



The Mediator Role of Student Engagement in the Relationship between Charismatic Leadership and Student Learning Performance

Akram M. Alhamad¹, Ayoub Ali Makhlu Abuketaba², Abdullah Mahfoud Salem Baadhem³

^{1,2} Faculty of Business, Karabuk University, Turkey.

³ Faculty of Business and communication, University Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.

Emails: akramalhamad@karabuk.edu.tr¹, ayuob3672@gmail.com², abdullahmahfoudh@unimap.edu.my³

Article history

Received: 28 March 2024

Accepted: 11 April 2024

Published: 27 April 2024

Keywords:

Student Engagement,
Charismatic Leadership,
Student Learning
Performance.

Abstract

In this study, we look at the connection between charismatic leadership and students' ability to learn in a university setting, specifically at the mediating function of student engagement. This research examines how charismatic leaders motivate their students to achieve academic excellence by creating an environment of engagement and commitment, using theoretical frameworks from organizational psychology and educational leadership. The research takes a quantitative tack by analysing survey responses from a cross-section of undergraduates majoring in different fields. A survey will be administered to students in Libya to collect the data. It is challenging to create focused interventions to improve academic outcomes due to the lack of data showing how student engagement may mediate this relationship. Leadership development programs can be better designed and implemented to maximize student outcomes if we better understand how charismatic leadership impacts student engagement, which impacts learning performance. This study can help educational leaders create more engaging and successful learning environments by outlining how charismatic leadership affects student outcomes. Examining how student engagement mediates the connection between charismatic leadership and academic achievement is the overarching goal of this study. This study examines the relationship between charismatic leadership and student performance in the classroom by using rigorous quantitative methods to determine how much student engagement moderates this relationship.

1. Introduction

Several educational leadership styles have been studied to see how they affect student results (Banks et al., 2017; Grabo et al., 2017). Researchers have tried to figure out how various leadership styles, such as transactional and transformational leadership, [1] affect student engagement and performance in the classroom, and one of these leadership styles that has caught people's attention is charismatic leadership (Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016; Tucker, 2017; Fragouli, 2018). The capacity to inspire and motivate followers through charisma,

vision for the future, and the expression of common objectives is central to Weber's [3-11] theory of charismatic leadership (Antonakis et al., 2022; Horn et al., 2021). Those in positions of authority in educational institutions often take charismatic leaders for granted; they are heroes to students and teachers for their ability to see and implement the big picture (Grabo & van Vugt, 2016; Calás, 2019). The educational community can benefit from charismatic leaders who inspire others to work together toward common goals by sharing their

inspiring vision and tirelessly advocating for change (Sy et al., 2018; Jamal & Abu Bakar, 2017). Connecting with followers emotionally and going beyond conventional hierarchical structures makes charismatic leadership appealing (Meslec et al., 2020; Ackerman, 2019). Charismatic leadership is more effective at inspiring followers to do their best because it appeals to their emotions rather than logic. Unlike more traditional forms of leadership, charismatic leaders have a gift for appealing to their follower's deepest desires and ideals, inspiring them to go above and beyond in their work (Grabo et al., 2017; Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016). Charismatic leadership may seem like a good fit for educational settings, but little data shows how it affects student outcomes (Banks et al., 2017; Tucker, 2017). There are many anecdotal tales of charismatic leaders who turned around failing schools, but there needs to be more research to back up these claims and explain what is going on (Horn et al., 2021; Sy et al., 2018). Even though charismatic leadership has been acknowledged as having the ability to improve educational settings, little is known about the exact mechanisms by which it affects students ability to learn (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023; Kim et al., 2023). It is challenging to create focused interventions to improve academic outcomes due to the lack of data showing how student engagement may mediate this relationship (Mainwood & Mainwood, 2022; Chan, 2023). There are substantial policy and practice implications for education in resolving this gap. Educational leaders and practitioners can benefit from this research by learning more about the mediating role of student engagement (Mudrikah et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2022). Leadership development programs can be better designed and implemented to maximize student outcomes if we better understand how charismatic leadership impacts student engagement, which impacts learning performance (Ma & Luo, 2022; Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). This research investigates the mediator role of student engagement in the relationship between charismatic leadership and student learning performance. This study examines the relationship between charismatic leadership and student performance in the classroom by using rigorous quantitative methods to determine how much student engagement moderates this relationship. It is anticipated that the results of this study will have

a substantial impact on theoretical knowledge as well as real-world application in the field of educational leadership. This research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge and offer a detailed framework for improving educational practices by revealing the complex relationships between leadership, student engagement, and learning performance.

