

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Charismatic leadership and organizational commitment: An Indian perspective

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**The aim of this study is to further our understanding on the relationship of charismatic leadership and organizational commitment in Indian organization. A total of 147 employees from eastern and northern India participated in the study. Pearson correlations of the factors from the two scales were computed and revealed that five of the six Ck-factors were significantly correlated with the commitment factors. These findings indicate leader's sensitivity to member's needs is related to organizational commitment, having a clear vision and articulating it seems related to commitment, and managers need to be clear about the goals and values of the organization. The results of multiple regression analysis provide strong support for main objectives – among the two major antecedents (charismatic leadership and job satisfaction) is found to exert the strongest effect on organizational commitment of the employees of Indian organization in the study sample. Factors hypothesized to be significant predictors of organizational commitment, age and nature of job did not turn out to be significant at all.**

**Key words:** Organizational commitment, charismatic leadership, factors, employees.

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is always fascinating subject in any current job. In fact, it is the most important aspect of human behaviour. It gives a positive direction to the use of human resources and brings out the best in a man. Leadership can be broadly defined as the relationship between an individual and a group built around some common interest wherein the group behaves in a manner directed or determined by the leader.

The concept of charisma was first used to describe a special gift that select individuals possess that gives them the capacity to do extraordinary things. Weber (1974) provided the most well known definition of charisma as a special personality characteristic that gives a person superhuman or exceptional powers and is reserved for a few, is of divine origin, and results in the person being treated as a leader. Despite weber's emphasis on

charisma as a personality characteristic, he also recognized the important role played by followers in validating charisma in this leadership (Bryman, 1992; House, 1976). Further, House suggested that charismatic leadership act in unique ways that have specific charismatic effects on their follower.

For him, personal characteristics of a charismatic leader include being dominant, having a strong desire to influence others, being self confident, and having a strong sense of one's own moral values. Followers of such leaders are often radically devoted and ascribe transcendent abilities to the charismatic individual (Bass, 1985; Trice and Beyer, 1986). House et al. (1991) described the new theories describing charismatic leadership as focusing on the emotional attachment of follower to the leader; the emotional and motivational arousal of followers; identification with the mission articulated by the leader; follower's self-esteem, trust and confidence in the leader; value that are of major importance to followers; and followers intrinsic motivation. Charisma refers to the ability of a leader to exercise

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diffuse and intense influence over the beliefs, values, behaviour and performance of others through his or her own behavior, beliefs and personal example. House's theory has been extended and revised through the years (Conger, 1999; Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Bass, 1985; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). One major revision to the theory was made by Sharmir et al. (1993). They postulated that charismatic leadership transforms followers self concept and tries to link the identity of followers to the collective identity of the organization. According to Conger and Kanungo (1998) behavioural model builds upon the idea that charismatic leadership is an attribution based on the follower's perceptions of their leaders behaviours. According to this model, the leader first critically evaluates the existing situation or status quo and the inclinations, abilities, needs and level of satisfaction experienced by followers; this leads to formulation and conveyance of goals. Charismatic leaders can be distinguished from others by the strategic visions they formulate and by the manner in which they articulate them.

Conger and Kanungo (1998) developed a model of charismatic leadership which focuses on three stages of leadership process. In the first stage, the leader assesses the environment as to growth opportunities for the respective organization (sensitivity to the Environment) and carefully evaluates his /her followers' needs (sensitivity to members' needs). In the stage two the respective leader formulates a strategic vision which is constantly presented in an inspiring way (strategic vision and articulation).

Finally, in the third stage, the leader provides a role model by demonstrating personal risk and unconventional behaviour to his/her followers. By means of PR and UB, the leaders build up followers' trust and commitment (Conger et al., 1997). Vision is central to Conger and Kanungo's charismatic leadership theory. The emphasis on vision as an essential ingredient of charisma is much stronger than in the previous two theories where the charismatic leader needs to have the ability to articulate a vision among many other qualities. At subscale level, CKS classified into six scales, examples:

1. Sensitivity to the leadership: the leader assesses the environment for growth opportunities for his/her respective organization and purposes radical changes in order to achieve organizational goals.
2. Sensitivity to members' needs (SMN): the leader carefully evaluated his/her followers' needs.
3. Strategic vision and articulation (SVA): the leader formulates a strategic vision for the respective organization. It is constantly presented to followers in an inspiring way.
4. Personal risk (PR): Presenting self confidence, demonstrating belief in the potential outcome of the vision.
5. Unconventional behaviour (UB): Leaders build trust

and commitment in the followers; provides a role model for followers.

