leader in their self and improve their proactivity at work. Furthermore, when followers include the observed characteristics and behaviors of leaders in their self-concept, they can transform their own attitudes and behaviors to realize the ideal self.[25] Therefore, they are more likely to engage in taking charge behavior.

Furthermore, multiple studies have expressed the need for researchers to explore the boundary conditions of the influence of visionary leadership.[12,26] Self-expansion theory provides a theoretical perspective to explain how the boundary conditions are set on the influence leaders have over employees. It is unknown how followers' personality traits influence the effectiveness of visionary leadership. Future orientation as a positive personal trait is an important aspect of individual self-development,[27,28] which may represent a novel boundary condition on the influence of visionary leadership on followers. It can be defined as the extent to which members of an organization believe that their current behavior will affect their future, focus on the future, invest in their future, and plan their future development.[29] If followers are highly future oriented, they will actively pay attention to the future and view and analyze issues with a developmental lens[27] and thus are more willing to accept the vision delivered by the leader. Therefore, followers' future orientation may be a factor affecting inclusion probability and desirability may strengthen the relationship between visionary leadership and the inclusion of the visionary leader in the self, ultimately facilitating taking charge behavior.

Overall, we constructed a moderated mediation model to explore how and when the effectiveness of visionary leadership inspires individuals by addressing (1) how visionary leadership gives rise to followers' self-expansion, or the fundamental change in self-concept that enables followers to taking charge, and (2) when the influence of visionary leadership on followers' taking charge is strengthened by followers' future orientation. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model. This study contributes to the literature in the following three respects. First, based on self-expansion theory, our research explores the impact of visionary leadership on followers' taking charge. It enriches our understanding of the
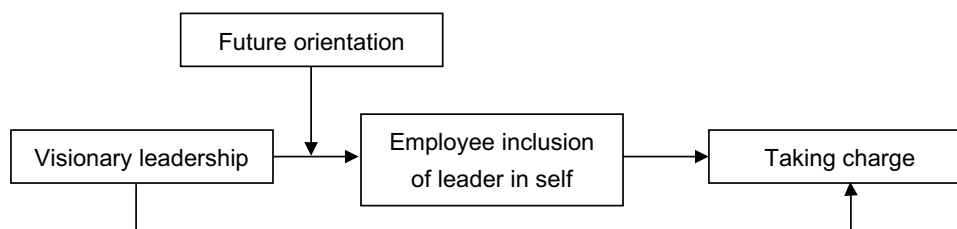
Figure 1 Theoretical model.

effectiveness of visionary leadership with a new theoretical perspective that uncovers the internal psychological mechanism of influence on followers' work behavior. Second, our research reveals the moderating effect of future orientation on the influence of visionary leadership, thus further enriching knowledge of the boundary conditions for the effectiveness of visionary leadership. Finally, our research empirically responds to the call by Dansereau et al[22] to combine leadership theory and self-expansion theory, which further expands the application of self-expansion theory. These findings also provide implications for practical human resource management.

Theory and Hypotheses

Self-Expansion Theory and Visionary Leadership

Vision refers to the ideal state that an enterprise hopes to achieve in its future development,[30] and visionary leadership is vision-centered behavior by which a leader depicts the positive future of the organization in a vivid and clear way and then shares that vision with followers to motivate them.[31] Visionary leadership focuses on identifying the key factors of the organizational environment that motivate followers to pursue the organization vision independently[8] and finally prompts followers to constantly adapt to their environment and implement proactive behavior to achieve success. Self-expansion theory provides a theoretical basis for explaining the effectiveness of visionary leadership because it focuses on the social and psychological mechanisms inherent in leaders and followers.[22]

Visionary Leadership and Taking Charge

Two core elements of visionary leadership are vision content and vision communication.[31,32] Vision content refers to the "grand blueprint" or ideal state that followers and the organization aim to achieve in the future, as determined by the leader's in-depth identification with and processing of the organization's environment.[33] An understanding of the direction of future development of individuals and organizations helps followers to have a deeper understanding of the ultimate goals of the organization and the significance and value of individual work and motivates them to improve their autonomy at work.[17] As a typical kind of proactive behavior performed by followers beyond the requirements of their own role,[34] taking charge emphasizes follower autonomy. With this type of behavior, followers try their best to not only complete the work assigned to them to achieve their own "grand blueprint" but also contribute to the realization of the "grand blueprint" of the organization by taking charge.[20]

