

## **Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower's Self-Efficacy: Moderating Role of Follower's Impression Management**

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**Abstract.** Enhancing the belief in the abilities of employees to perform a particular task is the critical role played by a transformational leader subject to impression management strategies used by the employees. The purpose of this paper is to report a study on how self-efficacy of the subordinates is enhanced by their use of impression management strategies on supervisors and the impact of transformational leadership in enhancing subordinate's self-efficacy. Data were collected from 112 respondents (40 females and 72 males) working in the information technology industry in India. They responded to questions about their supervisor's transformational leadership, the impression management strategies they used on their supervisors and their self-efficacy. The results show positive relationship between transformational leadership and the self-efficacy of the subordinates. Self-focused impression management strategies are positively related to the self-efficacy. Other-focused strategies have positive relationship with transformational leadership. Other-focused and job-focused strategies moderate the relation between transformational leadership and self-efficacy, such that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and follower self-efficacy only when followers' use of other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies is high.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, charisma, impression management, self-efficacy, empowerment

Transformational leadership is a relationship based on leader's associated extraordinariness, charisma, and an aura of mysticism of leaders, who can bring out the best in their followers. Transformational leaders exert influence by addressing their followers' needs, by expressing their firm beliefs, by acting as role models with high morals and ethics and without the desire of any personal gains. Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and encourage followers by enhancing the value of their work to themselves and by enhancing the belief in their abilities to perform tasks. Transformational leadership is mutually stimulating and engaging relationship between the leader and the subordinates. Another dimension that this study explores is subordinates influencing supervisors with their impression management strategies and thereby developing enhanced levels of self-efficacy. Considering the size of organizations and the varied talent pool with diverse skill-set facing tough competition, there is a need to ensure employees have high levels of self-efficacy.

Organizations strive to achieve a common objective of employee empowerment. Organizations need leaders who have extraordinary qualities to enhance the capabilities of their employees. In addition, organizations also need employees who have skills to effectively influence their supervisors and develop a healthy and strong leader-follower engagement. Organizations that have charismatic leaders, who inspire others to perform beyond expectations and show exemplary traits, are one of the key instruments of thriving and employee-friendly organizations.

This research attempt takes a step forward in studying the impact of transformational leadership on the self-efficacy of the subordinates and the role played by impression management strategies used by subordinates on their supervisors. Earlier research has found that transformational leadership has significant impact on the employees' empowerment in the organizational settings. This study adds another dimension by studying the relationship between the self-efficacy of the subordinates and their impression management strategies. It also explores the impact of transformational leadership on the self-efficacy of the subordinate in the presence of impression management strategies.

### **Theory and Hypotheses**

There are two types of leadership—transactional leadership and charismatic/transformational leadership. Transactional leader is the one who adheres strictly to the organizational requirements, focuses more on maintaining as less deviation as possible from the existing system, focuses on meeting targets, indulges in rewarding based on performance and involves in correcting the status quo in case of deviations or mistakes. Transformational leaders are those who clearly articulate their vision with a strong sense of self-confidence, determination and power to communicate their high expectations from their followers.

#### ***Transformational Leadership***

Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a relationship wherein one or more people engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Transformational leaders influence their followers by their exemplary behaviour, selfless attitude, inspiration and high levels of morality. Transformational leaders change the organizational culture. Transformational leadership consists of four factors, which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence could be further subdivided into idealized influence attributed and idealized influence behavior. Terms transformational leadership and charismatic leadership are used interchangeably because both the terms are considered identical twins (Conger, 1999; Krishnan, 2005).

Charisma and charismatic leadership has long been defined by many researchers. The first application of charisma into leadership context came by an exemplary work of German Sociologist Max Weber. He was intrigued by the forces that gathered and stabilized the society and came up with three ideal types to describe the forces of authority in a society: the traditional, the rational-legal, and the charismatic. Weber also differentiated between pure charisma, which is a behavioural trait of a leader and routinized charisma, which comes to a leader by a formal position he resides in (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Conger and Kanungo (1987) stressed on removing the aura of mysticism from charisma. The focus should be

strictly on observable behavioural process that can be described and analyzed as an established model of study. Charisma has two behavioural components—idealized influence, which leaders exert by serving their followers by addressing their needs, by expressing their firm beliefs, by acting as role models with high morals and ethics without the desire of any personal gains; and inspirational motivation, when a leader motivates, inspires and encourages followers by enhancing the value of their work to themselves. Leadership has been studied by researchers in variety of approaches (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998). However, each approach views leadership as an interactive and dynamic process, during which the charismatic leader exercises extraordinary influence and encourages the followers to come out with their best potential.