6. Does not maintain status Quo (DSQ): Leaders criticize the status quo in order to achieve organizational goal.

Conger et al. (2000) found that charismatic leader behavior directly generates in follower feeling of reverence, a sense of group collective identity, and perceptions of group task performance. To the extent that the leader's goals and values are congruent with the goal and value of organization, charismatic leader provides a strong basis for members' commitment to such goals. Both job involvement and charismatic leadership are likely to be related to organizational commitment.

### Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment has attracted considerable attention in theory and research because of its attempt to understand the intensity and stability of employee dedication to work organizations (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The literature is replete with a variety of definitions and explanations for it. This may be because, as Yoon and Thye (2002) declare, it is a broad-ranging concept that goes across many organizational and sociological domains. Nevertheless, the variety of definitions for organizational commitment with all its different measures shares a common notion that organizational commitment is a bond of the individual to his or her organization (Camilleri, 2006). One of the definition said that Organizational commitment is "the force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets" (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). An employee's commitment is a concern to all organizations because it has been linked to reduced turnover (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), increased knowledge sharing (Alvesson, 2001), increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer et al., 2002), higher acceptance of organizational change (Iverson and Buttigieg, 1999; Iverson and McLeod, 1996), ethical behaviour (Wahn, 1993) and reduced absenteeism (Eby et al., 1999). Generally, higher or lower levels of commitment have been shown to be a major driver of employees staying with or leaving an organization (Shaw et al., 1998).

People are less likely to leave their organization as the age and tenure of employees increase (Hunt et al., 1985). Other authors (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) pointed out those employees with higher levels of education show less commitment to their organization. In addition, job position, marital status, and length of service, also clearly influence employee commitment (Tsui and Cheng, 1999). The degree of employee commitment has been connected with the extent to which certain employee needs have been satisfied by the organization. However, Meyer and Allen's (1991) model has been subjected to the greatest empirical scrutiny and has received the most support from researchers (Clugston, 2000; Meyer et al.,

2004).

### **Charismatic leadership and organizational commitment**

There has been extensive research performed in the last twenty years into similar leadership theories variously referred to as charismatic (Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Hunt et al., 1999; Shamir et al., 1993), visionary leadership (Sashkin, 1988), and transformational (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1994; Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). What these theories have in common is that they focus on exceptional leaders who have extraordinary effects on their followers. In addition, these leaders cause employees to become both committed to the leader's and the organization's mission (McCann et al., 2006).

Among these, two fields of research have gained considerable interest. First, charismatic leadership (Conger and Kanungo, 1998) describes why followers identify with their respective leader. Second, within trans-formational leadership, leaders emphasize higher motive development, and arouse followers' motivation by means of creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future (Bass, 1997).

In turn, the empirical leadership literature uses the terms transformational and charismatic leadership inconsistently and interchangeably. Following the arguments made by Yukl (1999). Shamir and colleagues (Shamir et al., 1993 1998) suggest that trans-formational leaders influence organizational commitment by raising the level of intrinsic value associated with goal accomplishment and by creating a higher level of personal commitment on the part of the leader and followers to a common vision, mission, and organizational goals.

The positive effects of transformational and charismatic leadership on several organizational outcomes underscore their relevance (Bass, 1998; Yammarino et al., 1993) while these positive effects have been proven in a wide range of applied settings (Dumdum et al., 2002; Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Lowe et al., 1996). These theories examine the behaviour of leaders who are able to evoke the confidence and support of their follower, which often leads to exceptional productivity, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Tejeda et al., 2001). Charismatic leaders communicate high expectations for followers, and they exhibit confidence in follower's abilities to meet these expectation. The impact of this behaviour increases followers' sense of competence and self efficacy (avolio and Gibbons, 1998) which in turn increases their performance.

One of the critical antecedents of organizational commitment is leadership. Rowden (2000) found that charismatic leader behaviours, such as sensitivity to member needs and having a clear vision, were positively related to affective organizational commitment.

