

**THE IMPACT OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ON  
REFERENT POWER AT WORK**



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**THE IMPACT OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ON  
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## **THE IMPACT OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ON REFERENT POWER AT WORK**

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M.M. (GENERAL MANAGEMENT)

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### **ABSTRACT**

Verbal communication portrays the personality of the speaker which influences how other people perceive and regard the speaker. However, as majority of communication being non-verbal (Sugiharto, SH. MM, 2013; Colta, A. S., 2010), the purpose of this research is to find out its impact on the authority on other people at work.

For the purpose, qualitative research approach is used by personal interviews people of varied by their age group, nationality, positions (entry-level, managerial, executive), industry, types of company (private organizations, NGO, embassy), and level of work experience. It was revealed that everyone is aware of and uses non-verbal communication for gaining charisma and authority at work. Non-verbal elements were used differently based on the audience; Serious for boss and clients, casual and friendly with colleagues, and authoritative with subordinates and vendors. The research also went on to find out the charismatic body language, way of speaking, and way of dressing perceived by entry-level, managerial, and executive level employees.

**KEY WORDS:** Non-verbal communication, Referent power, Authority at work, and Charismatic leader

30 pages

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLE</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Evolving World	1
1.2 Challenges	1
1.3 Scope of study	2
<b>CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Types of power	3
2.2 Charismatic leadership	4
2.3 Gain power at work	5
2.3.1 Show confidence	5
2.3.2 Keep your boss happy	6
2.3.3 Don't get upset or angry	6
2.3.4 Stop worrying about being liked	6
2.3.5 Pay attention to the tone of voice	6
2.3.6 Become comfortable with silence	6
2.3.7 Use of power poses	7
2.4 Non-verbal elements	7
2.4.1 Kinesics	7
2.4.2 Paralanguage	8
2.4.3 Physical contact	8
2.4.4 Physical characteristics	9
2.4.5 Environment	9
2.4.6 Proxemics	9
2.5 Gap in studies	9

## CONTENTS (cont.)

	<b>Page</b>
<b>CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Research design	10
3.2 Data Collection Methodology	10
3.2.1 Population	10
3.2.2 Sampling	10
3.2.3 Data collection	11
3.3 Instrument	11
3.3.1 Demographic	11
3.3.2 What one likes in a charisma leader and association on non-verbal elements	11
3.3.3 Awareness of non-verbal elements at work	12
3.3.4 Use and effectiveness of power poses or body postures at work	12
3.3.5 Use of non-verbal elements to different target groups	12
3.3.6 The charismatic body language, way of speaking, and way of dressing	13
<b>CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Demographic profiles of respondents	14
4.2 Observation findings	16
4.2.1 What one likes in a charismatic leader and the contribution of non-verbal elements?	16
4.2.2 Awareness of non-verbal elements at work	17
4.2.3 Use and effectiveness of power poses or body postures at work	18
4.2.4 Use of non-verbal elements to boss	20
4.2.5 Use of non-verbal elements to colleagues of the same level	20
4.2.6 Use of non-verbal elements to subordinates	21

## CONTENTS (cont.)

	<b>Page</b>
4.2.7 The charismatic body language	21
4.2.8 The charismatic way of speaking	22
4.2.9 The charismatic way of dressing	22
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1 Conclusion	23
5.2 Recommendations	24
5.2.1 Gaining referent power over subordinates	24
5.2.2 Gaining referent power over colleagues of the same level	25
5.2.3 Gaining referent power over boss	25
5.2.4 Gaining referent power over others outside the organization	25
5.3 Limitations	26
5.4 Suggestions for further research	26
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>BIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>31</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.1 Framework: Sources of power	4
4.1 Body posture in client meeting	19
4.2 Body posture in vendor meeting	20





**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.1 Participant Biography	15
4.2 Non-verbal element awareness	17



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Evolving World

The world evolves overtime, so does the way we view success and the means to achieve it. Businesses have become over more competitive due to globalization, customer-centric market orientation, and more frequent financial crisis. Good and rewarding jobs are more difficult to find, some factors being academic inflation, outsourcing capability, delayed retirement plan, and increasing turnover rates. On top of this, in this much more complex environment, people have more hunger for success and professors and strategists around the world had given numerous ways and tools people can use to help them become successful in their businesses (business owners) or work places (employees).

### 1.2 Challenges

To be successful, business owners face various challenges like market demand, raising funds, competition, stakeholder relationships, and many more. However, there is no other person on the same level of authority as the business owners within the company. Employees, on the other hand, face totally different kinds of challenges and it becomes even more interesting how the most dominant challenges revolve around people they work with, be it their supervisors, colleagues, or subordinate. Then also came a whole new set of tools and strategies for employees to overcome their challenges ranging from 5 sources of power, leadership strategies, motivation theories, until managing stress, conflicts, negotiation, and nonetheless, bosses.

### 1.3 Scope of study

The researcher, through my 7 years of employment career, understand the challenges in the corporate world. Everyone wants to stand out from the crowd but the one thing that differentiates one from the other is the way they carry out themselves. As majority of communication is non-verbal (Sugiharto, SH. MM, 2013; Colta, A. S., 2010), it becomes a dominant part and means of personality which influences how people are perceived and regarded.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether non-verbal communication has any impact on the authority of employees who can enhance their lateral leadership, which is leading without legitimate authority given by the company in the form of title or position, and conventional leadership (Sloane, P. 2014).



