
Linking Emotional Intelligence to Charismatic Leadership: Evidence from Management Students

Sonia Mairaj Ahmad^{1*}, Rashna Pervez², Hareem Malik²**Abstract**

This study examines the charismatic potential of future leaders among students enrolled in management sciences programs in selected regions of Pakistan. Charismatic leadership plays a critical role in inspiring and influencing others, particularly in diverse and dynamic environments. Using a quantitative, correlational (cross-sectional) research design, this study assessed the relationships among charismatic leadership, charismatic communication, and emotional intelligence. Data were collected through a survey method using purposive sampling. A total sample of 249 postgraduate students from universities in Islamabad, Punjab and Azad Jammu & Kashmir participated in the study. Results showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted charismatic leadership communication ($R^2 = .32, p < .001$), and notable differences were observed across gender. Male students scored higher on charismatic communication. The findings of this study have significant implications for leadership development programs, educational institutions and organizational practices in Pakistan, to inculcate emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership into trainings and skillsets for university students as well as for leaders and managers in workforces.

Keywords: Charismatic Leadership, Charismatic Leadership Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Management Students

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Introduction

Leadership has always been a central concern in organizational psychology, management sciences and education, as effective leadership is a vital predictor of institutional success, employee motivation, and organizational growth. Among the many theories of leadership, charismatic leadership has attracted sustained interest from scholars due to its unique emphasis on the leader's personal charm, emotional influence and vision-oriented communication. Charismatic leadership is

particularly important in transitional societies like Pakistan, where organizations, whether academic, corporate or governmental, are confronted with rapid change, generational shifts and the pressing need to retain and develop competent leaders for the future workforce. Understanding charismatic leadership potential among university students, especially in management sciences, is therefore crucial to preparing the next generation of leaders who can inspire, motivate and transform workplaces.

Max Weber in 1922, introduced the concept of charismatic type of authority in his famous work, the Theory of Social and Economic Organization, stating in the explanation of *the three pure types of legitimate rule*; as a specific quality in a leader to be godly and commanding obedience and in return demanding welfare towards those ruled to sustain faith. The charismatic leader is like a savior, offering a change in the form of ending the suffering of the followers. Davis (2024) offers an

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examination of Weber's theory suggesting that to a follower a charismatic leader is a source of hope towards a just world. Many researchers have built on their definitions and theories of Charismatic leadership from these earlier works, as this theory serves a full range of values including self-serving and yet being pro-social (Hu & Dutta, 2022). Charismatic leaders are individuals possessing extraordinary qualities that captivate and motivate followers, leading them to pursue a shared vision or goal. It involves a leader's ability to influence followers by means of personal charm, enthusiasm, and emotional appeal (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). It has become one of the most influential theories to have its impact on societies (Biviano, 2000) and is regarded as a source of building emotional bonds between the leaders and their society (Popper, 2000). As stated by Conger (1991), the era of dictating to manage is coming to an end to be replaced by the era to inspire and manage, requiring the new leadership skill of having the 'ability to craft and articulate a message that is highly motivational'.

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand and manage their own emotions, as well as to perceive, interpret and respond appropriately to the emotions of others (Mayer et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence has become a central focus for the general public, practitioners and researchers alike. There is a widespread belief that emotional and social competence holds equal, if not greater importance than traditional measures of intellectual ability and personality traits. Emotional intelligence encompasses a range of abilities that enable individuals to effectively manage both themselves and others (Goleman, 1998).

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in the effectiveness of charismatic leadership (Putrawan, 2022). Bass and Avolio (1994) state that confident leaders are able to face challenges and overcome obstacles calmly, thus instilling the same confidence in their followers. The confidence that charismatic