*Charisma and charismatic leadership.* Individuals choose to follow charismatic leaders in management settings, not because of their formal authority but out of a perception of their extraordinariness. Thus, any measure of charismatic leadership must be based on the follower's perception of certain specific behavioural attributes of the leader (Conger & Kanungo, 1987).

Behling and McFillen (1996) developed a model of processes of charismatic leadership, which is based on six attributes of a leader behaviour and three beliefs a follower holds of the leader. The six attributes—(1) empathy; (2) dramatization of the mission; (3) projecting self-assurance; (4) enhancing own image; (5) assuring followers of their competence and ability to achieve great things, and (6) providing followers with an opportunity to achieve success by delegating responsibility and removing obstacles to follower's performance—are a mixture of personal qualities and behavioural patterns. The three beliefs held by the followers are: (1) awe; (2) inspiration, and (3) empowerment.

*Characteristics of a transformational leader.* Transformational leaders possess extraordinary qualities. They have a strong determination and self-confidence and are capable of inspiring subordinates towards achieving organizational goals with strong commitment and dedication. Charismatic leaders are visionary leaders sensitive to the needs and values of their followers. Krishnan (2001) found that transformational leaders gave greater importance to values pertaining to others than to values concerning only themselves. Subordinates identify with the leader's vision, which is also the organization's vision, and thus exists collective cohesion in the organization (Waldman, Ramirez & House, 2001). These leaders are future-oriented and take the responsibility to move forward from the status quo to the future state (Hayibor, Agle, Sears, Sonnenfeld, & Ward, 2011). Charismatic leaders tend to indulge in inspirational talks and possess emotional appeal to arouse motivation in their followers. The followers of transformational leaders also express high levels of satisfaction at work due to the presence and influence of a transformational leader. Charismatic leaders have strong articulation and therefore, communicate vision and goals of the work group and of the organization to subordinates in a highly effective manner. A higher level of charisma in a leader has been proven to lead to higher team performance (Balkundi, Harrison, & Kilduff, 2011). Transformational leaders take the organization on a forward march by articulating common purpose and exciting future possibilities. They rationally drive individuals to expand their personal purpose to include organizational purpose. In addition, such leaders address the needs of individuals achieving higher purpose rather than mere career success (Harrison, 1983).

A supervisor turns into a transformational leader when the subordinate develops admiration for the leader and effortlessly rises up to the leader's expectations. Showing

favourable attribution to the leader by a subordinate is a means to acknowledge the influence of a transformational leader on the subordinates. Influence and charisma involves both a leader and a follower. Therefore, the perception process of the leader depends on the cognitive mechanism of subordinate, the context in which the leader's behaviour is embedded and the large number of pieces of information available simultaneously (Foti, Knee, & Backert, 2008).

Perception of a leader is dependent on multiple constraints, such as subordinates' expectations from the leader, past record of the organization, record of the subordinates' past leaders in the work group and affective or cognitive process of the subordinate. The presence of a large number of more such constraints working together at the same time largely influences the leadership perception process.

Foti et al. (2008) mentioned two theoretical perspectives—connectionist theory and catastrophe theory—to understand the issues in leadership perception. Leadership perception is a subjective process that largely depends on the subordinates' perception of their leader. The connectionist theory deals with an explanation of how perception of leaders can be context dependent and may change as context changes. The catastrophe theory deals with concepts to understand the critical points when the perceptions change qualitatively during the process of leadership perception.