Vision communication is the source of motivation for followers to execute their functions, which can improve work efficiency and enhance the sense of identity within the organization and the sense of meaning and mission at work.[35] Visionary leadership helps followers understand how to achieve both personal and organizational visions by clearly communicating the organization's vision to followers and by efficiently guiding action, which can effectively enhance followers' work confidence and self-efficacy.[36] In this way, followers are motivated to complete the work in their roles and more actively participate in work outside their roles.[14] Finally, visionary leadership can enhance followers' proactivity at work by providing a shared vision and values, thus prompting followers to generate ideas to improve work flows and help colleagues complete their work tasks to ensure that personal and organizational vision can be realized.[12,17] Accordingly, recent research believes that visionary leadership can motivate followers' taking charge by outlining the vision content and strengthening vision communication.[20,37] Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1. Visionary leadership is positively associated with taking charge.

The Mediating Role of Follower's Inclusion of Leader in Self

As an important theory to explain the impact of leadership,[22] self-expansion theory can explain the internal mechanism by which visionary leadership encourages followers' taking charge. According to self-expansion theory,[36] desirability and probability of inclusion are key factors affecting a follower's inclusion of the leader in self. Visionary leadership can improve followers' growth by meeting their needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. First, visionary leadership promotes followers' positive self-development while fully communicating the organization's vision and promoting a "common vision".[38] Second, after specifying the future direction of followers' efforts, visionary leadership fully and reasonably grants followers certain powers to be autonomous in realizing the visions of individuals and organizations.[17]

Finally, visionary leadership can effectively maintain stable and positive interactions between followers through frequent vision communication and feedback to meet followers' relatedness needs.[31]

Visionary leadership can also further promote followers' inclusion of the leader in self by improving their inclusion probability. Aron A. and Aron EN.[36] found that intimate relationships are an important factor affecting the probability of inclusion, and individuals tend to include only those who are close and accessible. Visionary leadership involves the formulation of a vision statement reflecting followers' needs and values. The satisfaction of followers' needs and respect for their values are conducive to establishing good relationships between followers and leaders.[39] Therefore, visionary leadership will prompt followers to include leader in self by improving the desirability and probability of inclusion to enable followers' self-expansion.

Self-expansion theory states that when individuals include others in self, they are more capable and motivated to do things that are beneficial to the included objects.[25] Followers feel that the resources of their leaders are their own resources when they include the leader in self. Therefore, they feel more capable and effective when dealing with additional or challenging work,[25] such as thinking about ways to improve the work process and help others. Furthermore, self-expansion theory states that followers incorporate thinking and perspectives when they include others in self;[36] that is, followers think from the perspective of their leaders. This results in followers thinking about the work process, proposing suggestions to improve it, and actively helping their colleagues complete their work to ensure that the leaders can complete their tasks. In addition, self-expansion theory states that followers behave in ways that are beneficial to the included object because an increase in the included object's resources also means an increase in their own resources.[23] In summary, from the perspective of ability and motivation, followers who include visionary leadership in self engage in more taking charge.

Hypothesis 2. There is an indirect effect of visionary leadership on followers' taking charge via the follower's inclusion of leader in self.

The Moderating Role of Followers' Future Orientation

Previous research has shown that an individual's future orientation is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes and is an important aspect of individual self-development.[28,40] According to self-expansion theory, the desirability and probability of including others are the key factors that affect an individual's inclusion of others in self.[36] As discussed in the previous section, visionary leadership can prompt followers to include the leader in self, and the strength of this relationship may be affected by the level of followers' future orientation. Specifically, we believe that followers' future orientation strengthens the relationship between visionary leadership and the inclusion of the leader in self by the follower, by increasing the inclusion of desirability and probability in the self-expansion motivation.

