

Impact of Impression Management and Value Congruence on Attributed Charisma

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Abstract. The effects of leader's use of impression management strategies and leader-follower value system congruence on leader's charisma as perceived by follower were studied using a sample of 52 pairs of managers and subordinates of an automobile company situated in North India. Three types of impression management strategies (self-focused, follower-focused, and job-focused), two types of value congruence (terminal and instrumental), and five factors of attributed charisma (personal risk, sensitivity to others, unconventional behavior, vision, and environmental sensitivity) were examined. Results show that job-focused and self-focused strategies are negatively related to unconventional behavior. Terminal congruence is negatively related to unconventional behavior, vision, and environmental sensitivity, and instrumental congruence is negatively related to unconventional behavior. Job-focused strategy also moderates the effect of congruence on charisma.

There has been growing interest in the study of charismatic leadership. Numerous studies have looked at the behavioral traits of charismatic leaders. Most authors agree that charismatic leaders are characterized by their ability to uplift followers by providing themselves as role models and by inspiring the followers through vision. We report here a study that we conducted to look at charisma as seen by followers and how it is affected by value system congruence between leader and follower and the various impression management strategies used by the leader.

Theory and Hypotheses

Charismatic Leadership

Charisma has come to mean anything ranging from celebrity to superhuman status. The term charisma (Greek for gift) was first borrowed from theology. The term was widely discussed but shunned for the most part by experimental, social, and organizational psychologists and behaviorists. The first exception was House (1977) who argued that charismatic leaders could be distinguished from other leaders by their tendency to dominate, a strong conviction in their own beliefs and ideals, and a need to influence others. Bass (1985) considered charisma to be a part of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership and charismatic leadership have however been treated by most researcher as synonyms or identical twins.

Behavioral charisma. Charismatic leaders are high on self-confidence, self-esteem, self-determination, power, and activity inhibition, and low on achievement and affiliation (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, Spangler, and Woycke, 1991). They have insight into and are sensitive to needs, values, and hope of their followers, and have the ability to conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations (Bass, 1985). They have the ability to project themselves as miracle workers and the ability to project to their followers their extreme self-confidence and conviction so that they become larger than life (House, 1977). They create an idealized future vision that they are supposed to achieve, they are sensitive to environment, and they have the ability to take personal risk. They have unconventional belief and can use unconventional and counter-cultural means to achieve the goals (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Charismatic leaders are strong in articulation. They use inspirational talks and emotional appeals to arouse motivation in followers (Bass, 1985). Charismatic leaders are often agents of radical change. They are action oriented and anti status quo and are high on performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Charismatic leaders are more likely to use referent and personal power bases (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, and Popper (1998) found that leaders who show charismatic behaviors of emphasizing ideology, and displaying exemplary behavior are rated high in the performance appraisal by their superiors.

Followers and charisma. Charisma is dependent on the behavior of followers also. House, Spangler, & Woycke (1991) argued that a leader is not charismatic unless described by followers as such. Charismatic leaders are described by their subordinates as being significantly more dynamic, and the followers are ready to work harder and longer for them (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Leader's emphasizing collective identity leads to subordinate identification with and trust in the leader, motivation and willingness to sacrifice, and identification with and attachment to unit (Shamir et al., 1998). Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) found that leader's providing task cues increased the quality and quantity of performance and followers' task clarity and intellectual stimulation. In addition, the leader's articulation of a vision emphasizing quality positively affected followers' attitudes and perception as a whole.

Situational variables. The charismatic leader is an idolized hero, a messiah, and a savior and such a leader appears at time of great distress. Organizational cultures in transition are ripe for charismatic leaders to appear in the industry (Bass, 1985). Charismatic leaders arise when crisis is chronic such as when the ultimate values of a culture are being attacked. People become "charisma-hungry" in time of distress due to decline of old values and rituals, shocks to the culture, growing fears, anxieties, and identity crises (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). It is easier for charismatic leaders to appear in societies that seek, expect, or encourage their appearance. In organizational context too, the culture, tradition, and value system plays an important part in the making of a charismatic leader (Bass, 1985).

