

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to operationalise charisma as a follower-centric phenomenon being in line with the reconceptualisation of charisma as a follower-centric multidimensional cognitive-affective phenomenon which was carried out by Jayakody in 2008. According to literature, charisma has long been known as a perceptual / attributional and an emotional phenomenon. Thereby, behavioural theory of charismatic leadership is follower-centric although it was operationalised as a leader-centric phenomenon. Furthermore, literature relating to Romance of Leadership states that followers consider positive outcomes of the organisation are results of exceptional performance of the leader hence attribute charisma to their leaders. In addition, literature denotes that leader's performance in handling crisis situations also has an impact on attribution of charisma to the leaders by their followers. Moreover according to literature, social and cultural environments also have an impact on follower perception and attribution of charisma. Thereby the objectives of this study are to identify what leader behaviours and attributes give rise to creation of cognitive and affective dimensions in the minds of the followers thereby leading to construction of charisma in relation to their leaders. Furthermore, to identify whether exceptional performance of leader, resulting positive outcomes of the organisation, has an impact on construction of charisma in the minds of the followers and to investigate the impact of handling crisis situations by the leader in follower construction of charisma in relation to their leaders.

The methodology adopted for this empirical study was qualitative multiple case study design. Study tries to bridge theoretical, methodological, empirical gaps. Grounded theory analysis tool was used as the data analysis tool. Data was first analysed as case by case basis where each organisation or each leader was analysed separately in relation to the follower perception about the leader. This was followed by a cross case analysis, where an analysis was carried out across organisations to find common patterns and trends in follower perception of leader behaviour in attributing charisma in order to arrive at generalisation. Study covered three organisations covering 17 in-depth interviews.

Findings of the study uncovered characteristics that the followers consider in attributing charismatic dimensions to their leaders. In addition followers attributed archetypes to

their respective leaders such as father, friend, teacher and also different combinations of archetypes also emerged from the study such as father friend and father teacher demonstrating that the leader played multiple roles. Furthermore, it was uncovered that followers attached the successful outcomes of the organisations to the exceptional performance of the leader considering their leader to be charismatic. In addition, it was also unearthed that leader successfully handling crisis situations was also seen by the followers as exceptional performance of the leader thus considering leader to be charismatic. Furthermore, emergent findings revealed that there is a connection between cognition and affection which leads to future research in order to explore this relationship further. Another finding that emerged from the study was that the process of ‘think-feel – act’ does not necessarily have to have the same sequence but the sequence can vary which was also referred to future studies. In addition, it was also emerged that the followers consider leaders to be role models thus learning from them which led to future research in order to investigate the connection between this and leader group prototypicality.

Limitations of the study include the followers in generally talked about positive characteristics of the leader may be due to the fear of sensitivity of the information. In addition since the candidates were highly qualified individuals thus they tend to limit themselves to basic research topic which might have the chance to miss out any important points.

Practical implications of the study include leaders being able to adopt characteristics that followers perceived to be charismatic as impression management techniques and the leaders can be trained and developed in order to adopt these qualities. However followers should be aware that these techniques can be used as impression management techniques to impress followers suppressing their own qualities which might have a tendency to surface any given time. Furthermore leaders can set themselves to be examples in developing the second layer of leaders since followers tend to emulate the leader and learn from leaders when followers become passionate about leaders.