Followers with a high level of future orientation actively plan their future according to their current self-concept.[41] Because visionary leadership holds the power and resources to support followers' long-term development,[13] followers will be more motivated to include leaders in self to establish a high growth potential. A higher level of future orientation also encourages followers to actively establish a close relationship with the visionary leader and win their trust and support,[12] thus making it easier for followers to include the leader in self. When followers have a low level of future orientation, they do not fully consider the future and only focus on their immediate interests, believing that the resources in the hands of the visionary leader cannot help them grow.[42] Therefore, these followers are less willing and motivated to include visionary leadership in self. In this case, the relationship between the leader and follower remains at the level of an ordinary working relationship, and the follower lacks the motivation to form an intimate relationship with the leader. Over time, the follower will be alienated by the visionary leader, which will seriously affect the intimacy of their relationship and make it more difficult for the follower to include the leader in self. Therefore, we propose that a follower's future orientation moderates the relationship between the visionary leadership and the inclusion of leader in self by the follower.

Hypothesis 3. The relationship between visionary leadership and a follower's inclusion of the leader in self is moderated by the follower's future orientation such that the relationship is stronger among followers with a high level of future orientation.

Based on a combination of H2 and H3, followers will reduce their likelihood of self-expansion and will be unwilling to establish a close relationship with their leaders (ie, low probability of inclusion) when they feel that the inclusion of leader in self is not beneficial to their self-development (ie, low desirability of inclusion) due to a low level of future orientation. Followers who do not include their leaders in self, lack the abilities and motivation brought by self-expansion, and thus they seldom implement taking charge. In contrast, followers with a high level of future orientation are more willing and able to include their leaders in self, and thus they think from the perspective of their leaders and believe that they have enough resources to carry out taking charge in favor of their leaders. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 4. The indirect effect of visionary leadership on followers' taking charge via the inclusion of leader in self is moderated by followers' future orientation, such that the indirect relationship is stronger among followers with a high level of future orientation.

Methods
Procedures and Sample
The current research obtained multiwave and multisource data to examine the theoretical model. Based on the researchers' network of acquaintances in China, the researchers first contacted the enterprise principals, and after obtaining their permission, we contacted the HR manager of the enterprise to obtain a list of staff who could participate in the survey. It should be noted that there are two main reasons for the selection of Chinese samples in this study. First, all authors come from China. Choosing a sample in China is more convenient for us. Second, and most important, China is a country characterized by a culture with high traits of collectivity. Employees pay attention to community and relations. The self-expansion of employees in this culture is more likely.[41] Then, we went directly to the workplace and distributed the questionnaires to the team leaders and followers. After each participant completed the questionnaire, the researcher collected the questionnaire on the spot. Leaders and followers filled out questionnaires in separate areas to avoid mutual influence. At time 1, the researchers sent questionnaires to followers, including demographic variables such as gender, age and length of time with leaders, as well as variable information such as followers' evaluation of visionary leadership, the follower inclusion of leader in self and their future orientation. In this stage, a total of 350 questionnaires were issued, and 313 were returned. At time 2 (approximately 8 weeks later), the researchers issued the second phase of the survey questionnaire, which again included demographic variables such as gender and age of the leader, and asked them to evaluate the taking charge of followers. A total of 313 questionnaires were issued, and 286 were collected in this phase. After eliminating questionnaires with omitted and irregular answers, 234 leader-follower dyads were finally obtained in the two stages, and the overall response rate of the questionnaire was 66.9%.

Among all the leaders surveyed, 67.9% were men with an average age of 35.24 years (SD = 5.57). Among all the followers surveyed, males accounted for 72.2%, with an average age of 29.75 years (SD = 6.63) and an average working history with their leaders of 3.34 years (SD = 3.12). The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Measures
In this study, the measurement scales were originally written in English. We therefore translated them into Chinese using Brislin's[43] "back translation" procedures to ensure the accuracy of foreign scales. All scales were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). All the items used in this study are listed in the Appendix.

Visionary leadership. We measured visionary leadership with a 5-item scale previously used by Kearney et al.[37] Followers were asked to answer five questions about whether their immediate leader has visionary leadership behavior. The representative question was "My leader states clearly where we are going." The Cronbach's α of the scale in this study is 0.88.