Charismatic leadership can improve employees' affective commitment (Barling et al., 1996). Moreover, transformational leadership behaviour may encourage employees in both regular and irregular ways to develop stronger employee commitment (Bass, 1985). For instance, generally, managerial leadership styles deeply affect employee attitudes of attachment to their organizations. Specifically, the leadership behaviours of employees' managers are clearly recognized as having a powerful influence on subordinate loyalty (Nijhof et al., 1998). In another study, researcher found that the principal's conduct (Coladarci, 1992), managerial activities (Zeffane, 1994) and style of management (Nijhof et al., 1998) to have significant impact on various aspects of employee commitment in different organizational settings. Bycio et al. (1995) studied the main focus of the connection between leadership and commitment and expected high correlations between transformational leadership and affective commitment. Podsakoff et al. (1996) inform about medium correlations between commitment and different dimensions of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership indirectly favour organizational outcomes which is their direct effect on subordinates' satisfaction with (Hater and Bass, 1988), and trust in (Barling et al., 1998; Podsakoff et al., 1996), their leaders, and the way in which it raises subordinates' affective commitment (Barling et al., 1996) and self-efficacy beliefs (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1993). Several studies reveal that transformational leadership had a strong and positive effect on both affective organizational commitment (Bono and Judge, 2003; Gunter, 1997; Lowe, 2000; Metscher, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2005; Bell-Roundtree, 2004) and job satisfaction (Bell-Roundtree, 2004). Barling et al. (1996) found that transformational leadership training increases the affective organizational commitment to the organization. McCroskey (2007) replicated these earlier studies with petroleum product redistributors and hedge-fund trading employees and expanded upon them by also including continuance and normative commitments. A good leader will inspire followers by enlisting them in his vision (Kouzes and Posner, 2004). Leadership is not about enforcing the leader's dream; it is about developing a shared sense of destiny (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). Research has shown that an inspired vision motivates employees (Collins, 2001; DePree, 1989; Goleman et al., 2001; Kouzes and Posner, 2002a, 2004; Shoemaker, 1999).

The results of several studies suggest that leaders who exercise charismatic/ transformational leadership practices will most likely experience higher trends for organizational commitment. Previous researches reveal that a relationship could exist between the leadership styles and subordinates' organizational commitment. Managing employee organizational commitment is important because it has been linked to reduced turnover (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), increased knowledge sharing

(Alvesson, 2001), increased organizational citizenship behaviours (Meyer et al., 2002), and reduced absenteeism (Eby et al., 1999).

## Hypothesis

On the basis of review the study hypothesized that:

1. Charismatic leadership would be positively related to organizational commitment.
2. Sensitivity to the organization (SE), Sensitivity to members' needs (SMN), Strategic Vision and articulation (SVA), Personal risk (PR) and Unconventional Behaviour (UB) would be positively related to organizational commitment. And which factor is better predictor of organizational commitment.
3. Which variable is better predictor (leadership style, personal variable, and organizational variable) of organizational commitment?

## Rationale

As organizations and their leaders have realized that, research on organizational commitment has gained importance (Colbert and Kwon, 2000) because of relationships between it and various measures of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Beck and Wilson, 2000). Managing employee organizational commitment is important because it has been linked to reduced turnover (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), increased knowledge sharing (Alvesson, 2001), increased organizational citizenship behaviours (Meyer et al., 2002), and reduced absenteeism (Eby et al., 1999). Organizational commitment has been identified as a predictor of behaviour within organizations. Secondly, the study showed that transformational leadership training increases the affective organizational commitment to the organization (Barling et al., 1996), so if the antecedent of commitment is known then, the training programmer for enhancement of manager's organizational commitment of organization can be sketched. However, there is little empirical evidence in the literature about the relationship between the charismatic leadership and followers job outcomes (organizational commitment) in Indian sample. Although, the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational commitment have been addressed (Rowden, 2000), but relationship of charismatic leadership and organizational commitment remain elusive in Indian context.

## Aim

The aim of this study is to further the understanding of the relationship of charismatic leadership and organizational commitment in Indian organization in particular. As charismatic leadership should influence values and

regard the emotional needs of subordinates, significant influences on commitment were expected in this study. In this study, different organizations (University Professors, R and D Professionals, School Teachers, Military leaders, entrepreneurial) have been taken for generalization purposes. The study also tried to explain how much charismatic leadership contributes to explain organizational commitment in comparison to other predictors; such as organizational as well as personal variables. This study will explore the research on the effects of charismatic leadership on organizational commitment and explain the leadership behaviors described by Conger and Kanungo (1994).

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Sample

The sample consisted of 147 respondents (N = 147) working at different levels in a varied organization in Eastern and northern region in India. Respondents were first given a set of written and brief verbal instructions and were informed of their anonymity. This was made clear to every respondent through request letter with questionnaire thus, respondent were not asked to give any form of identification. Data were recorded in written form and some demographic data was also collected, such as age, monthly income, length of service, nature of job and their educational background. Next, questionnaires were given and collected personally from the respondents selected randomly. Finally, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation. From a total of N = 160 respondents, 147 responded (response rate = 91.87 %). The mean age of the participants was 34.51 years and SD = 7.34 (22 - 49 years); 93.9% were male and 6.1% were female. Of the 147 Employee, 138 were male and 09 were female. There average monthly incomes were 21951 rupees (6500 - 45000) and average lengths of service were 13.78 years. Most of the respondents had spent at least two year in their organization, eight month under current organizational head or their immediate boss. The educational levels were as follows: 28% High school, 42.9% graduate, 24.5% post graduates and 4.1% were advanced technical or doctoral degree. Out of total sample 75% were married and 25% were unmarried.