Value Congruence

Values have been defined in many ways. At one extreme, they have been referred to as mental entities that do not exist, and at the other end they are described as central core to individuals' personalities that have a direct effect on behavior (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984). Values could be described as ways of life, standard of conduct, and conceptions of the desirable means and ends of action (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Rokeach (1973) defined value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence. Values serve as major component of the personality that helps individuals

maintain and enhance their self-esteem. Chatman (1989) looked upon values as relatively enduring constructs that describe characteristics of individuals as well as organizations.

At the most basic level, theoreticians have focused on two types of values. One type is the value that an individual places on an object or outcome (e.g., the value one places on pay). These objects or outcomes acquire value through their instrumental relationship with other objects or outcomes that, in turn, are instrumental to still other objects or outcomes. A second type of value is more likely to be used to describe a person as opposed to an object (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). These values have been further subdivided into terminal or end values and instrumental or means values. Terminal values are self-sufficient end-states of existence that a person strives to achieve (such as happiness or wisdom). A distinguishing feature of terminal values is that they are pursued for their own sake. Instrumental values concern modes of behavior (such as behaving honestly or responsibly) rather than states of existence. Instrumental values describe behaviors that facilitate the attainment of terminal values (Rokeach, 1973).

Another distinctive characteristic of values is "oughtness." This term indicates that values specify an individual's personal beliefs about how he or she "should" or "ought" to behave (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Values serve as standards that we learn to employ transcendentally across objects and situations in various ways, to guide action and to guide us to the position that we take in various social, ideological, political; and religious issues. Values guide anticipatory and goal-directed behavior, self-presentations, and impression management. They help us to evaluate and judge others, and ourselves and to compare ourselves with others, not only with respect to competence but also with respect to morality.

Similarities in values (value congruence). When persons share similar value systems (i.e., when there is greater interpersonal value system congruence), they tend to perceive external stimuli in similar ways and behave in similar ways (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Value congruence produces a social system or culture that facilitates the interactions necessary for individuals to achieve their common goals. Because predictability in interpersonal interactions reduces role ambiguity and conflict, individuals with similar values should also experience greater satisfaction in their interpersonal relationships.

It is important to note that organizations do not really possess values apart from the values of their members. When a social unit's members share values, they may form the basis for social expectations or norms (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Individuals might be attracted to organizations they perceive as having values similar to their own. The congruence between an individual's value system and that of an organization may be the crux of person-culture-fit.

Value congruence between different units can determine the extent to which successful mergers can take place between the units, and value congruence between an organization and its members can indicate overall happiness and satisfaction with the organization (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1992). It is also positively related to employee performance, commitment, and intention to remain in the organization (Chatman, 1989). Value congruence between employees and their supervisor is positively related to employee satisfaction and commitment (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). Enz (1988) found that top management ascribed more power to departments that they judged to have more value congruence. Department members also ascribed more issue based and general power to their department when they perceived it to have more value congruence with top management. A high degree of congruence exists between the values of highly ranked subordinates and those of their superiors who rate them (Senger, 1971).

Charismatic leadership and value congruence. Supervisor-subordinate value similarity is positively related to supervisor consideration, success, and competence (Weiss, 1978). The extent to which followers' values are congruent with those espoused by the leader will be positively related to the degree to which followers identify with the leader. The influence of the leader's vision is particularly potent when it is congruent with followers' needs, values, and aspirations. The more convinced individuals become that a leader has a vision and the capacity to achieve personally valued goals, the more likely they are to commit to and even love the leader (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). Krishnan (1998) found that transformational leadership was positively related to terminal value system congruence between subordinate and leader.

Hypothesis 1. Charismatic leadership would be positively related to the degree of value congruence between leader and follower.

Impression Management

Impression management refers to the process by which; people attempt to control or manipulate the reaction of others to images of themselves, their ideas, behavior, motivations, and morality, and a host of personal attributes like dependability, intelligence, and future potential (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1994). It involves influencing the way people are perceived by significant others, and presenting themselves in a socially desirable way (Mendenhall & Wiley, 1994). Individuals can use impression management behaviors to accomplish either short- or long-term goals (Wayne & Liden, 1995). People seek to create favorable impressions by highlighting aspects of their behavior that they believe will be pleasing to others. Impression management is tactical, but not necessarily deceptive (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Individuals are more likely to engage in impression management in ambiguous and uncertain conditions (Rosenfeld, 1997).