Inclusion of leader in self. Inclusion of leader in self was measured using the scale developed by Aron et al.[44] Each follower was asked to choose a graphic that best described their relationship with their leader. Previous studies have also used this scale to measure the relationship between leaders and followers.[45]

Table I Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Leader's gender		
Male	159	67.9
Female	75	32.1
Leader's age		
30 years old and below	36	15.4
31 to 35 years old	104	44.4
36 to 40 years old	73	31.2
Over 40 years old	21	9
Follower's gender		
Male	169	72.2
Female	65	27.8
Follower's age		
25 years old and below	45	19.2
26 to 30 years old	132	56.4
31 to 35 years old	28	12
Over 36 years old	29	12.4
Tenure with leader (years)		
2 years and below	105	44.9
3 to 5 years	99	42.3
Over 5 years	30	12.8

Taking charge. A 6-item taking charge scale was used.[3] A sample item is "This follower often tries to bring about improved procedures for the work unit or department." The Cronbach's α of the scale in this study is 0.86.

Future orientation. The future orientation measurement adopts a 12-item scale developed by Biondolillo and Epstein,[46] in which followers conduct self-evaluations, and a representative question is "I consider how things might be in the future and try to influence those things with my day-to-day behavior." The Cronbach's α of the scale in this study is 0.96.

Control variables. According to previous studies on self-expansion theory,[25] to eliminate other interfering factors, the current study controlled for the age and gender of followers, the age and gender of leaders, and the time spent together between leaders and followers.

Analytical Strategy

According to the research questions and hypotheses proposed in this study, SPSS 25.0, PROCESS 3.4 macro and Mplus8.3 statistical analysis software were used for data analysis. First, SPSS 25.0 software was used to conduct descriptive statistical analysis of each variable in this study and to conduct a reliability analysis of the scale. Second, we conducted a set of CFAs using Mplus8.3 based on chi-squared statistics and fit indexes of the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) to ensure adequate discriminant validity among the variables in our model. The results of standard

factor loadings, composite reliability and convergent validity are listed in the Appendix. Finally, the hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with SPSS 25.0 to test the research hypothesis, and the PROCESS 3.4 program was used to test the bootstrap asymmetric confidence interval for the mediating effect of follower inclusion of leader in self and the moderated mediation effect.

Results
Confirmatory Factor Analysis
In this study, due to the large number of measurement items for some variables and considering that there are a large number of parameters to be estimated in the model, standard errors may be increased.[47] At the same time, because we pay more attention to the distinction between the variables being measured, rather than the inherent correlation in variable items, in theory, it is more effective to treat the items in packages (Item parcels).[47,48] Therefore, variables (eg, Visionary leadership, Taking charge, Future orientation) that have 5 or more items are randomly packaged into three items in this study.[49]

After data packaging was completed, Mplus8.3 was used in this study to conduct confirmatory factor analysis to test the discriminant validity of variables such as visionary leadership, followers' future orientation and taking charge (since the follower inclusion of leader in self only has one item, confirmatory factor analysis was not included). The analysis results are shown in Table 2. According to model A, the fitting indexes of the three-factor model ($\chi^2 = 49.45$, $df = 24$, $\chi^2/df = 2.06$, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.04) not only reached the academic recommended standards but were also significantly better than alternative models. Therefore, the three main variables measured in this study have good discriminant validity.

Common Method Bias
We conducted Harman's one-factor analysis to assess the impact of common method bias. According to the recommendations of Podsakoff et al,[50] it is acceptable for the single-factor cumulative variance interpretation rate to be less than 50%. The results of this study showed that the cumulative variance interpretation rate of the first precipitated factor was 43.92%, less than 50%. Therefore, it is initially believed that the common method bias of measurement data in this study is small and will not lead to false correlation in data results.

Descriptive Statistics
Table 3 shows the mean value, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of each variable. As seen from Table 3, visionary leadership is positively correlated with inclusion of leader in self ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) and with taking charge ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). There was a positive correlation between inclusion of leader in self and taking charge ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). The data preliminarily verify hypothesis 1.