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is structured into 3 sections. The first section presents the overview of the theories related to types of power and charismatic leadership. The second section portrays various studies and suggestions done to increase the authority at work which leads to the third section of the review which explains the various elements of non-verbal communication.

#### 2.1 Types of power

Power, in a broader sense, can be referred to as the ability to control or influence the behavior of people or things (Merriam-Webster, 2014; Lunenburg, F. C., 2012). Other words often associated to power are manipulation and dominance, which make it perceived as something bad. However, power can be creative and constructive (Clegg, S.R., Courpasson, D. & Phillips, N., 2006) which is the interpretation adopted in this paper.

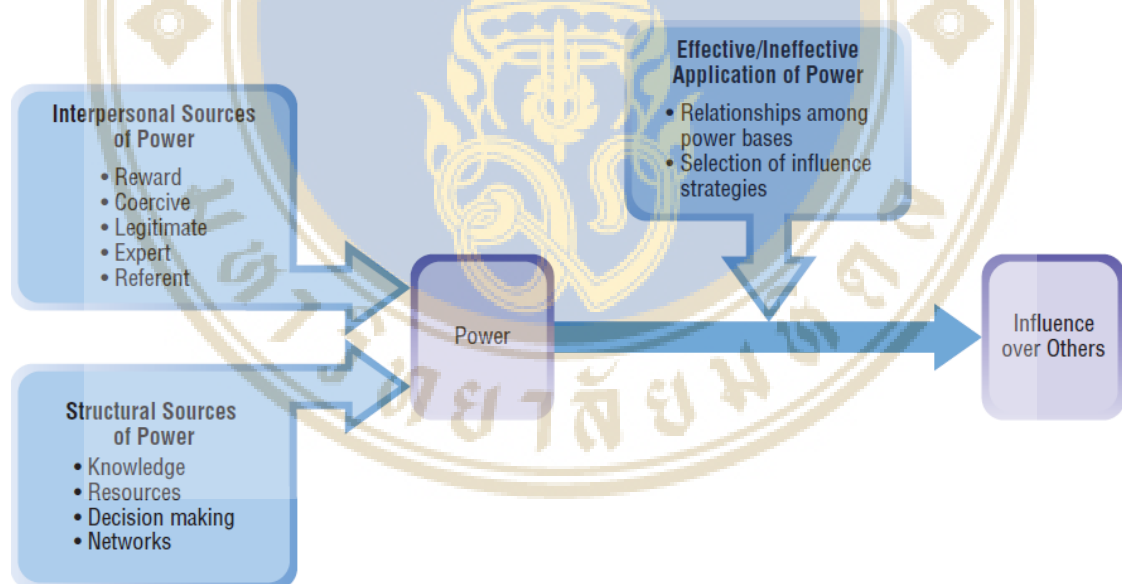
Managers in public and private organizations obtain and use power to accomplish organizational goals on a daily basis. Power in an organization is categorized into two main categories; interpersonal power and structural power. Interpersonal power is obtained from attributes of an individual whereas structural power is obtained by the organizational social system (Aquinas, P. Q., 2008; Sadhu, A. K., 2014; Ivancevich, J. M., Konopaske, R. & Matteson, M.T. (Ed.), 2010; Merchant, P., 2014; Wagner, J. A. & Hollenbeck, J. R. (Ed.), 2014).

There are five following sources of interpersonal power (Ivancevich, J. M., Konopaske, R. & Matteson, M.T. (Ed.), 2010):

- **Referent power:** It is gained as a result of being respected, admired, or liked. The source of the power is derived from personal characteristics, dominantly personality or behavior style. Charisma, is the basis of referent power.

- Legitimate power: This power is derived from the position of the person itself. It is the right given by the organization, by virtue of position, to control and influence behavior on subordinates in lower positions.
- Expert power: It is gained from having expertise in a specific area perceived valuable by others. The more difficult the knowledge to obtain, the higher the power degree. This is perceived from a personal characteristic, rather than from organization.
- Reward power: This power is gained from the resources one possesses which is considered valuable by the other person. He then, for exchange of the resources, is willing to perform certain actions.
- Coercive Power: This is opposite of reward power. It is gained from the ability to punish others. Consequently, other people comply with the orders and instructions out of fear.

Following, figure 2.1, is the framework of power sources summarizing this section of the literature review



**Figure 2.1 Framework - Sources of power (Szoc, R., n.d.)**

## 2.2 Charismatic leadership

Further drilling down into sources of referent power, charisma is an attribute that have been dominantly associated to referent power (Stimson, T. 2011; Kudisch J.

D., Poteet M. L., Dobbins G. H., Rush M. C., Russell J. A. 1995). Charisma derived from a Greek word meaning “gift” and regarded as a special magnetic charm or appeal a person has (Ivancevich et al., 2010). Characteristics of charismatic people in the today’s complex world are supportive, sensitive, and nurturing, compared to the traditional stereotype of aggressive, demanding, and dominant (Howell, J. M. 1992). Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi are all charismatic people and have extremely high level of referent power which they used for their respective good causes. A great example of a charismatic leader in the modern era is Barack Obama. In fact, charisma is considered to be one of the main reasons Obama won the elections (Bacharach S. B. 2012; Phillips B. 2012).