2. Literature Review and Proposition Development

2.1 Student Engagement

Student engagement is a complex concept that includes students cognitive, emotional, and behavioral educational investments (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017; Groccia, 2018). It reflects how much students care about and put into their education, as shown by their focus, excitement, and dedication to learning objectives and processes (Reschly & Christenson, 2022; Lei et al., 2018). Teachers and lawmakers must fully grasp student engagement to comprehend its significance concerning retention rates, academic success, and student's general welfare (Fredricks et al., 2019; Matthews, 2016). The level of mental investment and effort students put into their learning activities is called cognitive engagement (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Barkley & Major, 2020). It is about thinking critically, solving problems, and contributing to class discussions and assignments. Students show cognitive engagement when they are open to learning new things, thinking critically about old ideas, and finding practical ways to practice what they have learned (Fredricks et al., 2016; Harrington et al., 2021). Methods of teaching that encourage in-depth knowledge acquisition, such as guided inquiry, group work, and self-reflection, increase students cognitive engagement (Payne, 2019; Bond & Bedenlier, 2019). When emotionally invested in their learning, students react meaningfully to the classroom setting and the material covered (Groccia, 2018; Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017). It encompasses emotions related to a desire to learn, pleasure in learning, and excitement about the subject matter (Lei et al., 2018; Reschly & Christenson, 2022). When emotionally invested in their learning, students are more likely to take an optimistic view of their coursework, have strong feelings of belonging at school, and are highly motivated to succeed academically (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Fredricks et

al., 2016). Teachers can significantly influence their student's emotional engagement by developing strong relationships with them, recognizing their interests and strengths, and creating a welcoming classroom environment (Harrington et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2016). All the things students do that show interest and are involved with their learning are part of behavioral engagement. All students are expected to be present in class, contribute to group work, finish all assignments, and follow all classroom policies and procedures (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Matthews, 2016). Students who exhibit behavioral engagement are enthusiastic about learning and are prepared to do the necessary work to succeed academically (Lei et al., 2018; Reschly & Christenson, 2022). Teachers can encourage students to actively participate in class by outlining specific goals and objectives, creating safe spaces for students to work independently, and publicly acknowledging and rewarding good work (Matthews, 2016; Fredricks et al., 2016).

2.2 Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leadership is characterized by the capacity to inspire, motivate, and influence followers through charisma, vision for the future, and persuasive communication abilities (Grabo et al., 2017; Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016). Charismatic leaders captivate and inspire their followers with the power of their character and the captivating allure of their vision, unlike other types of leadership that depend on force, compulsion, or transactional exchanges (Tucker, 2017; Fragouli, 2018). The charisma of the leader is central to charismatic leadership. The sociologist Max Weber originally proposed the term "charismatic personality" to describe a "certain quality of an individual personality under which they are set apart from ordinary people and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Antonakis et al., 2022; Horn et al., 2021). Leaders with charisma enchant and motivate people around them with their magnetic presence and commanding presence. Their convictions, energy, and self-assurance inspire others to pursue their vision (Grabo & van Vugt, 2016; Calás, 2019). A charismatic leader can inspire followers by vividly depicting the future. The ideals, beliefs, and ambitions of those who follow a charismatic leader are reflected in their vision for a better tomorrow

(Sy et al., 2018; Jamal & Abu Bakar, 2017). Their passionate and convincing communication of this vision invites others to realize it by creating a clear picture of the opportunities that await (Meslec et al., 2020; Ackerman, 2019). What distinguishes charismatic leaders from more conventional forms of leadership is the way they act in ways that are either revolutionary or out of the ordinary. They embody a spirit of innovation and change, challenging the status quo and questioning existing norms and conventions (Banks et al., 2017; Grabo et al., 2017). Charismatic leaders motivate their followers to abandon the limitations of the past and seize the opportunities of the future by having the courage to dream big and think creatively (Ackerman, 2019; Horn et al., 2021).