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	Factor	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model A	VL; FO; TC	49.45	24	2.06	0.98	0.98	0.07	0.04
Model B	VL; FO+TC	257.28	26	9.90	0.85	0.79	0.20	0.11
Model C	VL+FO; TC	376.47	26	14.48	0.77	0.69	0.24	0.14
Model D	VL+TC; FO	353.06	26	13.58	0.79	0.71	0.23	0.17
Model E	VL+FO+TC	583.31	27	21.60	0.64	0.52	0.30	0.17

Note: "+" means that two factors are combined into one factor.
Abbreviations: VL, visionary leadership; FO, future orientation; TC, taking charge; χ^2, Chi-square; df, degree of freedom; CFI, comparative fit index; TLI, tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leader's gender	0.68	0.47								
2. Leader's age	35.24	5.57	0.03							
3. Follower's gender	0.72	0.45	0.17*	−0.15*						
4. Follower's age	29.75	6.63	−0.10	0.32**	−0.03					
5. Tenure with leader (years)	3.34	3.12	0.17**	0.45**	0.02	0.52**				
6. Visionary leadership	2.39	0.77	−0.02	−0.02	−0.09	−0.05	−0.13			
7. Future orientation	2.92	0.98	0.14*	−0.01	0.03	−0.17*	−0.15*	0.42**		
8. Inclusion of leader in self	2.68	1.00	0.03	−0.05	0.06	−0.11	−0.07	0.39**	0.43**	
9. Taking charge	3.55	0.74	−0.02	−0.27**	0.18**	−0.27**	−0.08	0.24**	0.47**	0.33**

Note: N = 234. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.
Abbreviation: SD, standard deviation.

Test of Hypothesis

Multilevel linear regression was used to test the hypothesis, and the analysis results are shown in Table 4. Models 2a and 2b show that after controlling for the gender and age of followers, the gender and age of leaders, and the length of tenure with leaders, there is a significant positive correlation between visionary leadership and followers' taking charge (B = 0.26, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01). Hypothesis 1 was supported. Model 1c showed that the interactive items for visionary leadership and follower future orientation (to reduce the effects of multicollinearity on the research conclusions, the items for visionary leadership and follower future orientation were combined for standardized processing) have a positive

Table 4 Results of Multi-Level Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	Inclusion of Leader in Self						Taking Charge					
	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 1c		Model 2a		Model 2b		Model 2c	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
1. Leader's gender	0.03	0.15	0.01	0.14	−0.07	0.13	−0.16	0.10	−0.17	0.10	−0.17	0.09
2. Leader's age	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	−0.01	0.01	−0.03**	0.01	−0.03**	0.01	−0.03**	0.01
3. Follower's gender	0.12	0.15	0.20	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.24*	0.10	0.28**	0.10	0.24*	0.10
4. Follower's age	−0.01	0.01	−0.02	0.01	−0.01	0.01	−0.03**	0.01	−0.04**	0.01	−0.03**	0.01
5. Tenure with leader (years)	−0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.05*	0.02	0.06**	0.02	0.06**	0.02
6. Visionary leadership			0.51**	0.08	0.22*	0.09			0.26**	0.06	0.17**	0.06
7. Inclusion of leader in self											0.17**	0.05
8. Future orientation					0.33**	0.07						
9. Visionary leadership * future orientation					0.18**	0.05						
R^2	0.02		0.17**		0.28**		0.16**		0.23**		0.27**	
ΔR^2			0.15**		0.12**				0.07**		0.04**	

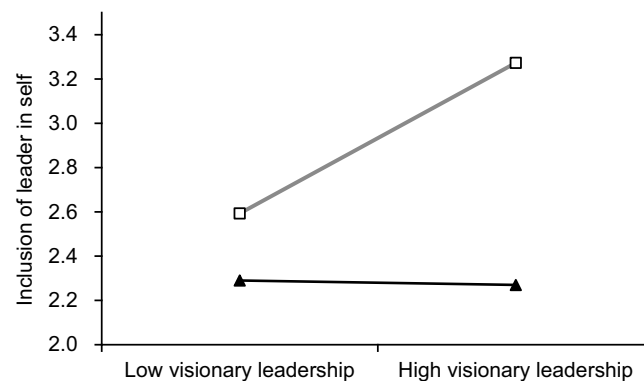**Note**: N = 234. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01; Δ, adjusted R^2.