Subordinates attribute charisma to a leader because of the leader's high performance. Balkundi et al. (2011) framed two models—charisma to centrality model and centrality to charisma model. Charisma to centrality model operates on charisma as a central trait of leaders that facilitates leaders' movement towards more advantageous and central location where their influence on the subordinates is positive and leads to better performance. Such charismatic leaders also take a central position in informal settings and develop cordial relations with subordinates outside work that allows them to share their goals and vision and influence and motivate subordinates to go a step further to achieve the desired outcomes. Centrality to charisma model operates with leaders occupying the central location being seen as possessing extraordinary qualities. A leader who is at a central location is seen as a charismatic personality possessing extraordinary qualities by the subordinates in his or her network. Thus, in centrality to charisma model, due to work related interactions the leader gets opportunity to establish charisma with subordinates and in turn improves the performance by influencing subordinates to work effectively.

The charismatic, transformational and visionary leadership perspectives are called new leadership theories. They focus on perceptual processes. These theories stress that followers' perceptions are the ultimate determinant of leader influence (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999).

According to Balkundi et al. (2011), subordinates perceived their leaders to be charismatic based on the personal interaction they share rather than their media presentations or public speeches. A leader who solicits subordinate's advice and pays individualized attention is perceived as a charismatic leader by subordinates and wins respect and trust of subordinates.

Hayibor et al. (2011) directed attention towards the effect of value congruence on a subordinate's perception of his or her leader's charisma. Value congruence between the subordinate and a leader raises the level of their interpersonal interaction and leads to

internalization of the core values of the leader by the subordinate. Improved interpersonal interactions reduce ambiguities and conflicts at the work place (Singh & Krishnan, 2002).

*Charismatic leadership and followers.* Studies have supported that charisma has a positive relation with follower's task satisfaction. Charismatic leaders enhance the clarity of work for the subordinate by providing a frame of reference and by using fine articulation skills (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Krishnan (2005) showed that the leader-follower relationship duration enhanced the effect of transformational leadership on follower's terminal value system congruence and identification (cognitive outcomes), but not on attachment and affective commitment (affective outcomes). Charisma of a leader is positively related to task performance, trust in leader, quality of work, willingness to sacrifice and alignment of value system of subordinate.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy, a key element in his social learning theory, as one's belief in one's capability to perform a specific task. Self-efficacy is a dynamic construct that keeps changing gradually with acquired new information and experience (Nandal & Krishnan, 2000). Bandura (1982) found that by gradual and repeated cognitive experiences people experience notable enhancement in self-efficacy.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as a process of enhancing self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information. Thorlakson and Murray (1996) proved that empowered group of employees found their work more rewarding.

*Dimensions of self-efficacy.* Self-efficacy has three dimensions. Magnitude refers to the level of task difficulty a person believes he or she can attain. Strength refers to whether the conviction that a person holds regarding the magnitude is strong or weak. Generality refers to the degree to which expectations can be generalized across situations (Gist, 1987). These dimensions have implications on the performance (Bandura, 1977).

*Development of self-efficacy.* Four information cues influence the self-efficacy of a person. They are enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal from most influential to least influential. These cues provide important data but it is the cognitive appraisal and integration of the data that ultimately determines self-efficacy.

First, enactive mastery, the most influential of all cues, is defined as repeated performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1982). Mastery is achieved with continuous and gradual accomplishment of the tasks, which builds skills, capability to cope and expertise required to perform a particular task.

Second, vicarious experience or modeling, less effective than enactive mastery, is when the subject watches the model perform the task. The outcome of modeling is the most effective when the model and subject are similar in terms of characteristics and capabilities (Bandura, 1977).

Third, verbal persuasion, less effective than both enactive mastery and vicarious experience, is by which a person is convinced of his or her capability to perform a certain task.

Fourth, Bandura (1977) defined emotional arousal as a stressful situation that may be informative and of value to a person's personal competencies and in turn self-efficacy. Gist (1987) pointed to a study that highlighted that in anxiety generating scenarios, modeling raised self-efficacy of the subject more than emotional or psychological desensitization.

