The Influence of Charismatic Leadership Communication Towards the Credibility of Public Organisation in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The credibility of public organisation as the source of information often receives negative intuition and misinterpretation from the public at large. Since credibility of public organisation is very much related to public trust, scholars have focused on antecedents of organisational credibility such as leadership constructs to restore trust and confidence among the public. Yet not much research has investigated the role of charismatic leadership communication in building and establishing organisational credibility of the public organisation. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between charismatic leadership communication and the influence of its three dimensions (task oriented, enthusiasm and empathy) with organisational credibility of public organisation in Malaysia. This study employed a quantitative approach to measure participants' perception on their organisational leadership communication and credibility. A total of 368 public organisation employees which were selected through stratified random sampling participated in the survey. The hypothesis of this study was tested using Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between the constructs, whereas multiple regression was used to examine the variance of each dimension of charismatic leadership communication on organisational credibility. The finding reveals that there is a significant relationship between charismatic leadership communication and public organisation credibility, while task-oriented communication appears to be the most significant dimension influencing the credibility of Malaysia public organisation. The implication of the study suggested that public organisational credibility is influenced by the way the information was delivered by the organisation through its charismatic leaders. Theoretical and practical contributions were advanced in this study.

Keywords: *Charismatic leadership communication, empathy, enthusiasm, task-related communication, organizational credibility.*

INTRODUCTION

Organisational credibility, a degree to which an organisation is perceived as trustworthy and possesses expertise (Halder, Pradhan & Chaudhuri, 2021; McCroskey & Young, 1981) has been widely discussed in the organisational literature. A huge body of research has examined organisational credibility in various disciplines such as business and management, marketing, advertising, and consumerism as well as organisational communication and reputation management. As such, a study on organisational credibility has been widely conducted in a private organisation context as compared to public organisation. For example, in the field of marketing and consumerism, a study on organisational credibility is important as it is being associated with the product brand while in business and management, organisational credibility is linked with the organisation corporate brand and endorsement of spokesperson toward a brand (Halder, Pradhan & Chaudhuri, 2021). Similarly, organisational credibility has been associated with reputation management which has received extensive consideration from private organisations as compared to public organisational context. In the little study conducted on a public sector, organisational credibility has been associated with a concept of trust which has usually been viewed from an external-environmental or an inter-

organisational social perspective (Park, 2012). Thus, not much can be understood about the role of organisational credibility in a public organisation from its internal perspective, specifically employees.

On the other hand, it is also worth noting that charismatic leadership communication as the core element in the leadership theory has not been sufficiently addressed in a public organisation setting (Koerber, Provencher & Starkey, 2021). Recently, research has also highlighted that communication plays a major role in constructing and protecting government bodies' reputation (Liu, Horsley & Yang, 2012) and forming multiple stakeholders' perception of their reputation especially in crises (Maor, Gilad & Ben-Nun Bloom, 2013). Whilst the literature indicates guidance, this important aspect of leadership communication has been given little attention from researchers, resulting in a knowledge gap in organisational communication, and its impact on organisational credibility from the internal stakeholders' perspective, specifically employees at the executive and managerial levels (Lee & Kim, 2021). Moreover, the diverse demographic factors of the leaders in building organisational credibility appear to be largely unexplored, providing an opportunity to bridge the gap for credibility literature.

Likewise, leadership as a construct has been examined from a few perspectives such as charismatic leadership styles (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Gemeda & Lee, 2020), leader's decision making (Jolly, Krylova, & Phillips, 2020), personality traits (Aydogmus, Camgoz, Ergeneli & Ekmekci, 2018; Bevan, Gosetto, Jenkins, Barnes & Ioannou, 2018; Lopez-Perry, 2020) as well as ethic and charismatic leadership (Price, 2020; Williams, Pillai, McCombs, & Lowe, 2021). This research mainly focuses on the managerial aspect of a leader as the communicative aspect of a leader and its relations to organisational credibility have hardly been discussed. Leaders' decision-making style for example, are led by the organisational management elements such as organisational climate and corporate culture (Puni & Bosco, 2016) which has little effect on organisational credibility. Studies indicated that leadership styles such as transformational leadership has been proven to increase organisational performance (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Alrowwad & Abualoush, 2020), however leadership literature has yet to explain the variance of charismatic leadership communication on other organisational outcomes such as organisational credibility as a reliable source of information.

Charismatic leadership communication in this study is examined as a multidimensional construct comprising three dimensions namely empathy, task-oriented communication, and enthusiasm. Empathy as one of the important components of charismatic leadership communication has been directly linked with leadership outcomes. Jian (2021) suggests that empathy - the ability to understand another person's motives, values, and emotions, characterised the trait of charismatic leadership communication. The notion is that an emphatic leader will lead to empathic leadership practices by showing an understanding of employees' feelings and concerns (Yue, Men & Berger, 2021). By being empathic, a leader expresses his feelings by being genuine which involves entering the other person's perspectives (Gómez-Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Fernández-Berrocal & Patti, 2021). Leaders' ability to demonstrate concern, express the right emotion and be seen understanding is perceived as more emphatic thus gaining more trust from the public (Perry, Cebulla & Dick, 2021). Likewise, empathy, as part of non-verbal communicative behaviour, has been regarded as the core of leadership success and is linked to ethical decision making (Jenkins, 2021). Subsequently, Flynn and Lide (2021) suggest that leaders that lack empathy have the

tendency to not communicate or under-communicate with their subordinates, thus leading them to be perceived as less effective.