Figure 2 The interact effect of visionary leadership and future orientation on follower's inclusion of leader in self.
Note: ▲—Low future orientation —□— High future orientation.

influence on follower inclusion of leader in self ($B = 0.18$, SE = 0.05, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 is preliminarily supported. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 2, the simple slope test results show that when followers have high future orientation, visionary leadership has a stronger effect on followers to inclusion of leader in self ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). When followers' future orientation is low, visionary leadership has no significant effect on follower inclusion of leader in self ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = ns$). Based on this, hypothesis 3 is verified again.

According to the recommendations of Hayes,[51] the mediating effect was tested with the SPSS 25.0 plugin PROCESS 3.4, and 5000 bootstrap samplings were performed. The indirect effects of visionary leadership, via follower inclusion of leader in self, are significant for taking charge (0.08, SD = 0.03, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.15]). Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Additionally, this study used the method proposed by Preacher and Hayes to test the moderated mediation effect.[52] As shown in Table 5, the bootstrapping results showed that the mediating effect of follower inclusion of leader in self was 0.08, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.17]. When followers' future orientation is high, the indirect effect is 0.08, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.15]. When the follower's future orientation is low, the indirect effect is −0.002, 95% CI = [−0.05, 0.04]. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Discussion
Theoretical Implications
There are three theoretical contributions of the current study that deserve attention. First, based on self-expansion theory, this study explains the mechanism whereby visionary leadership influences followers' taking charge, which enriches the theoretical perspective of the effectiveness of visionary leadership from a follower-centric view. Although some previous studies have explored the effects of visionary leadership on followers, they are mostly based on leadership theories,[16,37] and the exploration of theoretical mechanisms from the psychological point of view of followers has received little attention. Even though visionary leadership has been shown to have an impact on employee work behavior and outcomes, the conclusions are contradictory.[12,18] In a rapidly changing environment (eg, economic globalization, COVID-19, etc.), promoting employees' taking change behavior through attractive vision content and vision communication is critical to achieving organizational development goals.[53] Based on self-expansion theory and a follower-centered perspective, our research finds that visionary

Table 5 Moderated Mediation Effect Analysis Results

	Indirect Effect	**SE**	**95% CI**	
Low future orientation	−0.002	0.02	−0.05	0.04
High future orientation	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.15
Indirect effect difference	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.17

Abbreviations: SE, standard error; 95% CI, 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

leadership enables employees to inclusion of leader in self and then implement taking charge behaviors for personal and organizational development. This finding provides a new theoretical perspective on and a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of visionary leadership[54] and extends the conclusions on the antecedents of taking charge behavior.[55]

Second, this study reveals the conditional effect of followers' future orientation and further enriches knowledge of the boundary conditions for the effectiveness of visionary leadership. Visionary leadership can help employees align with organizational goals, which is crucial for the successful transformation of organizations in a rapidly changing and competitive environment.[56] Notably, whether visionary leadership can deliver the vision to employees through vision communication and make employees understand and accept the goals of enterprise development and ultimately achieve growth of employees and the enterprise together is largely limited by the personal characteristics of the employees.[14] Existing studies have emphasized the impact of goal orientation on the relationship between visionary leadership and employee work outcomes.[17] However, future orientation has not been examined as a trait closely associated with employee acceptance and understanding of leadership vision.[29] From the follower-centric perspective, this study found that followers' future orientation traits can moderate the relationship between visionary leadership and followers' inclusion of their leader in self, and promote taking charge. Therefore, this study reveals the influence of followers' personality traits (eg, future orientation) on the effectiveness of visionary leadership, thus providing insights into the boundary conditions of its effectiveness.

Finally, this study contributes to the literature in the field of positive leadership and self-expansion. Although Dansereau et al[22] proposed that self-expansion theory is an effective perspective to explain leadership theory and called for the combination of leadership theory and self-expansion theory, there has been little empirical research to test this inference until now. Based on self-expansion theory, the current study explains how and when visionary leadership influences followers' taking charge by clarifying the mediation mechanism of follower's inclusion of leader in self. Visionary leadership may increase communication frequency and relationship intimacy in the process of delivering their vision to employees,[39,57] which increases employees' inclusion probability and inclusion desirability.[24] When employees include leaders' resources and concepts into themselves, they can encourage themselves to more actively participate in the process of organizational change.[14] Moreover, our results also provide an important boundary condition for this influencing process, that is, the personality trait of future orientation. Therefore, this is also a compelling response to Dansereau et al,[22] who called for further integration of the theories of leadership and self-expansion and further expansion of the application range of self-expansion theory.