## **2.3 Gain power at work**

Numerous strategists and consultants around the world have written about “tips” and “secrets” on how individuals can gain power or authority over others in an organization. Some key tactics illustrates by the writers are as follows:

### **2.3.1 Show confidence**

People want to look up to leaders who are knowledgeable and confident. The way of communication is of utmost importance to convey confidence. Weak phrases such as “um”, “I’m not sure” and “I think so” should be avoided (Barker, E. 2014; Green, A. 2012; Sydney, D. 2013). To enhance it further, least number of words should be used to communicate a message (Wakeman, C. Y. 2011). Having and showing confidence also play a big part into handling uncomfortable situations. To maintain a good posture and facial expression while being able to gracefully exit tough conversation is the key. The use of phrases like "You've given me a lot to think about, so let me get back to you" or "I appreciate you raising this, and I'll think it over" can be very handy in such situations (Green, A. 2012).

### **2.3.2 Keep your boss happy**

Getting aligned with supervisor is advisable so he does not revert what the employee had said, which would very negatively impact the employee's authority level in the eyes of others. In contrast, with the backing of the supervisor, if also made aware to others, it helps add to the level of one's authority on others as an additional factor, the boss's authority, gets transferred onto the employee's authority level as well (Barker, E. 2014).

### **2.3.3 Don't get upset or angry**

There is no reason for people who are confident in their own authority to show their anger because they have the authority to fix problems. Getting upset will only undermine the person, as it signals that he does not know a more effective way to respond. He should be confident that he have the tools to back up his words with action if he needs to (Green, A. 2012).

### **2.3.4 Stop worrying about being liked**

Being liked should not be the focus. The goal should be being respected and effective. Sometime it is required to deliver hard messages and make decisions that not everyone will like without worrying about others' approval. But if the focus is being liked, people might not take the person seriously, losing a very important pre-requisite of obtaining authority (Wakeman, C. Y. 2011).

### **2.3.5 Pay attention to the tone of voice**

Linked with the above point is the use of the tone of voice which should be declarative statements, and the use of question should strictly be used for asking questions only. Sounding hesitant or unsure as a habit is a big flaw and can massively hurt the authoritativeness (Green, A. 2012).

### **2.3.6 Become comfortable with silence**

When speaking, one should make his point and then stop. There is no need to rush in to respond and try to fill silence by chattering nervously. It is perfectly fine to

pause before responding. Confident people assume that others will wait for them to speak. It can diminish the authority level, otherwise (Green, A. 2012).

### **2.3.7 Use of power poses**

It is essential for a person to have people perceive him in the way he desired and posture can direct the way how people think about the person. Poses that help portrays authority are called “power poses” (Shellenbarger, S. 2013). In fact, it is so manipulative that it also subconscious changes how one think about himself. For example, taking a confidence posture to help make the person more dominant, even when confident level is low. Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, in her research, stated that sitting or standing in a certain way, even for two minutes, lowers the stress hormone cortisol and raises testosterone levels. There are the right poses for speaking up in a meeting, closing a deal, pitching an idea, conducting an interview, and even chit-chat with the boss and negotiating a pay raise, amongst others (Robinson, M. 2014).

## **2.4 Non-verbal elements**

A lot of non-verbal elements have been linked to gaining power at work, be it posture, voice tone, or silence. Also, some other studies were done on the effective use of non-verbal communication. Examples of such studies are impact of a handshake which can not only help strangers form a better impression with a good handshake but also avoid negative impression as well (McGaughey, S. 2012; Haberman, M. 2012). Another example of the effective use of non-verbal communication is about dressing for the job one wants. It is not just a matter of putting on new clothes but a process of internalizing of one’s goals and dreams (Green, R. K. 2013). Therefore, it is worthwhile to further drilldown into in finding out the complete set of elements which are broken down into following six categories:

### **2.4.1 Kinesics**

Kinesics, referred to as “body language” in common terms, consists of movements of the hands, arms, head, legs, postural shifts, gestures, eye movements, and



facial expressions (Mujezinovic, N. 2011). Body gesture, a movement produced with a limb, especially the hands, to emphasize, express, confirm or back up the speaker's intention or attitude, is further broken down into following five different types (Colta, A. S. 2010):

- Emblems: Non-verbal elements whose meaning is known by most people (e.g. OK gesture) and are used intentionally to convey certain messages.
- Illustrative: Non-verbal elements that accompany and complete verbal messages (e.g. describing a circle by hand to show that an object is round).
- Facial expressions: Express emotional states of the speaker.
- Adjusting gestures: Non-verbal elements that accompany in maintaining and controlling interaction with interlocutors (e.g. nodding head).
- Adapting gestures: Stereotypical gestures made in conditions of concentration or mental tension (e.g. twisting of strands of hair or distancing a glass of water).

#### **2.4.2 Paralanguage**

Content-free vocalization and patterns associated with speech which are intonation (the rise and fall of voice when speaking) (International Association of Conference Interpreters 2005), tone of voice (means by which the speaker implies his attitude to the message) (Academia n.d.), volume, frequency, shuttering, filled pauses (for example “ah”, “um”), silent pauses (performs like oral discourse to intonation or temporary vocal inaction expressing the speaker's tension, uncertainty, uneasiness, or hesitation (Colta, A. S. 2010), and number of words spoken in a given unit of time (Mujezinovic, N. 2011).