2.3 Student Learning Performance

"Student learning performance" describes how well students in a specific educational setting demonstrate competence with course material, skills, and competencies (Sung et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2022). It includes many things, like doing well in school, improving intelligence, learning new things, and expanding one's horizons. [76] Evaluations of educational interventions, teaching methods, and classroom settings are largely based on students' learning outcomes (Johar et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023). Academic achievement, often defined as how well students do on exams, quizzes, and homework, is important to how well students learn (Ramirez - Arellano et al., 2018; Zainuddin, 2018). Grading systems, grade point averages, and subject area proficiency levels are common ways to evaluate academic success. Students' ability to show that they have learned the material, think critically, and solve problems efficiently are all reflected in it (Lai & Hwang, 2016; Liu et al., 2020). Grades and test scores are only one measure of a student's performance in the classroom; there are many other aspects of their learning outcomes as well (Zhang et al., 2020; Luo et al., 2019). Critical thinking, creative problem-solving, analytical reasoning, and other higher-order thinking abilities are part of this. Student learning performance also includes the development of transferrable skills like communication, collaboration, information literacy, and digital literacy, all of which are necessary for success in both higher education and the workplace (Zhang et al., 2021; Chin & Wang, 2021). Several elements at the individual,

interpersonal, and environmental levels impact student learning performance, which is dynamic and complex (Petrov & Atanasova, 2020; Sung et al., 2016). Every student's academic performance is affected by unique personal circumstances, including socioeconomic status, learning style, cognitive abilities, and prior knowledge (Ng et al., 2022; Johar et al., 2023). Classroom dynamics, student-teacher relationships, and peer interactions are all examples of interpersonal factors that significantly impact students' learning ability. Lastly, students' socio-cultural context, instructional quality, and school resources are all environmental factors that can impact their learning opportunities and success (Qureshi et al., 2023; Ramirez - Arellano et al., 2018).

2.4 Proposition Development

In this section, the proposed research conceptual framework will be elaborated upon by discussing the relationships among the independent, mediating, and dependent variables. Specifically, the three dimensions of student engagement—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—will be explored concerning student learning performance and charismatic leadership. This discussion aims to articulate the theoretical underpinnings and hypothesized pathways that link these variables, thereby framing the study within the broader context of educational research. The analysis will detail how each type of engagement potentially mediates the influence of charismatic leadership on student learning outcomes, providing a comprehensive view of the expected interactions within the framework. A charismatic leader inspires others with infectious enthusiasm and a clear, compelling vision for the future (Mainwood & Mainwood, 2022; Chan, 2023). Charismatic leaders inspire their students to take an active role in their learning by sharing a compelling vision that speaks to their dreams and goals (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023; Kim et al., 2023). In addition, students are piqued and engaged by charismatic leaders because they project an optimistic and positive attitude (Balwant et al., 2019; Hudayana et al., 2023). Students are drawn to charismatic leaders for their forward-thinking perspectives and capacity to inspire confidence, belief, and trust, fostering a strong sense of belonging and dedication to common objectives (Anderson, 2021; Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). On top of that, captivating leaders

have great communication skills that let them engage and sway their audience. Leaders with charisma captivate their audiences, evoke strong feelings, and motivate followers to take action through persuasive language, compelling stories, and other techniques (Kim et al., 2023; Mainwood & Mainwood, 2022). Students feel more invested in a leader's vision and mission when their charismatic communication style crafts an enthralling story that speaks to their values and ambitions (Chan, 2023; Balwant et al., 2019). Furthermore, charismatic leaders frequently set an example for their followers by being genuine, honest, and passionate in everything that they do. Charismatic leaders cultivate an environment of engagement and excellence in the classroom by setting an example of how to act following their vision. This encourages students to follow in their footsteps and strive for greatness (Hudayana et al., 2023; Anderson, 2021).

