

Charismatic Leadership – The Double Edged Sword

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Abstract: Several researches have been done in the field of leadership especially in the context of charismatic leadership. Charisma has both constructive and destructive effects on their followers. It has been hypothesized that charismatic leaders attract the followers on the basis of their trust, amazement which slowly leads to contentment where development takes place but with the passage of time this get converts into threat. Charismatic leaders use their power to control their followers. In this article several research papers survey has been analyzed to know about the aura of their leaders and to understand its positive and negative impact on followers.

Keywords: Charismatic leadership, Charisma, Followers, Positive and negative side.

1. Introduction

Charisma is the Greek word which means A Gift. Charismatic leaders are the one who speechify utilizes the high force, determination, eccentric, perilously perform and such feelings are further communicated to the followers. Followers admire such leader by showing their faith and contentment. In order to comprehend traits of Charismatic leaders the study has already started in early twentieth century with the theories of German sociologist Max Weber, the one who firstly used the term “Charismatic” for the type of leaders. He used the term traditional, rational-legal and charismatic.

A. Three stages of Charismatic leadership by Jay Conger (2015)

1) First stage

In the first stage the leader understands the environment. Here charismatic leader gets recognition. Such leader shows compassion towards the others and start attracting people emotionally. Such environment where there is no hope increases the need of Charismatic leader.

2) Second stage

The second stage includes the making of future goals. Charismatic leaders as discussed in last stage start getting recognition as being different from others. They hereby start setting objectives (Vision). The vision is further explained to the followers is most impressive way through the high positive energy, bold attitude, heroic personality of the leader. Steadily followers start feeling the connection and this vision and objective oriented philosophy is accepted by the followers while bringing it to the practice.

3) Third and final stage

Here comes the final stage of this process where followers are now aligned to perform to achieve the settled goals. The level of trust has already increased amongst leader and follower. He demonstrates his own personal example to push the followers to perform well. Finally, under the influence of leader the followers wholly contribute to achieve the settled target.

B. The Conger- Kanungo Model of Charismatic leadership

The Conger- Kanungo Model of charismatic leadership has special importance. It was created (1987,1988) and further the measurement scale was given (Conger and Kanungo, (1994; Conger et.al, 1997). As per this model the charismatic leadership is the based on the perception of the follower towards the behavior of the leader. The charismatic leaders are different from the other leaders as the have the capability to make and express their vision through their behavior and emphasis on the follower that their goal is itself magnificent to achieve. Under such influence followers tend to accept their astonishing trait of the personality (Weber 1925). This model has defined three stages of the leadership process.

The stage one this model explains the charismatic leadership with relation to two dimensions. The first is the perception of the followers to get the great change through their leader. The Second is the understanding towards the leader with context to environment opportunities. The Second stage the vision of the leader makes him different from the other leaders. The third and the last stage is the implementation stage where followers are ready to take the risks to complete their leader’s vision. No doubt this model has ignored many other relevant aspects of charismatic leadership.

C. Affirmative face of Charismatic leadership

“Positive with task performance”

The research done in (Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo,1994) where data was collected from the managers of different organizations of U.S.A and Canada. The results illustrated that charismatic leadership lead to solidarity of groups in the organization and also increase the performance of the job assigned to the employees (House, 1977; Conger and Kanungo 1988). It was statistically proved that charismatic leadership is positively related to task performance. The presence of such characteristics in managers lead to growth of

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the organization and such features can be added through proper behavioral training given to managers from time to time.

“Psychological safety”

An article (Xue Zhang, Liang Liang, Guyang Tian and Yezhuang Tian,2020) has talked about the psychological safety that follower seek fro and get attracted towards the charismatic leader. Her the followers under the guidance of the leader start feeling optimistic and motivated and lead to achievement of the goals of the organization.

D. Negative face of Charismatic leadership

The research paper where research was conducted on the basis of several case states (Evangelia Fragouli,2018) that charisma is not something God sent, it can be acquired, learnt through appropriate learning and training and if taught erroneously can lead to negative impacts as well. Very importantly said that the leadership style chosen by one has to be balanced while being a beautiful blend of all. Charisma also required to be mixed with other behavioral aspects for the growth of followers and organization both. There should be a meaningful combination of emotions and divine in one and further makes him successful l leader (Biviano, 2000).

Charisma is a process between leader and his followers where it is not just a God gift to the one. (Takala,2010). It is the affection of the followers towards the leader which is shown when they in suffering stage. This is the time relation between both takes place. In other words, this situation creates a synchronization amongst the both.