*Self-efficacy and charismatic leadership.* Charismatic leadership leads to enhancement in the self-efficacy of the subordinate. Charismatic leaders exercise enactive mastery and verbal persuasion to convince subordinates of their capability to perform a task (Bandura, 1977). They delegate challenging work to the subordinates and expose them to enough opportunities to experience mastery and realize their self-worth. Charismatic leaders express high expectations from the subordinates and place high confidence in them regarding the work and fulfillment of bottom-line (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). An environment that abounds in healthy feedback, support of the leader, and inspiring challenges to the subordinates fosters optimism in the environment and conviction to achieve personal and organizational goals (Tims et al., 2011). Gist (1987), mentioned that Pygmalion effect might lead to enhanced self-efficacy. The Pygmalion effect is a phenomenon that results in enhanced learning or performance because of positive expectations of others. Pygmalion effect and self-efficacy are associated through persuasive influence of others, who hold high expectations from a person. The persuasion to live up to the high expectations may lead to subordinate's establishing high self-efficacy perception. Charismatic leaders have the capability to enhance the self-worth of the subordinate by emphasizing on the importance of delivering efforts based on important values. According to Shamir, House, & Arthur, (1993) higher sense of self-worth leads to higher self-efficacy; a sense of moral correctness is a source of strength and confidence.

Self-efficacy, charisma and performance. Performance and commitment of a subordinate is enhanced by charisma of a charismatic leader (Shamir et al., 1993). Studies show that self-efficacy, due to its motivational potential, is an important antecedent of work-engagement. Work-engagement as a general indicator of well-being, according to Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2009), is positively related to subordinate's work performance. Research shows high correlation between efficacy perceptions and performance (Gist, 1987). Personal resources (i.e. self-efficacy) are malleable in nature (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Therefore, leaders have immense capability to influence and boost optimism and self-efficacy (i.e., personal resources) of the subordinates by their transformational leadership style. Frequent fluctuations in support, belief or transformational leadership style may result in fluctuations in self-beliefs (i.e., personal resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, etc.) of the subordinate (Tims et al., 2011). Intervention by a leader to empower employees results in employees performing their tasks more competently (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Nandal and Krishnan (2000) found that charismatic leadership was positively related to lack of role ambiguity, which in turn was positively related to self-efficacy.

*Hypothesis 1.* Follower's self-efficacy is positively related to transformational leadership.

### ***Impression Management***

Impression management or self-presentation is a process by which people present themselves to others to create and maintain desired perception in the minds of significant

others and elicit desired response. According to Frink and Ferris (1998), impression management is a natural consequence of human interaction and impressions are influenced irrespective of the intentions. Therefore, impression management, demands active and high quality articulation competency and not just mere reliance on observation of others. Impression management deals with a fundamental human desire to be seen in a favourable manner by people in power (Rosenfeld, Gaicalone, & Riordan, 1994). The concept of impression management was introduced by Goffman (1959), who elaborated that people in social interaction function as actors whose performances depend upon the characteristics of both the situations and the audience at hand. These actors on stage of life strive to control the images or identities that they portray to relevant others in order to obtain desired end-states, be they social, psychological, or material (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997).

*Impression management strategies.* Impression management strategies can be classified as defensive and assertive (Wayne & Liden, 1995). Defensive strategies are employed in response to poor performance such as apologies, excuses, etc. in order to dampen the possible consequences of poor performance. Assertive strategies are for an individual who intends to establish a desired identity in the mind of the target audience. Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) listed different impression management strategies employed by people to appear as they desire and elicit positive response. Ingratiation is used to appear more likeable and attractive. Self-promotion is presenting oneself as highly competent with regards to certain skills or abilities. Exemplification is presenting oneself as a morally worthy person who will be acknowledged as a role model and may lead to follower emulation. Intimidation is presenting oneself as a dangerous person who can cause pain to others. Supplication is presenting oneself as a helpless person who solicits aid from others. The strategies used to appear appealing can be accomplished both verbally and non-verbally such as by eye contact, touch, smiling. Other common self-enhancement tactics to draw positive and intended response from target are flattery, opinion conformity and favor doing (Wayne & Liden, 1995). According to Gallagher (2007), individual needs, affection quotient and other situational factors are a reason for different impression management strategies being followed by people in the workplace. Impression management can also be classified into self-focused, other-focused, and job-focused. Self-focused impression management is to manage one's own image. Other-focused or supervisor-focused is to conform or be in agreement with the target. Job-focused is to focus on statements related to a person's performance at work (Singh & Krishnan, 2002). For the purpose of this study, we focused on this classification.