Proposition 1: Charismatic leadership has a positive impact on the dimensions of student engagement. Student motivation, persistence, and effort in learning academic material and accomplishing learning objectives are all enhanced when students are actively involved in their learning (Mudrikah et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2022). Class discussions, questions, clarifications, and peer collaboration lead to a more thorough and meaningful grasp of course content when students are actively involved. In addition, when students actively participate in class, it creates an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, where they are encouraged, pushed, and appreciated, all of which contribute to their happiness and contentment (Ma & Luo, 2022; Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). Grades, test scores, and course completion rates are all indicators of academic performance, and students who have an emotional investment in what they are learning are more likely to demonstrate these traits (Pudjiarti et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2021). Engaged students perform better in class and develop the social and emotional competencies necessary for academic achievement and continued learning throughout life (Rana & Dwivedi, 2017; Mudrikah et al., 2024). Students actively involved in learning are likelier to exhibit higher-order thinking abilities like analytical reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Ng et al., 2022; Ma & Luo, 2022). Students who

actively participate in class are more likely to develop marketable skills that will serve them well in college and beyond the ability to communicate effectively, work well with others, and control their behavior (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023; Pudjiarti et al., 2023). Active participation encourages students to own their learning, which in turn helps them take charge of their academic path, establish relevant objectives, and persevere through setbacks, all of which contribute to better learning outcomes and individual development (Fan et al., 2021; De Castro et al., 2021).

Proposition 2: The dimensions of Student engagement have a positive impact on learning performance. Student engagement is a crucial intermediary between charismatic leadership and student learning performance, bridging the gap between charismatic leaders’ uplifting influence and measurable academic success (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023; Balwant et al., 2019). Leaders with charisma enchant their audiences with their captivating personalities and inspiring visions, inspiring their students to take an active role in their education (Kim et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2019). Students are more engaged when charismatic leaders inspire them with a clear vision and create a welcoming classroom where they can learn in an encouraging atmosphere (Kuziukova et al., 2024; Purwanto, 2020). Students actively involved in their learning are more likely to be motivated, persistent, and make the necessary effort to succeed academically. As a result, charismatic leaders’ visionary leadership leads to better academic results because students are actively involved (Balwant, 2022; Ozgenel, 2020). Engaged students have a multiplicative effect on the positive effect of charismatic leadership on their academic performance because they can have more in-depth and relevant learning experiences (Balwant et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2023). Students interested in what they are learning are more likely to contribute to group projects, work well with others, and look for ways to improve themselves academically (Lin et al., 2019; Kuziukova et al., 2024). Students are more likely to take charge of their academic journey and give their all to the pursuit of knowledge and excellence when engaged in the learning process, giving them a sense of ownership and agency (Purwanto, 2020; Balwant, 2022). In this way, charismatic leaders can have an even greater impact

on their student’s academic performance because engaged students are more open to their advice and more likely to absorb and apply the lessons taught (Ozgenel, 2020; Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023).

Proposition 3: The dimensions of Student Engagement mediate the effect of Charismatic Leadership on Student Learning Performance