Task-oriented communication is also considered as one dimension of charismatic leadership communication. According to Mikkelson, Sloan and Tietsort (2021), competent interaction can be viewed as a form of interpersonal influence, in which an individual is faced with the task of fulfilling communicative functions and goals (effectiveness) while maintaining conversational and interpersonal norms (appropriateness). From this perspective, they stressed that the more a leader is motivated to interact with employees, is knowledgeable in communication skills that facilitate openness, negotiation, and teamwork, is skilled at using these techniques, and is sensitive to the communication context, the more communicatively competent the leader is perceived to be (Mikkelson, Sloan, & Tietsort, 2021). In addition, Men, Yue and Liu, (2020) suggest that for leaders to persuade people to follow their vision, they need to communicate effectively by appealing to the interest of the followers to sell their vision. Task-oriented leaders employ inspirational actions and communicative resources such as language, gestures and voice, share and respond to information in a timely manner, actively listening to other points of view, and communicate clearly and succinctly (Biganeh & Young, 2021). Enthusiasm is another communicative behaviour exhibited by leaders. Enthusiastic leaders will take ownership of their ideas and make it work (Glassman & McAfee, 1990; McMahon, 2021). Hauer, Quan and Liang, (2021) stresses that a leader's role is to convey emotion such as passion and enthusiasm and to inspire followers. Thus, charismatic leaders reflect their subsequent involvement encompassing feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. In addition, Nai and Maier (2021) asserted that enthusiastic leaders will engage in communicative behaviour aiming at achieving the organisational goals. These findings reaffirmed the role of enthusiasm in the effectiveness of charismatic leadership communication in organization.

Even though each dimension of charismatic leadership communication has been proven to constitute the construct, however, little is known as to which predictor has the strongest influence on organisational credibility. Investigating the dimensions is important as it helps leaders to know which dimension to focus on the most when building their organisational credibility. This is the research void this study attempts to address. In fulfilling this lacuna, we examine the three dimensions of charismatic leadership communication: empathy, task-oriented communication, and enthusiasm as a significant sub-construct influencing organisational credibility being perceived in a public organisation context. Therefore, the aim of this study is twofold; first is to examine the relationship between charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility, and second, to determine the influence of its three dimensions on the credibility of public organisation in Malaysia. It is hoped that this study offers a broader view on the dynamic role of charismatic leadership communication as one of the antecedents of organisational credibility particularly in the Malaysian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisational Credibility
The present study embraces the definition of organisational credibility by Newell and Goldsmith (2001, p.236) who define the concept as "the organization or corporation that manufactures the product or provides services and is seen as a credible source of the communication". This definition explicitly mentions 'expertise' and 'trustworthiness' as

important elements of organisational credibility. According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), expertise is the organisation's knowledge about the subject. An expert organisation will appear to be competent, capable, and effective, which knows the ins and outs of the issue. Trustworthiness demonstrates honesty and believability of the source, and is the organisation's goodwill toward, or concern for, its stakeholders. Based on this review, we contend that a trustworthy organisation is truthful and ethical, and always considers how its actions will affect its stakeholders. The dimensions of source expertise and trustworthiness are important to conceptualise credibility and have been shown to be influential in persuading consumers and in influencing attitudes.

A wide range of research indicated that study on credibility has been examined as an antecedent rather than an outcome, for example the role of credibility as an antecedent of consumers' reliance on online product reviews (Mumuni, Lancendorfer, O'Reilly & MacMillan, 2019). On the other hand, organisational credibility has also been studied as the organisational outcomes and has been linked with organisational antecedents, among other is leadership management construct. Review of literature indicates that credibility has been regarded as one of crucial elements which determine the survival of organisation, especially in the private sector. Thus, study on credibility has often been associated with celebrity endorser and instafamous influencer as the organisation spokesperson in promoting brands, products, and services (Lin, Crowe, Pierre & Lee, 2021; Sheehan, 2020) as well as spokesperson's credibility and its relationship with the brand.

As opposed to the private sector, the study of credibility on public organisation received less attention due to generic perception toward the existence of public organisation itself. However, recent trends have acknowledged the credibility of public organisation is equally if not more important as compared to that of private organisation due to its implication toward the legitimacy and authenticity of the government bodies it represents (Wæraas, 2020). For example, previous research on organisational credibility showed that public trust toward public organisations has been consistently decreasing (Houston & Harding, 2013). This is also evidenced in recent findings which indicate that lack of credibility affects an organisation's legitimacy (Busuioc & Jevnaker, 2020; Riggirozzi & Ryan, 2021). Thus, building and nurturing the governance legitimacy and credibility require careful planning and execution which involve responding to citizens demands and expectations (Christensen & Lægreid, 2020).