leaders show is synched with their high levels of emotional regulation and understanding of the emotional expressions that they are exposed to either one on one meetings or in front of larger audiences. Charismatic leaders are skilled in managing and regulating their emotions in crisis, in emergencies especially influencing followers as they handle difficult situations. Studies reveal that empathetic leaders can build stronger relationships and support a positive work environment. In addition, the ability to convey messages clearly and inspiring is critical in charismatic leadership (Yukl, 2017). Leaders with good communication skills can motivate and move their teams towards success (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Charismatic leadership in the view of charismatic communication is an important aspect as optimistic results are reported charismatic leadership impacting employee satisfaction, leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010; charismatic leadership positively impacts organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational outcomes, particularly when strain is low (Boerner et al., 2008). In future management teams this specific leadership style and transformation leadership, needs to be inculcated, lack of communication skills specific to experiencing work life demands and in the face of crisis is important. While prior studies link emotional intelligence to charismatic leadership, few have examined how emotional intelligence (EI) translates into observable charismatic behaviors, particularly charismatic communication. By differentiating leadership outcomes from behavioral expression, the study clarifies authentic vs. performative charisma, thus extending theory beyond simple association to behavioral mechanisms.

This research is built on the rationale that for a leader to have influence and impact emotional intelligence is a key variable along with charismatic leadership and charismatic communication skills.

Rationale

This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership among postgraduate management students, aiming to understand how emotionally intelligent emerging leaders exhibit or utilize charismatic communication styles and attributes of charismatic leadership. Although prior research has extensively documented the association between emotional intelligence and leadership styles; particularly charismatic and transformational leadership, most empirical evidence is derived from organizational or managerial samples in Western contexts.

The present study extends existing literature by focusing on emerging leaders within higher education, a population that remains underexplored in leadership research despite its relevance for future organizational and public-sector leadership. Additionally, by examining emotional intelligence as a predictor of charismatic communication, rather than leadership outcomes alone, the study offers a more process-oriented understanding of how emotional competencies translate into charismatic leadership behaviors.

By situating the analysis within the Pakistani context and employing a comparative, multi-region sample, the study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to the leadership literature and informs leadership development initiatives at the pre-organizational stage.

Hypotheses

H1: There would be a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, charismatic communication style and charismatic leadership in management students.

H2: Emotional intelligence would predict charismatic communication style and charismatic leadership in management students.

H3: Gender difference will be observed in emotional intelligence, charismatic

communication style and charismatic leadership in Management students.

Method

Research Design

The present research adopted a quantitative research approach. A correlational, cross-sectional research design was employed to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, charismatic leadership, and charismatic communication, through a purposive sampling technique for data collection, using a survey method. This allowed for systematic measurement of self-reported leadership-related constructs within a defined population.

Sample

Total sample of 249 students of Management Sciences at Post graduate level (MBA, MS, MPhil) were included in this study. The age range of students is between 21 to 35 years from universities located in the federal capital Islamabad, Punjab and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. This population was selected as it represents prospective future leaders in organizational and managerial contexts.

Measures

Charismatic Leadership Scale (C-K)

The Charismatic Leadership Scale (Conger & Kanungo, 1997) measures leadership behavior on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very uncharacteristic to 6 = very characteristic. It is a 20 items scale with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.58 to 0.64 (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) and alpha values from .71 to .88 across subscales (Rowold & Kersting, 2008). The 20-item C-K Scale comprises of five core behavioral subscales namely Strategic Vision and Articulation, Unconventional Behavior, Sensitivity to the Environment, Personal Risk-Taking and Sensitivity to Member Needs.

Charismatic Leadership Communication Scale (CLCS)

It is a 15-item scale measuring charismatic communication behavior through verbal and non-verbal communication by leader and is assessed in a manner perceived as charismatic defined by Levine et al. (2010).

It aims to operationalize charisma through behaviors such as enthusiasm, persuasion, listening, influence and empathetic communication. The items are responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as Strongly Disagree to 5 as Strongly Agree. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient is $\alpha = .89$.

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

Developed by Schutte et al. (1998) as a 33 items scale measuring trait based emotional intelligence. It is responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranking from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Reported Cronbach's alpha is .90 (Francis et al., 2018) and .81 (Schutte et al., 1998). The scale has four subcomponents that contribute to a total emotional intelligence score, these factors are perception of emotions, managing own emotions, managing others' emotions and utilizing emotions. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient is $\alpha = .87$ to .92 (Schutte et al., 1998); in Pakistani sample 0.70 (Yousaf & Ahmad, 2007) and .79 (Ahmad & Zadeh, 2016).