Through impression management, people try to create those impressions that are consistent with their desired self-images (Wayne & Liden, 1995) or self-esteem (Schlenker, 1980). Role constraints, correct targeting of value of significant others, valid attributions regarding the results of one's impression management efforts, focusing on one's desirable identity image when behaving, and displaying behaviors that express valued attributes of one's self-concept are all determinants of impression management behavior (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Impression management provides a means for actively communicating qualities and abilities, rather than relying on passive observation alone (Frink & Ferris, 1998).

Impression management strategies. Impression management strategies could be classified as defensive and assertive (Wayne & Liden, 1995). Defensive impression management is triggered by negative affective states, e.g. embarrassment, shame (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985), and is typically used in response to perceived threats to one's social image and poor performance. It is reflected through excuses, apologies, self-handicapping, learned helplessness, and self-deprecation. Assertive impression management strategies, on the other hand, are used by individuals to establish a particular identity for an audience and are not merely a reaction to situational demands (Wayne & Liden, 1995).

Charismatic Leadership and Impression Management

Often, the charismatic leader survives with more attention given to the apparent than the real (Bass, 1985). The charismatic leader must continue to demonstrate effectiveness. The effectiveness may however be real or apparent. Charismatic leaders continue to be deified by their followers as long as the image of success and effectiveness as leader can be sustained.

Image building contributes to a leader being seen as competent, credible, trustworthy, and motivated to serve followers' moral interests, and these images, in turn, provide a basis for charismatic leadership. In most instances, the leader's special talents are genuine. Still, many charismatic leaders exaggerate their true talents until they appear extraordinary to their followers (Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

Impression management could also be classified into self-focused (self-presentation), other-focused (other-enhancement), and job-focused. Self-presentation or self-focused impression management involves the manipulation of information about the self (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). It is accomplished either verbally or with nonverbal cues such as smiling, eye contact, and touching, manipulation of physical appearances, settings, and props, or to have a third party describe them favorably in front of the target audience. However, an agent must be willing to assume risk when using self-focused strategies (Liden & Mitchell, 1988) because the influence attempt will backfire if the target interprets the self-presentation as insincere.

Hypothesis 2. Frequency of use of self-focused impression management strategy by leader would be negatively related to charismatic leadership.

Other-focused impression management or other-enhancement refers to the favorable evaluation of, or agreement with, the target. Flattery, favor doing, and opinion conformity are common forms of other-enhancement that have been shown to positively influence target individuals (Wayne & Liden, 1995). Using other-focused strategy toward followers could help make them see the leader as more charismatic.

Hypothesis 3. Frequency of use of follower-focused impression management strategy by leader would be positively related to charismatic leadership.

Job-focused impression management refers to focusing on behavior and verbal statements related to individual's performance on his or her job. Use of job-focused impression management strategy is negatively related to performance ratings (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Charismatic leadership is more about the personality of the leader than about the way in which the leader performs his or her job. Leaders who keep highlighting how they are doing their job and thereby impress their followers may not therefore be seen as charismatic.

Hypothesis 4. Frequency of use of job-focused impression management strategy by leader would be negatively related to charismatic leadership.

Charisma, impression management, and value congruence. In framing their vision, charismatic leaders choose their words to amplify audience values, stress vision's importance, and efficacy (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). Charismatic leaders, during the initial stages of the charismatic relationship, tailor their speech style to complement followers' perceived values and characteristics. Doing so serves to increase these leaders' attractiveness to followers and promotes identification.

Hypothesis 5. Frequency of use of impression management strategies by leader will moderate the relationship between charismatic leadership and leader-follower value system congruence.

Method

We collected data for the study from leader-follower dyads belonging to an automobile major situated in North India. The leaders surveyed were top and middle level

managers, and the followers were middle and lower level managers. Leaders answered questions on their value systems and impression management strategies, and followers answered questions on their value systems and the charismatic leadership of their superiors. Questionnaires were given to 108 pairs of leaders and followers, i.e. 216 questionnaires. Out of these only 154 were returned. Among these 154 questionnaires, there were only 52 matched dyads of leader and follower. Most of the 52 superiors surveyed were in the age group 40-50, were graduates, and had been working in the organization for less than 15 years. Most of the 52 subordinates surveyed were in the age group 20-40, and had been with the organization for not less than 5 years. Half of them were postgraduates and the remaining half were graduates, and 85% of them were working under the present superior for less than 5 years.