Generally, all public organisations, in some ways, are connected to a political, superordinate level (Carpenter & Krause, 2012; Waeeras & Moar, 2015). To a certain level, all organisations are influenced by a political authority scrutinising the control and regulation of their administration and operation (Christensen, & Lægreid, 2020). Therefore, public organisations rely on strong credibility to achieve delegated autonomy and discretion from these political influencers. One of the mechanisms to accomplish this is through a demonstration of the three modes of appeal as introduced by the great philosopher, Aristotle way back in the Greek ancient time, which is known as ethos (character, intelligence, and goodwill), pathos (emotion) and logos (logic) (McCroskey & Young, 1981). The three concepts - otherwise known as rhetorical appeals, are often employed by a political leader during campaign or presidential election to obtain trust and confidence among the audience. In political communication, ethos is the most critical component that represents credibility of a leader as the source of information, while in the context of persuasive communication, favourable credibility of a speaker predicts greater persuasion and attitude change (Flanagin,

& Metzger, 2020). However, in a context of public organisation and leadership communication, scholars have started to pay more attention to antecedents that constitute an organisational credibility and its link with leadership and communication. Considering the magnitude of credibility for public organisation, addressing the antecedents of credibility in public organisation is highly necessary. Understanding the impact of leadership communication is also vital in shaping public opinion toward public organisation and more importantly, to be regarded as credible.

Charismatic Leadership Communication
De Vries, Bakker-Pieper and Oostenveld, (2010) offers a definition of leadership communication as "a distinctive set of leader's interpersonal communicative behaviors, geared toward the optimization of hierarchical relationships" (p. 368) to form a favourable perception. He stresses that charismatic leaders are characterised by a verbally non-aggressive communication style. Unlike other leadership practice definitions that focus on the managerial aspects and styles of leadership, this comprehensive definition suggests that leaders must employ more interpersonal communication skills in achieving the organisation's goals. This does not imply that a leader should depend on interpersonal skills exclusively but should see these skills as complementary. We argue that adopting this set of interpersonal communicative behaviours will enhance the leaders' ability to manage a crisis, thus creating better perceptions of organisational reputation.

Quite recently, Johansson, Miller and Hamrin, (2014, p.155) proposed a new insight in defining communicative leader as 'someone who engages employees in dialogue, actively shares and seeks feedback, practices participative decision making, and is perceived as open and involved' which summed up the elements of communicative behaviours that are central to leaders i.e. structuring, facilitating, relating, and representing. The notion is that leaders who are "communicative" are not just communicating, but they communicate effectively with a high level of competency. To complement the definition, Levine, Muenchen and Brooks, (2010) find that verbal and nonverbal communication are equally important aspects to determine charisma. Other communication behaviours such as listening, persuasion and influence are central to the definition which needs to be assessed while evaluating the construct. Based on our previous findings, we postulate that the verbal communication aspect of a leader includes the ability to speak well, poised, and demonstrates a sense of involvement. Furthermore, a charismatic person is a skillful speaker and has a large vocabulary. Non-verbally, leaders are seen as charismatic when they are enthusiastic, emphatic and demonstrate task-oriented communication (Jamal & Bakar, 2017). In a broad perspective, this definition suggests that a person with charisma is well-liked and respected. A charismatic leader is seen as strong, confident, understanding, influential, possesses a good attitude and is a good speaker. A charismatic leader is also genuine and knows when to talk and when to listen. Another aspect of charismatic leadership communication incorporates nonverbal communication such as the ability to speak well and to maintain effective eye contact as well as to possess a genuine speaking style. The final aspect includes behavioural and personality terms such as: someone who is powerful, enthusiastic, and can put others at ease.

Analysing these definitions, we extend our previous definition (Jamal & Bakar, 2017a) and proposed the revised concept of charismatic leadership communication as "a leader's demonstration of engagement in communicative leadership behaviours (both verbal and non-

verbal) through exchange of messages among organisational entities to achieve their shared objectives and desired organisational outcomes". This definition implies that charismatic leadership communication occurs in an organisational context, inclusive of interpersonal and small group communication, both formal and informal setting with the purpose to execute leader's responsibility encompass the main functions of leadership communication (to inform, instruct, direct, influence and inspire) with certain degree of inspirable manners deemed appropriate and appeal to others.