#### **2.4.3 Physical contact**

Touch is culturally determined but each culture defines what parts of the body one may and may not touch. Fundamental message of touch is to control or affect - protect, support, disapprove (Intercultural Business Relations. 2014).

#### **2.4.4 Physical characteristics**

Physical characteristics consists of clothes artifacts and adornments (e.g. dress code, perfume and jewelry, accessories, personal belongings) (Mujezinovic, N. 2011). It is a very essential element of non-verbal communication as people tend to notice obvious things first (e.g. gender, race), then note attractiveness and, unsurprisingly, physically attractive people are generally perceived better.

#### **2.4.5 Environment**

As people surround themselves with things that are important and meaningful to them, environment communicates the character of the person (Sugiharto, S. M. 2013).

#### **2.4.6 Proxemics**

It is the use of space and amount of territory available within an organization. In general, the greater the status, the more control one has over space and territory (The University of Texas at Arlington 2014), which comprises of intimate distance, personal distance, social distance, and public distance. It communicates one's education level, trustworthiness, social position, level of sophistication, economic background, social background, level of success, and character (Sugiharto, S. M. 2013).

### **2.5 Gap in studies**

There are studies on the types of power, charismatic leadership and referent power, gaining authority at work, and non-verbal elements, but independently from each other. This research attempts to connect the dots, focusing on the impact of non-verbal communication on referent power in an organization.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study aims to provide insight on the contribution of non-verbal elements in becoming a charisma leader and also tries to depict the importance of non-verbal elements, the extent to which it is used and the effectiveness of its impact on the authority of a person in an organization. It also aims to discover the awareness of non-verbal elements surrounding people in the corporate environment as well.

#### **3.1 Research design**

To answer the research objective, qualitative research approach is used. This way, subjective insights of respondents towards non-verbal elements at work can be extracted in an optimum way.

#### **3.2 Data Collection Methodology**

##### **3.2.1 Population**

The population of this study is the employees in private organizations working in professional, supervisory and managerial positions.

##### **3.2.2 Sampling**

Clustered sampling and convenience methods were used for data collection. Respondents were divided into three main clusters; employees at the entry-level, managerial, and executive levels. This is to discover the consistency of the viewpoint towards non-verbal elements across the groups. Respondents with various backgrounds

(gender, age, industry, position, work experience) in Bangkok were recruited for the research.

### **3.2.3 Data collection**

Data were collected through face-to-face and telephonic interviews with semi-structured and open-ended questions for the interview, allowing for the respondents to elaborate on each question. Face-to-face interviews were audio-taped with respondents' consent. They were also informed that the recorded material will be used for educational purpose. Note taking technique was used for telephonic interviews. Prior to the interview, the researcher explained about non-verbal elements for the respondents to be able to effectively respond to the questions.

## **3.3 Instrument**

The interview began with generic demographic questions followed the asking about their viewpoint on the contribution of non-verbal elements in becoming a charisma leader and then, the usage and effectiveness of non-verbal elements. This study then developed to conclude the analysis as the following questions:

### **3.3.1 Demographic**

- What is your age?
- What is your job title?
- What is your employer name?
- What is the industry you are working in?
- How many years have you been with this company?

### **3.3.2 What one likes in a charisma leader and association on non-verbal elements**

- Who is your favorite charismatic leader? Why? What does it take to become such the person?

- Do you think non-verbal elements played a major role in building the charisma in the person? Why/Why not?

### **3.3.3 Awareness of non-verbal elements at work**

- How important do you find the art of presenting as compared to the content itself? Why and how do you think it impacts the audience?
  - Are there any non-verbal elements you in your organization intentionally or unintentionally have which helps you be respected, admired, or authoritative?
  - Do you notice any person in your organization intentionally or unintentionally deploying non-verbal elements helps him/her be respected, admired, or authoritative?