Information processing, which provides insights into the quality of exchange between subordinate and supervisor, has few stages such as attention, categorization, recall and information integration. The processed information influences supervisor's judgment, behaviour and reaction towards the subordinate (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Therefore, impression management strategies used by subordinates on their supervisors are very crucial and highly influential during the period of their relationship building and determines the categorization of subordinates by the supervisors (Wayne & Liden, 1995). Observation is an incessant process and in addition to observation, strategic self-presentation or impression management strategies by subordinates play a crucial role on their acceptance level and perception by the supervisor.

Impression management has been studied in multiple organizational contexts such as performance appraisal, supervisor-subordinate relationship, and job interviews (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Studies have found that impression management is positively related to power relationship; the more power the target has the more the desire to manage impression

arises (Chin, 2006). Therefore, the study of impression management in organizations is important to understand subordinate-supervisor dynamics. Different impression management strategies are adopted by different people in order to establish long-term or short-term relationship and for eliciting desired reaction from the target audience. Impression management has also been studied for its impact on close relationships. A study found that close relationships turn into success by other-benefitting impression management techniques, which aim at affirming and enhancing the partners' self-image as desired by them leading to formation of glorifying view of their personality (Schlenker & Britt, 2001). In addition, the closer the relationship, both the actor and the target would be more beneficially associated to each other. Impression management is not always self-presentation to accomplish personal objectives, enhance self-esteem or establish desired self-image. Schlenker and Britt (2001) studied that impression management can also be applied to benefit others by means of providing support to them by addressing their needs.

*Self-efficacy and impression management.* Subordinates who focus more on managing their image in front of others and who focus more on highlighting their work and achievements develop self-belief in themselves and enhanced belief in their ability to perform tasks. Subordinates who focus more on agreeing with their supervisors and conforming to them do not develop an enhanced self-belief in their ability to perform task. Therefore, we hypothesize that of the three impression management strategies only self-focused and job-focused strategies positively relate to the self-efficacy of the subordinate.

*Hypothesis 2.* Self-focused and job-focused impression management strategies are positively related to self-efficacy.

*Transformational leadership and impression management.* Subordinates who are involved in highlighting their performance at work and their achievements are not likely to develop enhanced subordinate-supervisor engagement. Similarly, subordinates who focus more on maintaining their image in front of their supervisors are not likely to be held high by the supervisors. Due to poor engagement with the supervisor, the leader would not go beyond the status quo to remove the roadblocks for such subordinates. Subordinates who conform to the supervisor and are in agreement with their supervisors build better subordinate-supervisor engagement levels. Supervisors who share such a relationship with their subordinates are more likely to go beyond their status quo, remove roadblocks for the subordinate and bring out the best in their subordinates. Thus, we hypothesize that the subordinates' use of only other-focused impression management strategies is positively related to transformational leadership.

*Hypothesis 3.* Other-focused impression management strategies are positively related to transformational leadership.

*Self-efficacy, transformational leadership and impression management.* Impression management strategies applied by the subordinates are likely to develop enhanced supervisor engagement and make the supervisor believe in subordinates' capability to perform tasks. Repeated interaction with the supervisor and an engaging relationship between a subordinate and a supervisor are required for the subordinate to perceive his or her supervisor as more transformational in nature. According to charismatic leadership theory, exceptional leaders have extraordinary effects on their followers (House, Sprangler, & Woycke, 1991). According to this new genre of theory, supervisor's charisma would lead to subordinates performing beyond and above the call of duty and lead to enhanced self-efficacy of the subordinate. Subordinates who use other-focused and job-focused impression management



strategies engage better with their supervisors as compared to subordinates who use self-focused strategies. In self-focused strategies, subordinates focus only on enhancing and managing their image, which does not build a strong subordinate-supervisor relationship and does not motivate the supervisor to go beyond the status quo to clear roadblocks for the subordinate and thereby enhance his or her level of self-efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize that other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and the self-efficacy of the subordinate.