Organisational communication literature indicates that leadership communicative aspects directly and indirectly drive and reinforces perception toward organizational credibility (Coombs, 2020; Cooper, Hamman & Weber, 2020). The role of leaders' behaviour is paramount in forming a favourable perception and establishing public trust toward the organisation (Torrance, Holzleitner, Lee, DeBruine & Jones, 2020). Furthermore, a leader's positive communication practices in a diverse workforce contribute to more positive outcomes (Biganeh & Young, 2021). Ruben and Gigliotti (2016) in expanding their view of leadership communication theory regard communication as much more than merely a leadership tool or strategy. In addition, charismatic leaders project a powerful, and dynamic presence through charismatic communication which has been linked to credibility (Williams Jr, Raffo & Clark, 2018). Therefore, by focusing on politically appointed leaders' charismatic communication, this study contributes to a growing literature on leadership communication in the Malaysian public sector.

Organisational Credibility and Charismatic Leadership Communication in Public Organisation
Credibility in the public sector has been recognised as valuable political assets used to achieve delegated autonomy and discretion from politicians (Maor, 2020), and generate public confidence to continuously support the government (Luoma-aho, Canel & Hakola, 2021). In this context, a leader's charismatic communication will set the tone of engagement toward the organisation's internal and external public, lay down the organisation's stance on the matter, and assuage public concerns that such incidents are viewed seriously, and that the organisation is doing everything it could to rectify it. Leader's charismatic communication can be seen as invaluable strategies that the management can rely on to reduce the negative impact on their organisational credibility (Jamal & Bakar, 2017b), especially from the internal stakeholders as they are part of the public organisation entities (Maor, 2020). In addition, Bakar and Omillion-Hodges (2020) has reaffirmed the significant relationship between ethical leadership and organisation outcomes which possibly include credibility in the overall organisational performance.

Most public organisation research was examined through the lens of public or consumer (Schmidthuber, Ingrams & Hilgers, 2021). As a result, there is a great deal of understanding on public organisation perception from the consumer perspective. While external perception is important in positioning its credibility, internal perspective is equally invaluable to public organisation. Investigating internal stakeholders' perception, specifically employees, is crucial because they are the key driver behind the establishment of a good reputation. Employees' perception toward their organisational credibility will be an indicator to the value they place for the organisation. Both favourable and unfavourable perceptions to certain extent will be reflected in their actions and behaviours as organisational members, particularly when dealing with the public who in turn, will form a perception toward the organisation through their experiences dealing with the organisational members such as

employees. Therefore, understanding employees' perception on organisation credibility is crucial because credibility does not reside in the organisation; rather, it is in the mind of its stakeholders, including its employees (Cheung, 2013). More importantly, Shams, Rehman, Samad and Rather (2020) has stressed that the failure in communicating issues and tarnished credibility will influence the way employees interact with the organisation. This becomes significant, especially since public servants are also considered as public for, they use the services provided by their and other public organisations. Following this argument, a few studies investigating employees perception that were conducted worldwide has been used as an example such as credibility and trust of public sector managers (Oladottir & Adalsteinsson, 2017), employee perception toward organisational commitment (Blom, 2020), organisational prestige, public service motivation, and the turnover intentions (Bright, 2020), organisational politics, emotional intelligence and work outcomes (Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot, 2014), public servants' trust in citizens (Jong Lee & Jeong Yu, 2013; Vigoda-Gadot, Zalmanovitch & Belonogov, 2012), and citizens' trust in public servants (Mersiyanova, Yaklimets & Pakhomova, 2012).

Malaysian Perspective
Within the context of Malaysia literature, studies on public organisation measuring employee perception were conducted on the impact of knowledge management processes toward public sector performance (Al Ahbabi, Singh, Balasubramanian & Gaur, 2019), job performance and leaders' emotion management (Choudhary, Naqshbandi, Philip, & Kumar, 2017) and embodiment of power distance (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2011). These studies have not only contributed to the understanding of public organisation, but also provide indication that employees' assessment is vital in developing and maintaining organisation credibility. Findings also show that like the Western context, the credibility of public organizations in Malaysia suffers a great deal. Trust has been an issue affecting public organisation perception by the public for ages. Often seen as less competitive, too much political influence and lack credibility worsened citizens' perception toward the efficiency of public organisation. Citizens are becoming more aware of the importance of the public organisation's credibility in the service they rely upon. In Malaysia, public organisations are highly influenced by the political, economic, and social factors (Parasuraman, Badariah & Rathakrishnan, 2011) which determine the survival of their leaders in government administration. Intense scrutiny from the media on the efficiency of government servants has resulted in a pressure toward the public organisation's leaders to come forward to face public concerns. However, the challenges faced by the organisation leaders are not only to gain public trust through government communication initiatives, but also to present their charismatic leadership communication while communicating to the public. Despite all these challenges, there remains a large gap of theory-based research on the aspect of charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility in the management of public organisation, practically in Malaysia. To bridge this gap, Jamal and Bakar (2017a) examined charismatic leadership communication in times of crisis in a public organisational context. The findings suggested that the demonstration of charismatic leadership communication by a leader in managing a crisis has a significant impact on organisational credibility. This study serves as a pioneering investigation of charismatic leadership communication using quantitative methods to strengthen organisational credibility which contributes forethought for the public organisation research in Malaysia.