### **3.3.4 Use and effectiveness of power poses or body postures at work**

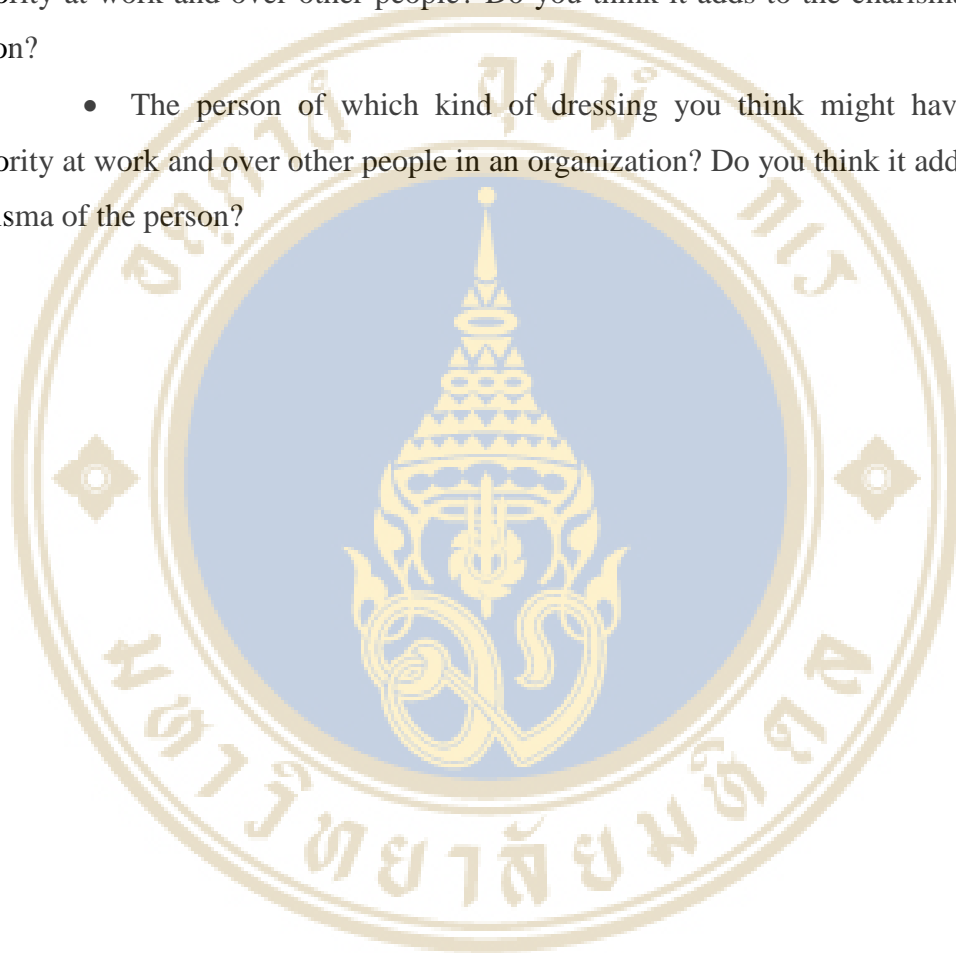
- Do you have any special power poses or body postures that you use in certain situations (e.g. talking to a colleagues, negotiating a deal, talking to subordinates, etc.)? If so, which pose(s) and used in which situation(s)? What do you think are the benefit and effectiveness of using such pose(s)?

### **3.3.5 Use of non-verbal elements to different target groups**

- What are the most powerful non-verbal signals (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, dress code, posture, etc.) for a talking to your boss? What do you think are the impacts of such signals?
  - What are the most powerful non-verbal elements (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, dress code, posture, etc.) for a talking to your colleague of the same level? What do you think are the impacts of such signals?
  - What are the most powerful non-verbal elements (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, dress code, posture, etc.) for a talking to your subordinates? What do you think are the impacts of such signals?

### **3.3.6 The charismatic body language, way of speaking, and way of dressing**

- The person of which kind of body language you think might have more authority at work and over other people in an organization? Do you think it adds to the charisma of the person?
- The person of which way of speaking you think might have more authority at work and over other people? Do you think it adds to the charisma of the person?
- The person of which kind of dressing you think might have more authority at work and over other people in an organization? Do you think it adds to the charisma of the person?



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher, through face-to-face and telephonic interviews, collected the data in a semi-structured manner to optimally extract the subjective viewpoints towards the awareness, usage, and effectiveness of non-verbal elements.

#### **4.1 Demographic profiles of respondents**

For the purpose, 7 respondents were interviewed, all of whom work full-time in an organization in Bangkok. The background of the respondents varied by their age group, nationality, positions (entry-level, managerial, executive), industry, types of company (private organizations, NGO, Embassy), and level of work experience. Every respondent had massive exposure in communication within and outside their respective organizations, since they have to conduct internal, partner, and client meetings on a regular basis. It would be very interesting to know their take on the use of non-verbal communication elements at work. Employment level, nationality, age, industry, and years in the organization are listed in the table 4.1 below:

**Table 4.1 Participant Biography**

<b>Sr #</b>	<b>Employment Level</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Years in the organization</b>
1	Entry-Level	Thai	24	Export Sales Engineer	ABB	1
2	Entry-Level	Thai	27	Brand Executive	SriChand United Dispensary	1
3	Entry-Level	Pakistan	27	Business Development Manager	NetSol Technologies	3
4	Managerial	Thai	26	Sales and Marketing Manager	Media Resource Management	2
5	Managerial	Thai	30	Payment Analyst	US Embassy	7
6	Executive	Pakistan	29	Head of Pre-Sales	NetSol Technologies	7
7	Executive	Thai	54	Chief of Records Management and Communication (APAC Region)	International Labor Organization - United Nation	30



## 4.2 Observation findings

Similar perspectives emerged in the three groups of respondents. It was also very interesting to find certain aspects on the same non-verbal elements that is emphasized differently by each of the three groups.

### 4.2.1 What one likes in a charismatic leader and the contribution of non-verbal elements?

- Entry-level employees: Charismatic leaders that entry-level employees like and admire are the ones who are kind to other people, regardless of their status or any other characteristics. They are understanding and are selfless in their approach in helping others. Leaders named by the respondents are a college professor, and Prophet Muhamad. The reason that such personalities appeal to them is because they have just started their careers and are dependent on a helper who can help them take that first step into the corporate world and can help them learn and prosper in their whole new world. All respondents agreed that non-verbal elements played a major role in making the leaders charismatic and in possessing a referent power in them. The non-verbal element identified to be the major source of charisma was soft and humble tone of voice. It conveys respect towards them, regardless of the speaker being at a higher level of status.