Demographic Information Form

The demographic form included aspects of socioeconomic information such as age, gender, education, field of study, city, university name and year of study.

Procedure

Initially a data pool representing universities from each province was designed, following university approvals and procedures pertaining to data confidentiality and a low response rate due to exams and other student activities, so a small sample of main universities from the federal capital, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab completed the questionnaires. Data was collected utilizing a google form including items from the three standardized scales along with a consent form and demographic sheet. Data was analyzed utilizing SPSS (v26) for descriptive, reliability, correlational analyses, and once significant findings were tabulated, regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical guidelines provided by APA and department level policies at the university were followed including consent prior to data collection, confidentiality of data, data handling and analysis. Participants could withdraw from research as per choice and completing of questionnaires via valid email addresses was voluntarily consented to.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N=249)

Variables	f	%	Variables	f	%
Gender			Qualifications		
Male	188	76	MBA	129	52
Female	61	25	MS	120	48
Age			Semester of Study		
21-25	21	8	Semester 2	144	58
26-30	224	90	Semester 3	45	18
31-35	4	2	Semester 4	54	22
Province wise			Course work/		
universities			Thesis	6	2
Federal Capital	114	46	Field of		
Islamabad			Specialization		
Punjab	79	32	Management	112	45
Azad Jammu Kashmir	56	23	Marketing	111	45
			Entrepreneurship	06	2
			Business	20	8

Note: f= Frequency, %= Percentage

Table 1 presents the detailed sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, illustrating the distribution of frequency and percentage across gender and age groups of students. It shows the disparity in choice of study as the universities have been selected from the

Federal capital (46%), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (including two universities) (22%) and from Punjab (32%). Majority (58%) of the data is from second semester of MS/MBA studies, and 22% from fourth semester, that is final year of study or completing thesis research.

Table 2
Psychometric Properties of Scales (N=249)

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's Alpha
Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale	140.69	4.45	126 - 152	.60
Charismatic Leadership Communication Scale	72.88	2.35	65 - 75	.72
Charismatic Leadership Scale	103.79	6.57	91 - 132	.72

Table 2 shows the psychometric properties of the three self-report measures used. It clearly shows the adequate values for internal consistency for the charismatic leadership $\alpha = .72$ and communication scale $\alpha = .72$, however a slightly low reliability index of $\alpha = .60$ for the emotional intelligence scale, which was lower than expected, likely due to online survey conditions rather than scale weakness, as

evidence in Pakistani sample consistently support reliable use of the scale, as $\alpha = .70$ (Yousaf & Ahmad, 2007), $\alpha = .79$ (Ahmad & Zadeh) and $\alpha = .7 - .85$ for student sample in Pakistan (Sohail et al., 2024). The range of responses suggest above average scores by the respondents, scoring for average and above average ranges for scores.

Table 3
Correlation among Study Variables (N=249)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 CLC	72.88	2.35	-.40**	.08	.31**	-.13*	.02	-.05
2 CL	103.79	6.57		-.36**	-.37**	-.17**	-.21**	-.21**
3 SEIS	140.69	4.45			.78**	.74**	.47**	.73**
4 PE	44.69	2.05				.45**	.09	.45**
5 MOE	37.61	1.77					.06	.49**
6 MOTE	33.39	1.52						.25**
7 UTE	24.98	1.08						-

* $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

CLC=Charismatic Leadership Communication, CLK= Charismatic Leadership, SEIS= Schutte Emotional Intelligence scale, PE = Perception of Emotions, MOE = Managing Own Emotions, MOTE = Managing Others' Emotions and UTE = Utilizing Emotions