Development of Research Hypothesis

Previous research has acknowledged a direct link between employees' perception of organisational trust and leadership characteristics which led to organisational stability (Park, 2012). Leader communication competence for example, was used to predict employee perceptions of credibility (Mikkelson, Sloan & Tietsort, 2021). Recently Men, Yue and Liu, (2020) found that charismatic executive leadership communication has a direct link with organisational outcomes such as trust and readiness to change. These studies proposed that leadership communication is one of the main sources of trust in an organisation and becomes a motivational factor that encourages change to take place in an organisation. Thus, it is suggested in this study that when employees trust their leaders, they will perceive their organisation as credible and will be likely to support organisational change. This is based on the argument that employees' trust in leaders would positively influence their perception on the overall aspect of trust in the organisation, especially their organisation's credibility (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). In other words, the findings imply that the stronger the perception toward charismatic leadership communication by the employees, the higher the perception toward public organisational credibility.

In a public sector the gap between superior and subordinates is bridged by leaders' "close-up communication" to build mutual understanding before trust can be established in their relationships. Literature in trust indicates that building employees' trust is crucial if organisations wish employees to perceive them as credible (Johansson et al., 2014) or otherwise their messages will go unheard. As Johansson et al. (2014) suggest that leaders' charismatic leadership includes sense-making processes, which create employees' understanding and buy-in. Thus, employees trusting their organisation does not just happen, it takes leadership communication to enable them to build their trust and perceive that their organisation as credible.

Another study on government communication and perceptions of government officials' communication revealed that message exposure by the leader influenced respondents' perceived credibility of and trust in government officials (MA, Pande & PK, 2021). This is further suggested by Kouzes and Posner (2012) that people, including stakeholders and employees specifically, must believe in their leaders before taking a stance on their organisation's credibility. Their research on charismatic leadership, communication skills and organisational credibility found a significant relationship between these constructs which suggested that to gain stakeholders' trust begins with leadership credibility. In addition, literature on trust also indicates that lack of confidence and trust have widened the gap between organisations and their public until organisations rebuild and strengthen their collapse credibility (Coombs, 2014). Coombs (2021) also suggest that different sources of communication affect stakeholders' perception on organisational credibility.

In examining the role of charismatic leadership communication on organisational credibility, we postulate that the credibility of a public organisation does not only depend on the amount of communication, or the frequency of communication being conveyed to their public. Rather it is influenced by the way the messages are being delivered by a leader through his or her charismatic communication. Leaders who could transfer their enthusiasm leads to better interaction (Alkhawlani, Bohari & Shamsuddin, 2021). This notion implies that communicative aspects of behaviours demonstrated (for example, showing emotional intelligence such as empathy, being enthusiastic and communicating with a purpose in meeting a group or organisation objectives) is essential. Therefore, we argue that leaders

practising communicative behaviours in a workplace such as showing appropriate emotion or simply by being emphatic when responding to certain specific situations will increase an organisation's credibility. Likewise, leaders who are perceived as enthusiastic and communicate with a purpose (task-oriented) are more likely to gain employee trust and confidence. Based on these arguments, we post the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Charismatic leadership communication (enthusiasm, empathy, and task-oriented communication) influences employee's perception of organisation's credibility.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
This study employs a quantitative research approach using survey research to explain the causal relationship between charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility. To assess the perception of internal stakeholders on their leader's charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility, this study examines public organisation employees at the middle managerial level. These employees are also considered as internal stakeholders; therefore, their perception is important in building and strengthening their organisational credibility. Mid-level managers act as evaluators of the organisational activities, thus, measuring their perception is appropriate and consistent with the purpose of this study.

Population, Sampling Technique and Sample Size
To measure public organisation's perception in this study, two public organisations and one main government agency (in this study the agency is considered as a public organisation because it was established under the government act) have been identified and approached. These three public organisations represented different types of organisation nature: authority-functions/regulatory body, and a government department. The rationale behind the selection of the organisations is rather straightforward. The three organisations have similar characteristics with slight differences among them. The criteria for selecting these organisations are: 1. These organisations are under one umbrella, which is the government of Malaysia. 2. Demographically, the two organisations are in a neighbouring area of Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, where most of the government offices are located and/or headquartered. 3. As compared to other government offices, the first organisation is chosen because the organisation is frequently associated with controversial issues (such as corruption and integrity) which has the potential to affect its credibility. While the second organisation is a government body serving as the 'voice of the government', which credibility matters the most in every public communication; and the third government agency is a regulatory body which is more independent.