- Managerial level employees: Charismatic leaders that managerial level employees like and admire are the ones who are ambitious and very hardworking. They are willing to passionately put in more than their 100% at work. They are very high in self-confidence. They know how to present themselves and when they speak, the world stops to listen to them. They are famous, successful, and most importantly, self-made. Leaders named by the respondents are Steve Jobs and Amitabh Bachchan (an Indian movie superstar). All respondents agreed that non-verbal elements played a major role in making the leaders charismatic and in possessing a referent power in them. The non-verbal element identified to be the major source of charisma was the essence of self-confidence that could be felt through the personality of the leaders. Their tough looks, communication skills, and active body language, all played parts into building the charisma in the leaders.

- Executive level employees: Characteristics of leaders executive level employees admired were the same to that of managerial level employees, having Steve

Jobs in their list as well. However, the only difference between the two groups was the emphasis of authority the leaders held was admirable and considered a powerful asset in the eyes of executive level employees. All respondents agreed that non-verbal elements played a major role in making the leaders charismatic and in possessing a referent power in them. The non-verbal elements identified to be the major source of charisma was the use and control of facial expressions to suit the situations and also the precision and confidence when the leaders spoke.

#### 4.2.2 Awareness of non-verbal elements at work

All the three levels of employees were aware of non-verbal elements they and people around them intentionally or unintentionally use at work. Table 4.2 illustrates examples given by the respondents:

**Table 4.2 Non-verbal element awareness**

Sr #		Non-verbal elements used by respondents	Non-verbal elements used by others that the respondents observed
1	Entry-Level	Talk in a high volume and aggressive tone to get things done from admin staff.	Use of firm and serious tone when assigning a task.
2	Entry-Level	Eye contact when talking to others. Use of extensive body gestures to portray friendliness and honesty.	Professional sitting posture at work portrays good personality.
3	Entry-Level	Appropriate dress-code. Talk in humble tone and voice to appear non-threatening/non-challenging, and more like a partner, to seek cooperation from others.	Boss is very articulate and expressive in his body gestures. Strong eye contact. Rise and lower tone. Makes content more interesting to listen to.

**Table 4.2 Non-verbal element awareness (cont.)**

Sr #		Non-verbal elements used by respondents	Non-verbal elements used by others that the respondents observed
4	Managerial	Use body gestures when talking to young clients to portray friendliness and approachability. While with older clients, less gestures and more professional body language to convey respect to them.	Boss uses serious and firm tone and facial expressions when following up with subordinates with a very direct way of communication. When meeting clients, he also dresses to the occasion with suit and tie to convey professionalism.
5	Managerial	Focus on dress code. It has to be smart looking. Try to be concise when talking to anyone and focus on improving presentation skills.	Boss communicates direct to the point and is able to finish weekly department meeting in an hour.
6	Executive	The use of facial expressions and silence on things not acceptable. These are enough to convey disagreement in a respectful way.	Maid always smile, showing care and her service-mind. On the other hand, Accounts Manager always have a negative facial expression and harsh tone. It bounce back to them the same way. It tells other people how you should treat me.
7	Executive	Dress appropriate to the occasion	A colleague with very sweet voice and is soft spoken that it is a delight to talk to her. With this, she can easily get help from other people on things she need.

#### 4.2.3 Use and effectiveness of power poses or body postures at work

Body posture, one of the non-verbal elements, was further explored to discover the deliberate use of certain body postures in certain situations. Unsurprisingly,

every respondent used power poses or body postures to appear authoritative over other people. Most of the respondents (6 out of 7), referred to the pose to use when having important discussions with their clients. Sitting with a straight back, leaning a little forward, elbow on the table, constant eye contact, responsive body gestures like nodding, while maintaining poker face so clients are unable to interpret what is going on in person's mind. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the posture:



**Figure 4.1 Body posture in client meeting**

(The University of Arizona 2014)

The purpose of having such a posture during meetings was to non-verbally communicate to the clients that the respondents were giving importance and interest on what the clients were saying. This is to give a positive impression to them and more importantly, facilitate communication and also build relationship with clients.

Power pose shared by one respondent was when she acted as a customer and was negotiating a deal with vendor. The body posture is relaxed, leaned back, one hand loosely on the chin while the other stretched out, and legs crossed. The explained posture is illustrated in the figure 4.2 below:



**Figure 4.2 Body posture in vendor meeting**

(Vogue 2014)

The purpose of this posture is to communicate authority and holding an upper hand. It portrays that the deal is not as important and the respondent had other options, resulting in higher negotiation power.

#### **4.2.4 Use of non-verbal elements to boss**

All the three levels of employees use non-verbal elements, and in very similar manner, when talking to their bosses. Extensive importance had been given to having eye contact with the boss to show confidence, less use of hand movement to not be perceived as nervous or too excited, and maintaining distance to avoid the boss feeling uncomfortable. Being direct and precise was the key to holding the boss's attention. In times of trouble with work, the use concerned tone and facial expression could lead to getting understanding and eventually support from the boss as well.

#### **4.2.5 Use of non-verbal elements to colleagues of the same level**

All the three levels of employees use non-verbal elements, and in very similar manner, when talking to their colleagues of the same level. All the aspects of non-verbal elements hold a casual and friendly manner. They were more talkative to the colleagues. Hands movements were extensively used when communicating, along with friendly tone and facial expression along with maintaining lesser distance from them. The use of touch is also very dominant during communication. This helped in building

relationships with colleagues. An example given by a respondent was pointing to the watch indicating to her colleague that he had been waiting for long.