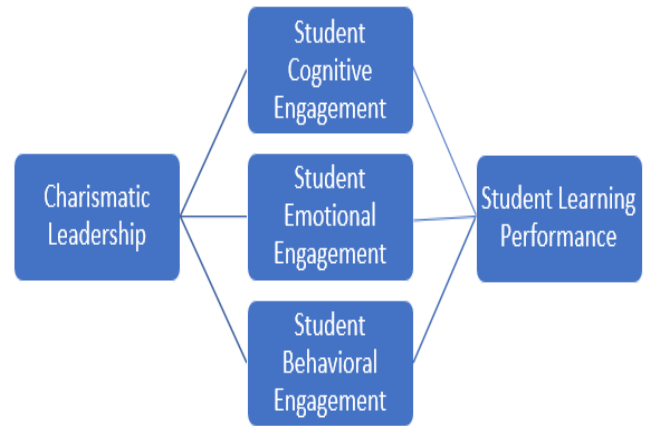


Figure 1 Study Model

Figure 1 depicts the proposed model and the relationships between the variables. In this study, the endogenous variable proposed is the student learning performance. The exogenous variable in this model is charismatic leadership. The variables mediates in this framework are student cognitive engagement, student emotional engagement, and student behavioural engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The targeted population for this study would be students studying at Azzaytuna University (AZU) in Libya. As primary recipients of leadership impacts within educational settings, students provide a direct lens into how charismatic leadership styles influence engagement and academic outcomes (Nadeem, 2024). Their experiences are crucial for assessing the efficacy of leadership strategies, making them central figures in such research (Morrison, 2023). Furthermore, educational outcomes among students are readily measurable—through grades, test scores, and classroom participation—facilitating a clear analysis of the impact of student engagement on learning performance (Nadeem, 2024). This data is invaluable for educational institutions aiming to enhance teaching methods and leadership effectiveness (Morrison, 2023). Lastly, insights from such a study are pertinent to the specific

educational context and can be extrapolated to inform broader educational policies and practices across various educational levels (Tintoré et al., 2023). Therefore, students represent an ideal demographic for this research, offering a specific and scalable understanding of educational dynamics. Self-administered questionnaires will be the main method of data collection. Before receiving the questionnaire, participants will be given a cover letter explaining the purpose and to assure the respondents of their confidentiality.

3.2 Measures

In evaluating student engagement, this study will utilize the 19-item multifactor student engagement questionnaire developed by Sun and Rueda (2012). This instrument is structured into three dimensions: cognitive engagement, which comprises eight items; emotional engagement, which includes six items; and behavioral engagement, which contains five items. This research will employ a 12-item measure created by Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) to assess charismatic leadership. Additionally, the evaluation of Student Learning Performance will incorporate a four-item scale developed by Kedia and Mishra (2023). Each item across all measures will be rated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for a nuanced analysis of participant responses concerning the studied constructs.

3.3 Data Analysis

The statistical analysis plan for this study is meticulously designed to utilize SPSS version 27 and Smart PLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2015) to ensure a thorough examination of the collected data. Initially, SPSS will be employed to compute descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients. This foundational analysis aids in understanding the general characteristics of the data, identifying underlying patterns, and verifying assumptions necessary for more complex analyses (Field, 2013). Following this, Smart PLS 4 will be used to assess the measurement model, focusing on the validity and reliability of the survey items. Reliability testing, often measured by Cronbach's alpha or Composite Reliability (CR), ensures consistent reflection of constructs by the items (Hair et al., 2017). Validity testing includes assessing convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which quantifies the variance

captured by a construct versus measurement error, and discriminant validity, ensuring constructs are distinct and not overly correlated with each other (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Once the measurement model is affirmed, the structural model depicted in Figure 1 will be analyzed. This involves path analysis to evaluate the strength and significance of the hypothesized relationships between constructs and assessing the overall model fit to determine how accurately the model represents the data (Kline, 2011). Moving from basic statistical assessments in SPSS to complex model evaluations in Smart PLS, this structured analytical approach ensures a comprehensive and robust examination of the relationships in the research framework.

4. Discussion

Researchers hope that by studying the connection between charismatic leadership and students' academic performance, they will find that student engagement plays a mediating role. Charismatic leaders encourage and inspire their followers to take an active role in their education, which is why they will also profoundly influence student engagement. Higher academic achievement, cognitive growth, and socio-emotional well-being are predicted among engaged students, who are hypothesized to mediate the relationship between charismatic leadership and student learning performance. These anticipated outcomes highlight the significance of inspiring leadership and encouraging active participation from students as critical factors in achieving academic success in schools.

Conclusion

This research shows that charismatic leadership and student engagement are the most important factors influencing students' academic success. While student engagement plays a critical mediating role, the results demonstrate the revolutionary effect of charismatic leaders in motivating and energizing students to achieve academic greatness. Teachers and lawmakers can help students thrive in school by fostering leaders with vision and making classrooms welcoming and interesting places to learn. In order to improve educational outcomes, more research is needed to determine what other factors impact the connection between charismatic leadership, student engagement, and learning performance. Ultimately, this will help inform practices and interventions based on evidence.

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