This study focuses on the population at the headquarters in Putrajaya and Cyberjaya. The reason for selecting only headquarters' employees is because they are perceived to be more homogenous in characteristics since they work under the same environment and working culture, which may be different with the branches. Another rationale is, it is assumed that the flow of information in headquarters is faster, more in-depth and is simultaneously received as compared to branches, thus, may have influenced the way they perceive their surroundings. For this reason, employees located at the branches are excluded in the sampling. The total population of the three organisations is 769 (in headquarters only). Based

on the population, the appropriate sample size of 700-800 respondents according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table is between 341-363 respondents with confidence level of 99% and margin error of 5%. To meet the critical sample size for the present study, a total of 600 questionnaires were delivered personally to respondents, which were spread between the three government bodies.

In the present study, the participants were of middle and top managerial levels who were selected based on a stratified random sampling method. To ensure participants have sufficient knowledge and understanding about leadership communication and organisation credibility, the requirements were that they (1) must be familiar with the organisation (a minimum of 6 to 9 months' working experience) and (b) must have had at least indirect experience in communicating or dealing with the organisational leaders. In addition, all participants possessed a bachelor's degree as a minimum educational qualification to qualify for this survey. Employees who did not meet the above requirement were excluded from the sampling frame. This is to ensure participants can provide professional assessment about the organisational credibility and leadership communication at their workplace. The leaders in this study were from the federal government departments and were among the highest-level leaders not politically appointed. They work directly under the ministries and are government appointed. These leaders are part of the civil service system and experience significant pressures from powerful outside forces such as public interest groups and legislators.

Data Collection Procedure and Instrumentation
The questionnaires were randomly distributed among the 600 mid-level managers of the three public organisations via personal delivery and collection of questionnaires. Prior to the distribution of questionnaires, approvals were obtained from the human resources department of each participating organisation. Survey packs were then personally sent to respondents. Prior to the survey, participants were identified based on a complete list of employees as listed by the Human Resources Department of each participating organisation. The survey pack contained questionnaires and pre-addressed envelopes for participants to return the completed questionnaires in a week. Participants were advised to read through the cover letter which was placed in the front page of the questionnaire. A cover letter outlined the research process, solicited voluntary participation, and assured confidentiality. Participants of this study responded to survey questions regarding charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility of their respective organisations.

The present study employs existing measurement items adopted from previous studies. The perception toward charismatic leadership communication was measured with a 23-item Charismatic Leadership Communication Scale (CLCS) developed by Levine (2008) which initially has 42 items. Charismatic leadership communication is operationalised as communicative leadership behaviour, which is categorised under three main dimensions namely, task-oriented communication, enthusiasm, and empathy. Participants in the study were asked to recall and evaluate their leaders' charismatic leadership communication related to these dimensions. Perception on organisational credibility was measured using the 8-items scale developed by Newell and Goldsmith (2001). In this study the operationalisation of this concept reflects public organisation's credibility from the employees' perspective. Participants were asked to evaluate their organisation's credibility based on two criteria, expertise, and trustworthiness. All measurement items in a present study used Likert scale to measure response. All items were tested for normality through skewness and kurtosis.

Reliability and validity tests were performed prior to hypothesis testing for this study. Details of the items and their value of Cronbach alpha and factor loadings are presented under the Findings section of this article.

Design and Structure of the Questionnaire
In this study, the questionnaire was structured into three main sections. These sections are categorised as Part I: Charismatic Leadership Communication; Part II: Organization Credibility and Part III: Personal Information. An English-language version questionnaire was used in the instrument adopted for this study as generally managerial level employees in Malaysia are considered proficient in English language.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Data of the study were analysed using SPSS v21. Of the 600 questionnaires sent to respondents, 383 were returned, a 63.8% response rate. We assessed the data for entry errors before performing descriptive analysis. Out of 383 responses received, only 368 were usable for inferential analysis. Participant demographic profiling comprises 54.8% male and 45.2% female: Malay ethnic (73%), Chinese (21%) and 6% Indians. Approximately 63% of the participants were lower and middle-level managers and 37% were top-level managers. Seventy-one per cent of the respondents had been working for 1 to 10 years in the organization; 29% indicated that they had worked more than 10 years for the organisation. The profiling shows that the majority of participants have sufficient experience dealing with their organisation leadership and its charismatic communication.

Prior to hypothesis testing, normality tests for skewness and kurtosis, reliability and validity were performed to ensure normality assumptions were met. The purpose of the normality test is to examine the distribution on each item and the composite score for each variable. Many of the items appeared within normal range. In addition, an inspection of multicollinearity between predictors was also conducted based on the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance index. Table 1 presents the skewness and kurtosis for the constructs of this study.