#### **4.2.6 Use of non-verbal elements to subordinates**

Study of the use of non-verbal elements when talking to subordinates had been done only on respondents of managerial and executive levels as entry-level respondents did not have any subordinates working under them. In this case, managerial- and executive-level employees use non-verbal elements in very similar when talking to subordinates, whereby the sole purpose was to appear commanding and authoritative. The tone of voice and facial expression had to be serious for the subordinates to take their words seriously and respect what they said. However, the volume is not raised for the purpose. Shouting was not considered an element of authority, but of disrespect instead. The only difference in results between the two groups of respondents was that executive level managers put more focused in portraying authority which, in turn, reflected in their tone. Executive level employees speak with more authoritative and commanding tone than managerial level employees.

#### **4.2.7 The charismatic body language**

Body language considered charismatic by all the three levels of employees were similar, in which the main aspects were firm body language, as supposed to shaky, and strong eye contact, portraying decisiveness and self-confidence in the person. In addition to these elements, each of the three groups had special emphasis on certain non-verbal elements, which they felt adds to charisma of a person, which are:

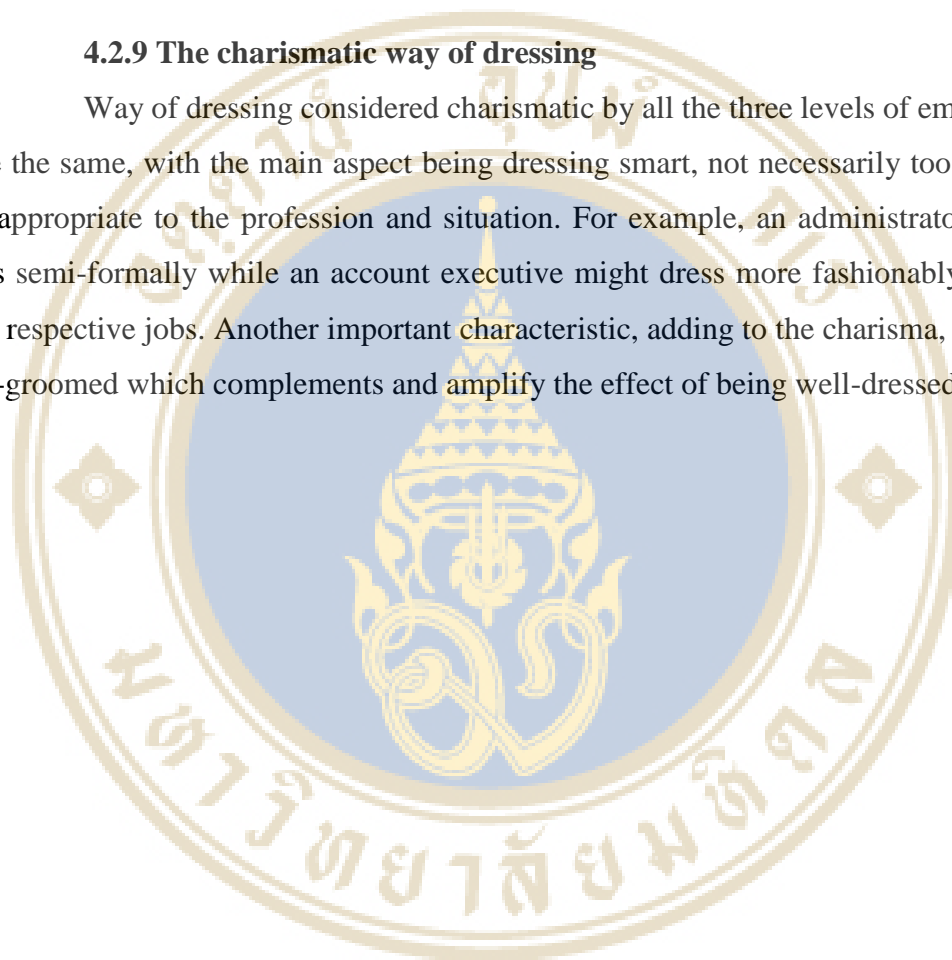
- Entry-level employees: Some focus had been put on the body language being active in the making of charisma as it indicated the readiness and enthusiasm towards work and life which was highly admired in this group of respondents.
- Managerial level employees: This group especially felt that the art of maintaining appropriate distance with others at work was highly admired.
- Executive level employees: The ability to control facial expressions was considered highly charismatic in a person by this group of respondents.

#### **4.2.8 The charismatic way of speaking**

Way of speaking considered charismatic by all the three levels of employees were the same, with the main aspect being direct and concise. i.e. the use of least number of words possible to efficiently communicate a message, that too, in a confident way. Speaker searching for words or hesitant or speak with full of filled pauses like “um” and “ah” impact negatively to his/her charisma level.

#### **4.2.9 The charismatic way of dressing**

Way of dressing considered charismatic by all the three levels of employees were the same, with the main aspect being dressing smart, not necessarily too formal, and appropriate to the profession and situation. For example, an administrator might dress semi-formally while an account executive might dress more fashionably to suit their respective jobs. Another important characteristic, adding to the charisma, is being well-groomed which complements and amplify the effect of being well-dressed.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Across responding groups from entry-, managerial-, and executive levels, this study examined to the identify characteristics of charismatic leaders, respondents' awareness of non-verbal elements at work, use and effectiveness of power poses, use of non-verbal elements to different target groups, and the body language, way of speaking, and way of dressing they considered charismatic. This is to serve the purpose of this study to find out the impact of non-verbal communication on referent power in an organization.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

A thematic interpretation of the data revealed that there is an impact of non-verbal communication on referent power in an organization, both in positive and negative ways.