### Instruments

Participants filled in the charismatic leadership scale, organizational commitment scale and job satisfaction Scale. Study variables were assessed in a questionnaire that was administered to participants individually. The questionnaires administered to participants included an introductory letter in which the purpose of the study was explained and primary data sheet. Anonymity was guaranteed, and it was made clear that analysis of the data would be at the aggregate organizational level.

### Charismatic leadership scale

This was assessed using of the 25-item Conger-Kanungo charismatic leadership questionnaire (Conger and Kanungo, 1994, 1998; for example, "influence others by developing mutual liking and respect"). Participants indicated the extent to which each statement is characteristic of their supervisor, on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (very uncharacteristic) to 6 (very characteristic). A charismatic leadership score was computed for each participant.

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviation, and correlation among studied variables.

	Mean	SD	CKS	SEN	SAE	VA	PR	UB	DSQ	JobSt	Comt
CKS	112.55	10.64	0.81								
SEN	14.28	2.29	0.62**	0.60							
SAE	33.36	3.97	0.81**	0.47**	0.69						
VA	29.40	3.40	0.71**	0.27**	0.52**	0.69					
PR	18.16	3.32	0.75**	0.60**	0.55**	0.44**	0.82				
UB	11.59	3.07	0.35**	0.06	0.11	0.09	-0.07	0.64			
DSQ	5.73	1.92	-0.02	-0.32**	-0.19*	-0.12	-0.08	-0.05	0.56		
Jobsat	14.79	3.53	0.32**	0.39**	0.23**	0.08	0.40**	0.16	-0.26**	0.65	
Comit	48.75	5.15	0.45**	0.39**	0.42**	0.15	0.31**	0.20*	0.04	0.53**	0.81

Cronbach alpha is in parenthesis along diagonal. \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Organizational commitment scale

It has been measured with eleven item scale adopted from Mowday et al. (1979; for example, It was found that the study values and the organizations values are similar). This scale measures the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization on 7- point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach alpha of the fifteen item scale is calculated as 0.93.

### Job satisfaction scale

It has been measured with three-item scale adopted from Brayfield and Rothe (1951; for example, "I enjoy my work more than my leisure time", "overall I feel fairly satisfied with my present job"). Participants responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach alpha of this test is 0.77.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive statistics

The means, standard deviations, and Inter-correlations among study variables are presented in Table 1. Table indicates that the arithmetic mean for the organizational commitment of the sample is 48.75 with a standard deviation of 5.15.

Based on the fact that an average level of organizational commitment, as measured by the organizational commitment (OC) Scale, would be represented by a mean of approximately 38. Table 2 also indicates that the mean for Job satisfaction and charismatic leadership behaviour of the sample is 14.79 and 112.55, respectively with a SD of 3.53 and 10.64.

It may be concluded that the overall organizational commitment and Job satisfaction of the sample is relatively above average. It may be concluded that the overall employee showing that they are satisfied and committed towards their job due to their leader who displayed charismatic leadership behaviour.

Charismatic leadership behaviour, other five dimensions

of CKS, organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction show satisfactory  $\alpha$ -levels (Table 1). The study therefore, assumes that the results are based on reliable construct assessment. The analysis revealed that 7 of the 8 variables were statistically significant variables of organizational commitment. Moreover, both charismatic leadership and Job satisfaction of these independent variables affected the dependent variable, supported research hypothesis. A significantly positive relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational commitment (0.45) was also confirmed by the study results (Hypothesis 1).

The first hypothesis tested the relationship between the charismatic leadership and organizational commitment. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.45 was significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that charismatic leadership is positively related to organizational commitment. Rowden (2000) finds that charismatic leadership highly correlated with organizational commitment. The study finding also supported the above notion.