Table 1: Result of Skewness and Kurtosis for the Measurement Instruments (n = 368)

Construct and sub-construct	Mean	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
1. Charismatic leadership communication	3.924	-.564	.127	.963	.254
a. Task Oriented Communication	3.940	-.542	.127	.873	.254
b. Enthusiasm	3.838	-.336	.127	.441	.254
c. Empathy	4.005	-.684	.127	1.205	.254
2. Organizational credibility	4.129	-.342	.127	-.483	.254
a. Trustworthiness	4.143	-.417	.127	-.483	.254
b. Expertise	4.116	-.340	.127	-.473	.254

P < .001

As depicted in Table 1, the mean score for charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility had mean value of 3.92 and 4.12 respectively, above the average five-point Likert scale of 3. The results suggested that participants' opinion about their organisations was above average which indicated favourable perception toward their organisation. Alternatively, all the SD scores of the variables were on a satisfactory level

indicating that the sample data is meaningful for achieving the present study's objectives. The analysis also found that none of the variable items had skewness values greater than .564 and kurtosis values greater than 1.587. This indicated that both constructs and their dimensions were normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis value fell within the acceptable range as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2010). These results indicated that the sample data was consistent with a normality assumption required for further use in multivariate analysis. The data was then tested for reliability for both constructs and subsequently reported the Cronbach alpha. Table 2 presents the reliability of the constructs in this study.

Table 2: Reliability Test Results of the Measurement Instruments (n=368)

Construct and sub-construct	No of item	α value
1, Charismatic leadership communication	23	.97
a. Task Oriented Communication	8	.94
b. Enthusiasm	8	.92
c. Empathy	7	.94
2. Organizational credibility	8	.83
a. Trustworthiness	4	.71
b. Expertise	4	.70

P < .001

As shown in Table 2, the results of the Cronbach's alpha values for both constructs exceeded the required level of .70 (α .97 and .83 for charismatic leadership communication and organisational credibility respectively), suggesting that the theoretical variables displayed a good internal stability and consistency. Further, the overall EFA is performed for both constructs with a total number of 31 items. The standardised factor loading for the items are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Standardised Factor Loadings of Items Measuring the Theoretical Constructs

Sub-construct	Measurement Item	Factor Loadings
	Organisational Credibility	
Trustworthiness	I trust the organisation	.58*
	The organisation makes truthful claims	.66*
	The organisation is honest	.61*
	I do not believe what the organisation tells me**	.59*
Expertise	The organisation has a great amount of experience	.56*
	The organisation is skilled in what they do	.57*
	The organisation has great expertise	.55*
	The organisation does not have much experience**	.56*
	Charismatic Leadership Communication	
	The leader has a confident communication style	.70*
	Is influential	.71*
	Is a good public speaker	.80*
	The leader uses active language	.80*
Enthusiasm	The leader is poised	.79*
	The leader communicates a sense of involvement with the subject matter	.77*
	Is a skillful speaker	.76*
	The leader is a positive thinker	.78*

	The leader is enthusiastic.	.56*
	The leader uses powerful language	.80*
	The leader is persuasive	.83*
	The leader is goal-oriented	.83*
	The leader is motivational	.70*
	The leader has definite ideas	.74*
Task Oriented Communication	The leader is likely to achieve the goals that he/she sets out to accomplish	.70*
	The leader communicates effectively	.78*
	The leader is task-oriented	.79*
	The leader asks others to share opinions.	.80*
	The leader listens well	.80*
	The leader can empathise with others	.75*
Empathy	Is genuine	.80*
	Understands other people's feelings	.77*
	Can put others at ease	.78*

Note: * indicates a loading significant at p < .001. ** Indicate reversed coding.

The results showed that 23 items were loaded significantly on charismatic leadership communication and eight items were loaded on organisational credibility. The correlation of all items exceeded the cut-off point of .30 which indicate them as accurate tools to measure the construct respectively (Hair et al., 2010). Subsequently, we perform linear regression to examine the relationship and the influence of charismatic leadership communication on organisational credibility. Result of linear regression was presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Linear *Regression Analysis Summary for Charismatic Leadership Communication Predicting Organisational Credibility*

Predictor variable	Organizational credibility			
	B	SE	β	t
Charismatic leadership communication	.412	.046	.421*	8.874

R^2 = .177
Adjust R^2 = .175
F = 78.739
df = 1
*p < .05

Based on Table 4, it is revealed that charismatic leadership communication and organisation credibility was significantly and moderately related (β = .421, t = 8.874, ρ < .05). The finding suggested positive perception toward charismatic leadership communication influences favourable organisational credibility. Therefore, the research hypothesis was supported. The linear regression model of charismatic leadership communication with organisational credibility showed the R Square of 0.175 indicating that this model explained 17.5% variation of charismatic leadership communication on organisational credibility. Subsequently, we tested for the influence of each dimension of charismatic leadership communication on organisational credibility. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple *Regression Analysis Summary for Charismatic Leadership Communication Predicting Organisational Credibility*

Predictor variables	Organisational credibility			
	B	SE	β	t
1. Task Oriented Communication	.314	.104	.337*	3.014
2. Enthusiasm	-.204	.111	-.216	-1.848
3. Empathy	-302	.095	.323*	3.167

R^2 = .200
Adjust R^2 = .193
F = 30.249
df = 3
*p < .05

In the model, 19.3% of variance in organisational credibility was accounted for by the task-oriented communication and empathy on organisational credibility. While the dimension of enthusiasm was found not to have any effect on organisational credibility in this study. As indicated in Table 5, task-oriented communication has a stronger unique contribution in explaining organisational credibility (β = .337, p < .05) as compared to empathy (β = .323, p < .05). However, the enthusiasm dimension did not provide a significant unique contribution to the equation in this model.