Practical Implications

The findings also have significance for human resource management practice. First, given that visionary leadership can stimulate employees' taking charge behaviors, we encourage enterprises to attach importance to the recruitment, selection and development of visionary leaders. Enterprises should foster visionary leadership in organizations by establishing an encouraging and open climate that encourages vision communication. Meanwhile, leadership training programs for communicating company vision can be held frequently within the organization to ensure that leaders at all levels reach a consensus on company goals and can effectively motivate employees,[18] especially in a timely manner. Furthermore, when arranging for promotions and manager recruitment, enterprises should pay more attention to the strategic pattern of objectives of the individual and screen for leaders who can create the grand blueprint for the enterprise and lead their followers to achieve this goal. It may be helpful for organizations to include the level of ability to communicate a vision in their assessments.

Second, this study confirms that followers' inclusion of leader in self plays an important role in the relationship between visionary leadership and taking charge behavior, which is an important mechanism for employees to translate leadership vision into action. On the one hand, visionary leadership should not only meet followers' personalized growth needs but also pay attention to the extent of followers' self-expansion and actively promote their self-development. On the other hand, followers are more willing to include others in self if they have a close relationship with them. Therefore, visionary leadership should include establishing quality relationships with followers by providing resources and actively interacting with them. These measures can increase the inclusion desirability and probability of followers to translate the leader's vision into taking charge behavior in a changing and competitive environment.

Finally, the results show that employees' future orientation is an important boundary condition for the influence of visionary leadership on taking charge behavior. For organizations and managers, one straightforward suggestion is to focus on selecting employees with strong future orientation characteristics to join their teams and organizations. Additionally, managers should create an organizational environment that fosters the future orientation of followers over the long term.[58] Employees should be encouraged to focus on the future and make plans for future development through cultivating corporate culture and availing themselves of internal and external training to develop proactive behaviors that support visionary leadership.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the study's theoretical contributions and practical implications, the following limitations should be addressed in future studies. First, based on self-expansion theory, this study identifies the mediating role of followers' inclusion of their leaders in self and the moderating role of future orientation in the relationship between visionary leadership and followers' taking charge. Whether there are other mechanisms and conditions within the self-expansion theory framework to explain the relationship between visionary leadership and followers' taking charge remains to be further explored. Second, the effectiveness of the single-item measurement method that include leader in self needs to be guaranteed through multisample verification or the development of a new scale. Third, the sample was obtained by convenience sampling in the collectivist cultural environment of China, and the results may be affected by cultural background.[41] We suggest that future studies sample different cultural contexts (eg, individualistic cultures) to further expand our findings. Finally, although the two-stage data collection method can effectively avoid the influence of common method bias on the results,[50] only 234 effective samples were obtained due to the high data loss rate. We suggest that future studies use longitudinal research designs and other methods to collect higher quality data to verify the research conclusions.

Conclusion

Based on self-expansion theory, the present study explores how and when the effectiveness of visionary leadership can be exercised by influencing the psychology and behavior of followers. The results show that visionary leadership can positively influence followers to include their leader in self, and thus motivate their taking charge. Furthermore, followers' future orientation moderates the positive relationship between visionary leadership and followers' inclusion of leader in self and the indirect effect of visionary leadership on taking charge via followers' inclusion of leader in self. Specifically, only when followers have a higher future orientation can visionary leadership promote the follower's inclusion of leader in self and stimulate their taking charge. These results contribute to the theoretical development, that is, provide a new explanation mechanism and boundary conditions for the influence of visionary leadership on employees' taking charge behavior. Likewise, these results also suggest that organizations should pay more attention to employees' cognitive (inclusion of leader in self) and individual characteristics (future orientation), which are of great value in facilitating leadership effectiveness.

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee on Human Experimentation of Huazhong University of Science and Technology and was performed in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration principles. We provided all participants with written informed consent and explained the purpose of the study at the time of the first wave of questionnaires. All participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and were assured that all data would be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic research.

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