Further, finding revealed that five of the six C-K factors were significantly correlated with the organizational commitment (Hypothesis 2). These findings indicate leader's sensitivity to member's needs is related to organizational commitment, having a clear vision and articulating it seems related to commitment, and managers need to be clear about the goals and values of the organization. Sensitivity to the organization or environment (SAE) dimension is better predictor of organizational commitment (Table 3 and Hypothesis 2). Table 3 indicates that the multiple correlations among the 7 variables and organizational commitment are 0.67, as indicated by Multiple R. On the basis of R square value of 0.44, it we can deduce that only 44% of the variance in organizational commitment can be accounted for by these seven variables. The F-statistic of 15.72 at 7 and 139 degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the 0.001 levels. On the basis, it may be concluded that the seven variables of charismatic leadership, job satisfaction, age, educational background, length of service, nature of job and gender

**Table 2.** Regression analyses among dimension of CKS and OC.

	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)		5.042	0.000
SEN	0.300	3.103	0.002
SAE	0.355	3.732	0.000
VA	-0.110	-1.280	0.203
PR	0.016	0.151	0.880
UB	0.152	2.074	0.040
DSQ	0.205	2.672	0.008

A dependent variable: Commitment.

of dependents together significantly explains 44% of the variance in organizational commitment. It should be noted, however, that the variance accounted for by these seven variables is average, with the remaining 54% of the variance being explained by factors other than those considered.

Table 3 depict that, when the other variables are controlled, five of the variables are significant. With a Beta-value of 0.38 for charismatic leadership and 0.42 for job satisfaction level reaches statistical significance at the 0.001 and is the best significant predictor of organizational commitment. Moreover, the fact that both job satisfaction (0.42,  $p < 0.001$ ) and charismatic leadership (0.38,  $p < 0.001$ ) carry positive Beta weights which suggests that positive relationships exist between these two variables and organizational commitment of the employees in organization.

Nature of job, with an obtained Beta-value of only -0.09, is the poorest predictor of organizational commitment. Length of service and gender of employee also reaches (Beta values are 0.27 and 0.23) statistically significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, it indicates that organizational commitment of employees is also affected by gender and length of service of employee. On the basis hereof, it may thus, be concluded that while charismatic leadership and job satisfaction are significant predictors of organizational commitment. Age, educational background and nature of job do not predict organizational commitment based on the sample of employees (hypothesis 3).

Findings supported the prediction that charismatic leadership was positively related to identification and attachment of the organization providing evidence that leadership is a process strictly linked to group membership and related processes (Hogg et al., 2003; Van Knippenberg and Van Shie, 2000). Also, results confirm the existence of a relationship between charismatic leadership and the organizational outcomes considered: Job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intention (Bass et al., 2003; Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Conger et al., 2000; Pillai and Williams, 2004; Shamir et al., 1993). From a leadership viewpoint, these results are

**Table 3.** Multiple Regression – Seven variables and organizational commitment.

Multiple R	0.67		
R Square	0.44		
Adjusted R square	0.41		
Standard error	3.95		
<b>Degrees of freedom</b>			
Regression	7		
Residual	139		
F	15.72		
Sign F	0.001		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig T</b>
CKS	0.38	5.02	0.001
Job satisfaction	0.42	5.83	0.001
Age	-0.33	-2.01	0.04
Edu	0.18	2.2	0.02
Length of service	0.27	1.94	0.05
Nature of job	-0.09	-0.17	0.24
Gender	0.23	3.2	0.002

aligned with the definition of charismatic aspects that heighten the sense of collective identity (Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; House, 1977, 1999; Shamir et al., 1993); this contribution allows further confirmation that the group membership dimension is relevant to a better understanding of complex organizational processes like leadership and its outcomes (Hogg and Van Knippenberg, 2003).

A final aim of the study was to examine the impact of charismatic leadership behaviour, other variables (organizational and personal) on organizational commitment. The study finding stabilized that people tend to be more satisfied and if their leader displays charismatic behaviour then they are more committed to their organization. This study may also be helpful in understanding and re-looking at antecedents of organizational commitment.

This study has direct implications for today's industrial world for the strategic role of leaders or officers as change agents in organizations. Turnover rates are skyrocketing, and employees are moving from one organization to another in rapid succession taking with them the entire organizational learning. To curtail this huge loss of human capital, it is necessary for an organization to know which work beliefs to tap to increase employees' attachment to the organization and the motivation to work for the organization.

## LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION

The paper admit that this research has some limitations.

The first one to note is that a causality relation cannot be inferred due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, although, it is one of the most-used methods in applied and field psychological research (especially in organizations, Spector, 1994). Future investigations, then, should adopt an experimental or longitudinal design. The data used in the study were acquired using the same questionnaire and this procedure might have led to common method bias that might have inflated the relationship among factors. A second one is represented by the fact that the criteria variables have been assessed by paper-and-pencil self-report measures, which may reflect participants' perceptions rather than objective realities. However, some of the analyzed variables (for example, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, etc.) pertain exclusively to individuals' perceptions and feelings, so only a few of these measures (for instance leadership behavior and performance) should be assessed through actual behaviours and more objective measures in order to substantiate the results obtained. In the current study, the findings may prove useful for guiding future research.

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