DISCUSSION

The findings further strengthened our hypothesis that charismatic leadership communication construct has significant association with organisational credibility. While there are many other factors contributing to organisational credibility, charismatic leadership communication appears to be a considerably prominent influencer to organisational credibility with moderate to strong relationships. The result can be interpreted in several ways. First, employees who perceive their leaders as possessing and practising charismatic leadership communication also perceive their organisation as credible. Second, there is a chance that a favourable perception toward charismatic leadership communication increases employees' positive responses toward organisational credibility due to the positive and meaningful interactions they experience with their leaders. Likewise, the perception that an organisation is untrustworthy is due to public employees' distrust of those (leaders) who they demand to fulfill their communication expectations. The result is in line with previous studies on charismatic leadership communication, trust and organisation credibility as researched by Men et al. (2020). Subsequently, the findings strengthen Jin and Yeo's (2011) and Mikkelson et al. (2021) argument that leadership communication, and organisational credibility are inextricably related because they contribute to a leader's ability to direct and make important decisions in public organisation.

This finding also supported previous result such as Coombs (2021) who found that organisation-employee interactions shaped organisational outcomes; by interacting charismatically will enhance the credibility of the organisation, and the statement that credible organization is led by credible leaders (Jian, 2021; Kouzes & Posner, 2012) holds true. Also, the notion that leadership communication success depends on leaders demonstrating empathy and being enthusiastic led to positive organisational effects, as well as the role of leadership communication in building employees' trust by Men et al. (2020) with Wang and Hsieh (2013) is further strengthened in this study. Based on the discussion, it can be

concluded that leaders demonstrating charismatic leadership communication leads to multiple outcomes in organisations and has an extraordinary impact on employees' perception of trust toward their organisation (Cooper et al., 2020; Laohavichien, Fredendall, & Cantrell, 2009). Thus, outstanding organisational credibility is certainly derived from impactful, reliable, and charismatic leadership communication being practised in the organisation.

Among the three dimensions of the charismatic leadership construct, task-oriented communication and empathy appear to be significant predictors of organisational credibility in this study. These findings imply that in Malaysia public organisation, organisational credibility may be influenced by leaders who are perceived as demonstrating and practising these two communicative behaviours. Task-oriented communication practised by leaders is more appreciated and accepted by employees. This finding is in support of Galli (2021) who found that leaders who are task-oriented communicate and motivate subordinates toward accomplishing organisational goals. While leaders who show empathy have been acknowledged as charismatic and thus being favoured in public organisation as suggested by Men, Qin, and Mitson, (2021) and Sebre, Stokenberga, and Šaitere, (2021). However, leaders who are enthusiastic are found as not affecting employee's perception toward their organisational credibility. This could be due to the context of this study which is influenced by the organisational culture. Malaysia public organisation has a different culture as compared to the Western where enthusiasm is regarded as important in leadership communication. While in the Eastern culture like Malaysia, enthusiasm may be interpreted differently and be associated with negative or neutral connotations of leadership traits. This is evidenced from a recent study by Li, Sun, Taris, Xing, and Peeters, (2021) who confirmed that national culture does moderate the relationship between charismatic leadership and employee perception and engagement. Considering the scales employed in this study were developed in the West, replicating the instruments in Malaysian context appears to yield a slightly different result. Thus the findings of this study warrant further investigation to revalidate this construct.

CONCLUSION

This study set a platform for public organisation leaders to consider the importance of engaging in the three dimensions of charismatic leadership communication (task-oriented, enthusiastic and empathy) to build, maintain and further strengthen their organisational credibility. As Ventriss (2021) stresses that the debate on intellectual credibility of public administration has been provocative, this study is an attempt to tone down the connotation by providing new evidence which make this subject appealing for scholarly discourse. It is with this premise that this research was embarked, to offer an empirical finding to nurture the credibility among public organisations. Based on the findings in this study we proposed that, public organisations aiming at strengthening their organisational credibility should consider engaging in charismatic leadership communication as a strategic communication function. In doing so public organisation leaders should embrace the three attributes of leadership communication while communicating with key stakeholders both internally and externally. As recommended by Dolamore, Lovell, Collins, and Kline, (2021), translating the scholarship of empathy into the practice of public organisation is necessary to making empathy work. Likewise, we recommend that future research should revalidate the dimension of enthusiasm in various organisational settings. This study also suggests probing further as to whether charismatic leadership communication has an influence on the relationships between

organisational credibility and other possible key organisational management outcomes, such as employees' loyalty, e-government policy, government online crisis communication, government risk management, e-leadership as well as e-media relations. As organisations are moving forward into technology and digital media, probing the outcomes of these constructs seems vital for the solid legitimacy of public organisation.

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