Findings revealed that non-verbal elements contributed largely to charismatic leaders who hold referent power. Charismatic leaders that entry-level, managerial level, executive level employees liked and admired were the ones who are kind to other people, ambitious and very hardworking, and authoritative and powerful, respectively. They are all aware of the use of non-verbal elements by the respondents themselves and people around them in their organizations.

It was also very clear that the use of non-verbal elements could manipulate how others interpret the person and the situation, and example being sitting in a certain posture in a meeting with client or vendor. Also, the appropriateness of the use of the same non-verbal elements differed depending to the audience. When talking to the boss, colleagues, and subordinates, all non-verbal elements used by respondents conveyed self-confidence, friendliness, and authoritative respectively.



At work, charisma, leading to referent power (Stimson, T. 2011; Kudisch J. D., Poteet M. L., Dobbins G. H., Rush M. C., Russell J. A. 1995), could be obtained from non-verbal elements. An active body language is considered to add charismatic values for entry-level employees, while maintaining appropriate distance with others is considered to add charismatic values for managerial level employees, and the ability to control facial expressions is considered to add charismatic values for executive level employees. Also, speaking precisely and dressing smartly and appropriate to the profession and situation is considered to add charismatic values for employees across all levels.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Everyone in an organization observes non-verbal elements, from entry-level, to managerial level, to executive level. It is part of a daily job life, and even personal life in that matter. Knowing how to present oneself in the right way according to the audience can make them form a positive impression about person, which is extremely important and helpful for career growth. Following are the major areas where managers can use the findings of the research to gain them gain referent power at work:

### **5.2.1 Gaining referent power over subordinates**

Entry-level employees are sensitive and are seeking support. Managers like to be authoritative and commanding over their subordinates and it is conveyed in all non-verbal elements of the managers, from voice tone to facial expression, which may get things done, by force, but not get them admired which can get things done by will. Therefore, it is recommended for managers to do the reverse and be soft-spoken with their subordinates. Major emphasis is also put on the way managers dress and speak. Managers should be precise and direct when they speak and filled with confidence, avoiding shaky voices and filled pauses. Managers mostly focus in dressing formally rather than smartly. Smart dressing means being not too formal and with a sense of fashion appropriate to the job and situation. These non-verbal elements can help managers gain referent power over their subordinates.

### **5.2.2 Gaining referent power over colleagues of the same level**

To exercise lateral leadership, which is leading without legitimate authority given by the company in the form of title or position (Sloane, P. 2014), it is essential to gain referent power the colleagues, who would then consider manager as the leader of their group. Normally, every employee appear friendly with colleagues all the time, however, it would be of great benefit if, in regular intervals, the manager can appear to be hard working and ambitious. Like entry level managers, speaking with confidence and smart dressing also contribute to charisma. These traits are highly admired amongst employees in managerial level.

### **5.2.3 Gaining referent power over boss**

For the boss, showing authority and command in manager's work and confidence in himself/herself are the keys to gaining referent power. Ways to do that is to maintain eye contact with the boss when talking, use less hand movements and maintain distance with the boss. Another interesting study revealed from the research is that executive level managers precisely notice facial expressions and admire the ones who can control their facial expressions. Therefore, managers have to be very careful with their facial expressions and try to maintain a poker face when talking to the boss. Like entry level managers, speaking with confidence and smart dressing also contribute to charisma as well.

### **5.2.4 Gaining referent power over others outside the organization**

This results included the effective use of non-verbal elements over clients and vendors. Siting with a straight back, leaning a little forward, elbow on the table, constant eye contact, responsive body gestures like nodding can help gain trust from the customer, while a relaxed, non-interested posture over vendors can make them give managers more discount or fasten the timelines as they would realize it is them more eager to sell rather the managers more eager to buy.

### **5.3 Limitations**

A major limitation to this research was the timeframe within which it had to be completed. Consequently, number of respondents that could be interviewed and, more importantly, analyzed. Therefore, the results might not truly represent viewpoints of the population. Due to the same limitation, respondents approached were all from Bangkok, where the researcher is based. The respondents available for the interview were all either from multinational companies or from international organizations who may not truly depict the viewpoint of employees from local Thai organizations.

### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

The profile of the respondents were slightly specific. To enhance the relevance of the results on the population, further research can be done involving respondents from not only international companies or international organizations, but from also local Thai companies without influence of foreign employees. The respondents can be employees based outside of Bangkok. Also, all respondents in this research were employees who are client-facing and had to interact with people outside their organizations, however, it would be interesting to find out the usage and effectiveness of non-verbal communication for back-office employees.

The influence of culture was not studied as different cultures have different rules about and interpretation of non-verbal elements (Sugiharto, S. M. 2013). Some non-verbal elements, such as touch or high volume, might be more or less acceptable and interpreted differently in different cultures. Therefore, further research can also be done in this regards.

Similarly, the influence of P-Types was also not studied to discover how employees of the same level, but of different P-Types, communicate non-verbally and find which ways of non-verbal communication charismatic and influential.

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