The value survey and the impression management questionnaire were given to superiors personally in a self-addressed and stamped envelope. An identification number was put on the envelope for matching it with the follower's questionnaire. Similarly, the value survey and the charismatic leadership questionnaire were given personally to one subordinate each for each superior. While selecting the subordinate, it was ensured that he or she had worked under the present superior for at least a year.

Charisma was measured through the Conger and Kanungo (1998) questionnaire called the C-K scale. Conger, Kanungo, Menon, and Mathur (1997) found that the C-K scale was reliable and valid. Charismatic leadership is an attribution based on followers' perception of their leader's behavior, and therefore we asked subordinates to rate the charismatic leadership of their superiors. The C-K scale had 20 twenty items to measure the five factors of charismatic leadership—ability to take personal risk, sensitivity to others, unconventional behavior, ability to provide vision, and environmental sensitivity.

Ipsative (rank-ordering) method is the most appropriate way to measure values. We used the value survey of Rokeach (1973) to measure values. It has two sets of values that the individuals are asked to arrange in order of importance. The first list contains 18 terminal values and the second list contains 18 instrumental values. Congruence was measured as the correlation between the ranking given by the superior and the ranking given by the corresponding subordinate.

Wayne and Ferris (1990) developed a 24-item scale to measure a number of assertive impression management behaviors, including self-enhancement, other-enhancement, opinion conformity, favor doing, and exemplification. Results of their principal component analysis indicated three types of impression management strategies: job-focused, supervisor-focused, and self-focused. The reliabilities for these scales in their study were .87 for job-focused, .78 for supervisor-focused, and .71 for self-focused impression management. We used the same scale with some minor modifications. The Wayne and Ferris scale measured the impression management strategies as used by the subordinate, and therefore we replaced the word subordinate with superior and vice versa, since we wanted to measure the impression management strategies as used by the superior. The 24-item scale for impression management that we finally used measured three factors—self-focused, subordinate-focused, and job-focused impression management strategies.

Results

The means, standard deviations, Cronbach alphas, and correlations between all variables are given in Table 1. Contrary to what we hypothesized, three of the five

charismatic leadership factors (unconventional behavior, vision, and environmental sensitivity) were negatively related to terminal value system congruence. Unconventional behavior was also negatively related to instrumental value system congruence. The other factors of charismatic leadership were not significantly related to congruence. Our hypothesis 1 was therefore not supported.

Insert Table 1 about here

Job-focused and self-focused impression management strategies were negatively correlated to unconventional behavior, but not to the remaining four charismatic leadership factors. Follower-focused strategy was not related to any of the five charismatic leadership factors. Thus, hypotheses 2 and 4 were supported only in the case of unconventional behavior, and hypothesis 3 was not supported.

To test hypothesis 5, we created six product terms by multiplying the two types of congruence with the three types of strategies. We also combined the five charismatic leadership factors by taking their mean and came up with a composite score for attributed charisma. We did a partial correlation analysis between attributed charisma and each of the six congruence-strategy product variables, after controlling for the relevant congruence and strategy variables. Job-focused impression management strategy moderated the relationship between terminal value congruence and the perception of charisma (partial $r=0.44$, $p<0.001$) and between instrumental value congruence and the perception of charisma (partial $r=0.28$, $p<0.05$). Hypothesis 5 was therefore supported only in the case of job-focused strategy and not in the case of self-focused and follower-focused strategies.

Discussion

Several explanations could be offered for the negative relationships between value congruence and attributed charisma. It is possible that at some point followers will have nothing left to give. When this occurs, the message of the leader will appear unrealistic. Further, if the leader's credibility is damaged further by performance deficits, his or her charisma may fade quickly (Bass, 1985), and in such case, even though there is congruence in values the subordinate may not see the leader as charismatic. There is also a possibility that Indian managers look at work and life as two separate entities. Therefore, values may be a reflection of their way of living while the work itself may be a separate entity. So there might be different yardsticks to measure the superior, which are a part of work life and not the values. Hence, even though there may be congruence in values, it is not reflected in the perception of charisma. There is also a possibility that subordinates and superiors will have similar reaction to work situation because of value congruence, and hence the subordinate may not see any of the superiors' action as special or charismatic.