“Just the Right Place Right Time”

As stated by research of case study (Vught,2013) it is sometime the game of time. Fortunately, one appears as a charismatic as just because of the right time and right place. It is explained in several psychological researches that in catastrophe people run for charismatic leaders whom they assume as a savior whereas in normal situation the followers would not have responded the same. (Choi and Yoon, 2005).

“But Ethics and Morality”

As explained by Paschen and Dihsmailer (2014), leadership is something which is unavoidable and vital fact of our life. Also explained “leadership without morality is a recipe for disaster” (Jacobsen,2009), that states being charismatic leader it’s also important to be high in morale and ethical if not such than such leadership can create situation of calamity. The best suitable example of such found in history is Adolf Hitler of Germany, Usama Bin Laden, many other emperors of history who was influential but used threat instead of ethics to lead the followers.

It cannot be forgotten that greatest leaders of times who controlled huge number of followers were also criminals who used unethical practices. Charisma can be used as a tool to control people but it has to be used ethically.

“Tragic end”

A research has been conducted that talks about the tragic ends (Xue Zhang, Liang Liang, Guyang Tian and Yezhuang Tian,2020) where it states sometimes under the influence of the leader the followers also choose to become unethical as for them accomplishment of task and achievement of goals become

more important.

E. Rise and Fall of Charismatic leaders

The study which was done (Tamas Czovek, 2001) has discussed about several questions related to charismatic leadership as their characteristics, how do they rise and even fall with the passage of time. Is has thrown light in the leadership skills used by them. It also gives a knowledge about the transformation that takes place. As per research done such leader can only survive if he uses the acceptable norms. One such leader set up himself there starts the journey filled with obstacles. This research has talked about the presence of God’s spirit in such leaders and when such spirit misses these leaders tend to fall.

F. Impact of Charismatic leadership on followers and organization

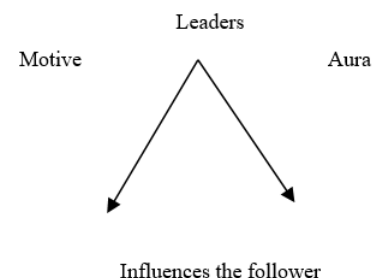
Charismatic leaders make use of power and authority and they urge for obedience from their followers. Graham (1988) has called this as “habituated followership” where followers can’t even think to ignore the order of the leader. There is an appealing relation between follower and leader where followers do get attract to the aura of the leader at first. Steadily they start showing commitment to the leader. With the passage of time some followers become suspicious whereas some remain faithful. Here in order to control the followers the leader start making use of supremacy, authority and apply force. Some leaders make use of physical damage as well. In other words, follower who was earlier attracted due to the positive aura and motive of leader now follows him under threat of physical punishment.

The theoretical model has been formed which shows the bright and the dark side of the Charismatic leadership. In this Model the Followers do get attracted to the leaders due to his positive attributes.

Whereas with the passage of the time these positive attributes soon become the negative ne where the leader wants to retain to his followers here the “charisma”

Starts get missing from the leadership.

Initial stage:



Attraction to the leader on the basis of his Positive Aura and Motive.

Fig. 1. Theoretical model

Kipnis (1976) has shown in his laboratory experiments and research that how such leaders make use of force to show their supremacy on followers and even become harsh to practice their

power. Hodgkinson (1983) said that charisma has both positive and negative effects. In other words, such leaders may go to any extent to control his followers. Many countries have made such norms a laws under democracy where they protect the followers from such power seeker leaders.

Final Stage:

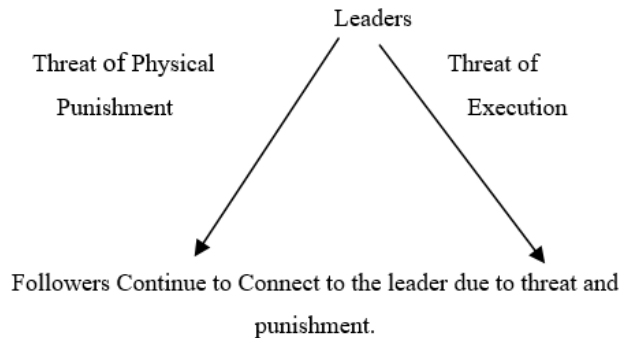


Fig. 2. Theoretical model

2. Conclusion

In nutshell Charismatic leadership is not a novel topic and several researches has been made on the same. But this research paper shows the light on the both bright and dark sides of the charismatic leaders that how through their charm they attract the followers in the beginning but soon they start showcasing their dark sides and soon after the contradict opinion towards their leader follower hardly dare to leave them and continue to follow as slave somehow. The future research could be done to highlight more personality characteristics of such leaders as their charismatic influence cannot be avoided.

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