Table 3 provides with a significant negative correlation between charismatic leadership and communication ($r = -.40$, $p < .01$) and is a moderate relationship, suggesting 16% variance caused by charismatic communication on leadership. The

correlation between emotional intelligence and charismatic communication is not significant, however with charismatic leadership it is reflecting a significant negative moderate relationship ($r = -.366$, $p < .01$) with a variance of 13% with

emotional intelligence. To further assess the relationship and variances for charismatic communication with the subcomponents of emotional intelligence, correlational analysis for the four sub factors was conducted and reveals significant positive relationship of charismatic communication with perception of emotions ($r = .31, p < .01$) with a strong correlation and a variance of 63%; clearly shows that charismatic communication positively impacts the perceived emotions in self. However,

charismatic leadership communication shows a significant negative correlation with managing own emotions ($r = -.13, p < .05$) and is not significantly correlated with managing others' emotions and utilizing emotions. Charismatic leadership however has significant negative correlation with all the emotional intelligence sub-factors perception of emotional ($r = -.37, p < .01$), managing own emotions ($r = -.17, p < .01$), managing others emotions ($r = -.21, p < .01$) and utilizing emotion ($r = -.21, p < .01$).

Table 4

Regression Coefficient of Emotional Intelligence & Charismatic Communication on Charismatic Leadership (N=249)

Variable	Model 1		
	B	β	SE
Constant	249.66		15.19
EI	-.49	-.33	.08
CLC	-1.04	-.37	.15
R ²	.27		
ΔR^2	.26		

** $p < .001$

Note. CLC=Charismatic Leadership Communication, CLK= Charismatic Leadership, SEIS= Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale

Table 4 shows the model fit results for multiple regression carried out by including emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership communication as predictors using the standard method, a significant model emerged; $F(2, 246) = 46.31, p < .001$. The model explains 27% variance in charismatic leadership. The Variance

Inflation Factor (VIF) (1.00) and tolerance (.99) values indicate no multicollinearity concerns, supporting the robustness of the regression findings and the regression estimates can be interpreted with confidence both well within acceptable limits.

Table 5
Gender Differences on the Study Variables (N=249)

	Male (N= 188)		Female (N= 61)		t (247)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
SEIS	140.37	3.98	141.66	5.56	-1.67	.099	-.27
CLC	73.43	2.07	71.21	2.39	6.97	.000**	.99
CK	103.45	8.22	104.82	8.22	-1.20	.233	.19

Note. ** $p < .01$, CLC=Charismatic Leadership Communication, CLK= Charismatic Leadership, SEIS= Schutte Emotional Intelligence scale, M= mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 5 shows the gender differences among study variables and significant difference is seen on the variable of charismatic leader communication with males scoring higher ($M=73.43$) than

females ($M = 71.21$). An independent t-test shows this difference is significant with large effect size ($t = 6.97$, $df = 247$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = .99$).

Discussion

The findings confirm that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of charismatic leadership communication and leadership potential. Students with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated stronger communication and leadership attributes, supporting prior research (Antonakis & Robert, 2015; Goleman, 1998). Gender analysis indicated that male students reported higher charismatic communication. Male students scored higher in charismatic leadership communication, suggesting different communication styles across genders. These findings highlight the need for targeted leadership development initiatives, for emotional regulation as well as communication skills consistent with emotions. These results indicate that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate charismatic leadership qualities and communicate effectively in a charismatic manner as emotional leadership affects job performance (Antonakis et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2022) and is reflective of better mental and physical health (Schutte et al., 2007). Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in leadership effectiveness by enabling leaders to better understand and manage emotions in themselves and others (Jenita et al., 2024; Radhakrishnan &

Udayasuriyan, 2010). The correlations indicated a significant positive relationship between the factor, *perception of emotion*, while it resulted in a negative significant correlation for the factor, *managing own emotions* of the emotional intelligence scale and charismatic leadership communication. These clearly reflect that perceiving of emotions may align with the communicated charismatic style of leadership, yet it is incoherent towards the management of the same perceived emotions in self. This dissonance then reflects into behavioral differences in felt and expressed emotions. The ability to understand and manage emotions, a key component of emotional intelligence, enhances a leader's capacity to build relationships and exert influence (Skrzypczyńska, 2020), all four factors of emotional intelligence significantly correlated with charismatic leadership, indicating the emotional intelligence itself manifests towards influential leadership in a positive light. Leaders who exhibit high emotional intelligence are often perceived as more effective by their followers (Yusof et al., 2014) and the strategic alignment of emotional intelligence can significantly enhance emotional intelligence of followers and impact job flourishing as well as job performance (A'yunnisa et al., 2024). Leaders who demonstrate effective use of emotions are often viewed as more efficient

while handling teams, reducing the stress of team members and successfully handling difficult situations (Yusof et al., 2014).