The negative correlation between terminal value congruence and three attributed charisma factors (unconventional behavior, vision, and environmental sensitivity) may be explained by the fact that the automobile industry is characterized by strong rules, standard operating procedures, and doing things in the prescribed way only. In such an environment, any individual who is seen as resorting to unconventional behavior may be perceived negatively. In addition, as seen from the demographic profile most of the superiors are towards the higher age category and their experience in the present organization is generally more than 10 years. Hence, they are more used to thinking in the conventional way, accepting what is passed down from the top rather than creating new vision, and doing things as per the

direction of the top man rather than sensing the environment and acting accordingly. The subordinates on the other hand are in the lower age group and their experience in the present industry is low. Further, the younger generation might be generally more aware and restless about the environmental condition. They may not be bogged down by standard operating procedures and they may want to do things their own way. This may possibly be the reason behind the dichotomy between the value congruence and the three charismatic factors. This may also be the reason behind the negative correlation between instrumental value congruence and unconventional behavior.

Those who resort to unconventional behavior may not be very effective in the present organization and this may result in low self-esteem and confidence. Superiors with low self-esteem will use less of self-focused impression management strategy. They are also less likely to focus on job-focused impression management strategy. This might explain why unconventional behavior is negatively related to self-focused and job-focused impression management strategies, but not to follower-focused strategy. Indian managers might differentiate between job and person, which could explain why only job-focused impression management strategy moderates the relationship between value congruence and attributed charisma.

Limitations

Only 52 pairs of managers and subordinates comprised our sample, which limits the ability of the study to find significant correlations. In addition, the sample is from one industry and one geographical area only, and this limits the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation of the study was that impression management behavior was not manipulated and hence causality could not be established. The correlations may also have been influenced by a variety of extraneous factors, such as differences in measurement accuracy among the impression management strategies, respondent biases, and the effect of organizational structure and regulations on the values and attitudes of employees. In addition, as the superiors were asked to rate themselves, they may have been less aware of the impression management strategies that they use. The subordinates may also be less sensitive to subtler forms of charisma. The subordinates may also be biased to charisma factors that are inconsistent with role expectations. Another limitation was the low reliability of the self-focused impression management scale (Cronbach alpha=0.39).

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could possibly focus more on the value structure in work settings. The value structure that reflects work values rather than the broader value systems could be used. The value system so developed could take into consideration even the cultural and organizational factors. Another area that needs to be taken into consideration would be the effect the organizational structure and cultural traditions have on the values and the manifested behavior of employees. The importance of competence, self-esteem, and confidence of the superior could also be considered while studying the effect of value congruence. Weiss (1978) found that there is difference in the value congruence for subordinates at the opposite spectrum of self-esteem. Level of confidence and perceived competence could also affect the use of various impression management strategies and the perception of follower.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach Alphas, and Correlations between Variables

(N=52)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job-focused	3.01	0.83	(.75)									
2. Follower-focused	4.24	0.74	***.46	(.64)								
3. Self-focused	4.97	0.81	** .39	.20	(.39)							
4. Terminal congruence	0.31	0.33	.14	.07	-.07							
5. Instrumental congruence	0.31	0.28	-.06	-.14	-.04	***.51						
6. Personal risk	3.36	1.06	-.02	.05	-.10	-.11	.07	(.48)				
7. Sensitivity to others	3.78	1.08	.16	.13	-.09	-.19	-.15	***.53	(.49)			
8. Unconventional behavior	3.16	0.98	†-.26	.03	*-.32	**-.36	†-.23	***.56	** .42	(.52)		
9. Vision	3.72	0.97	.02	.03	-.10	†-.23	-.21	***.65	***.69	***.63	(.80)	
10. Environmental sensitivity	3.65	0.98	-.07	.07	-.10	*-.33	-.10	***.70	***.61	***.73	***.69	(.56)

Cronbach alphas are given in parentheses along the diagonal.

†=p<0.10. *=p<0.05. **=p<0.01. ***=p<0.001.