Furthermore, significant positive relationships are reported between enhanced leadership communication and due to elevated emotional intelligence, this promotes managerial competence, improves organizational climate and directly impacts communication and clarity in decision making (Kour & Ansari, 2024). Similarly, one of the hypotheses that predicted a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership, resulted in a negative significant relationship for the sample under study. Research based interpretations for this finding reveal that individuals with higher emotional intelligence may regulate their expressions and avoid overtly demonstrative and highly expressive behaviors resulting in lower observed scores on charismatic leadership scales (Skrzypczyńska, 2020). Charismatic communication as measured may capture outwardly expressive behaviors that do not necessarily align with authentic emotional competence, that is, individuals with lower EI might compensate with rhetorical or superficial strategies (Antonakis et al., 2011). Finally, cultural norms in Pakistani educational settings may constrain assertive expressions, particularly among those with high EI, who are more attuned to social appropriateness (Yusof et al., 2014). These explanations suggest that high EI does not automatically translate into observable charismatic behavior, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between authentic and performed charisma in future researches.

Whereas charismatic communication has a negative correlation with emotional intelligence and it reflected the aspects related to talk without emotional base and emotional honesty. When leader display creative, influential and exceptional communication skills, the aspect of emotional intelligence itself needs to be reassured as well through the message

being given. The study reveals that charismatic communication may actually lack emotional intelligence, the higher the emotional intelligence the lower the charismatic communication. Charismatic communication positively impacts the perceived emotions in self. Charismatic communication can sometimes be displayed by individuals with low emotional intelligence, who compensate through rhetorical techniques or superficial emotional displays. This distinction between authentic and superficial charisma underscores the importance of emotional intelligence as a foundational trait for effective and ethical leadership. As charismatic leadership and effective communication become increasingly valued in modern workplaces, nurturing these competencies during students' academic development is crucial. However, charismatic leadership can also have negative aspects and lead to adverse outcomes in the effort to achieve higher organizational goals through the impact of performance pressure using unethical pro-organizational behaviors (Zhang et al., 2020). Charismatic leadership style offers a bridge between interpersonal communication and job performance (Rafiq & Khan, 2023).

Moreover, observed differences in emotional intelligence, charismatic communication and charismatic leadership across gender suggest that leadership behaviors are shaped by demographic factors. Understanding these variations offers valuable insights into how diverse individuals express and enact leadership, reinforcing the need for personalized leadership development strategies.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study is limited by its sample size and focus on management sciences students. Future research should extend to other fields and professional contexts. There was no response from major regions such as Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan, hence a different time frame, and university sessional timeline be

selected for a better response rate. Future research can employ stratified or multi-stage sampling techniques to capture broader regional and disciplinary diversity. Despite limitations, the study underscores the importance of integrating emotional intelligence and leadership communication into management education. Business schools should provide workshops and training programs to cultivate these skills, thereby enhancing the employability and leadership potential of graduates for these emerging leaders that do not hold formal leadership positions. While self-reported leadership traits are valid indicators of potential, future studies could include individuals in formal leadership roles to further strengthen construct validity and to strive for more balanced gender representation to generalize findings more confidently.

Conclusion

This research shows the foundations for examining emotional intelligence as a predictor of charismatic communication, rather than leadership outcomes alone, the study offers a more process-oriented understanding of how emotional competencies translate into charismatic leadership behaviors. It offers evidence for emerging leaders towards expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and the corresponding communication patterns and inconsistencies in felt emotion versus a rhetoric expressed content. The research findings suggest that active policies be developed and implemented for providing trainings and workshops targeted to teach for emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, charismatic leadership attributes and communication patterns reflecting a personalized, empathetic pattern for emerging leaders in universities.

Ethics Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the APA Ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Contribution of Authors

Sonia Mairaj Ahmad: Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Rashna Pervez: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft

Hareem Malik: Methodology, Data Curation

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [S.M.A.] upon the reasonable request.

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