*Hypothesis 4.* The positive relation between the self-efficacy of a subordinate and transformational leadership is enhanced by other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies.

## Method

Data were collected from 112 subordinates (of whom 40 were females) reporting to a supervisor each, in an information technology (IT) organization. Respondents from the organization participated in a questionnaire. 67% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 25-35 years and 32% were less than 25 years of age and 1% were in between 35-45 years of age. All the respondents met the criterion of reporting to a supervisor, a necessary condition for data analysis as the study aimed to draw conclusion based on the relationship of a subordinate and a supervisor. 1% of the supervisors were less than 25 years of age, 59% of the supervisors were in the age bracket of 25-35 years, 38% were in 35-45 years of age and 2% were more than 45 years of age. Of the 112 supervisors, 20 were females. The questionnaire measured transformational leadership of the supervisor, self-efficacy of the subordinate and impression management strategies used by subordinates on the supervisor. It also included the demographic details such as the age, gender and the number of years of work experience with the current organization of both the respondent and the supervisor.

## Measures

*Measurement of transformational leadership.* We used Krishnan's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (Loganathan & Krishnan, 2010) developed for the Indian context (Singh & Krishnan, 2007) to measure transformational leadership. The subordinates of the supervisors were asked to answer the leadership questionnaire items regarding their supervisors. The questionnaire had six items to measure each of the five factors of transformational leadership (total of 30 items): idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

*Measurement of self-efficacy.* Self-efficacy scale, developed by Jones (1986) consists of eight items measured on 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale measured self-efficacy as defined by Bandura as one's belief in one's capability to perform a specific task.

*Measurement of impression management.* Wayne and Ferris (1990) developed a 24-item scale to measure impression management strategies used by subordinates on their supervisors on a 7-point scale ranging from never (1) to always (7). The scale measured three factors, which are job-focused, supervisor-focused and self-focused.

### *Common Method Variance*

Data collected from a single source sometimes result in common method bias, which can be verified by factor analysis test. Factor analysis is one of the most widely used techniques to test for the presence of common method variance. The underlying assumption for the factor analysis technique is that if a substantial amount of common method variance is present, a single factor will emerge that will explain the covariance in the variables. We performed factor analysis for five variables to determine the number of factors that emerge after the test and we found that we get two factors with eigenvalue > 1. This gives confidence that the common method bias may not have significantly affected our results.

### **Results**

The mean, standard deviation, Cronbach alpha values and correlations among the variables are given in Table 1. Hypothesis 1 was supported by the data since there was a moderately significant ( $p < 0.10$ ) positive relationship between self-efficacy of the follower and transformational leadership. In Hypothesis 2, we expected self-focused and job-focused impression management strategies to be positively related to self-efficacy of the follower. Results showed a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy of the follower and both job-focused and self-focused strategies. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Other-focused impression management strategy was significantly positively correlated to transformational leadership, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3.

**Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlations between Variables<sup>a</sup>**

(N = 112)	M	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-efficacy	4.57	0.97	(.81)				
2. Transformational leadership	3.36	0.77	†.18	(.92)			
3. Job-focused IM	3.37	1.11	*.23	.08	(.89)		
4. Other-focused IM	3.64	0.95	†.17	*.24	***.69	(.71)	
5. Self-focused IM	4.57	1.16	** .27	.05	***.59	***.57	(.75)

<sup>a</sup> Alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal. IM = Impression Management.

† =  $p < .10$ . \* =  $p < .05$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

Regression analysis with self-efficacy as dependent variable and the other four variables as independent variables showed that self-focused strategy was the only predictor of self-efficacy. Regression analysis with transformational leadership as dependent variable and the three impression management strategies as independent variables showed that other-focused strategy was the only predictor of transformational leadership. Results of regression analyses are included in Table 2.

**Table 2. Linear Regression**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Parameter estimate	F	Model R <sup>2</sup>	Model F
Self-efficacy	Transformational leadership	0.25	*2.07	0.12	**3.47
	Job-focused IM	0.13	1.11		
	Other-focused IM	-0.12	-0.87		
	Self-focused IM	0.20	*2.03		
Transformational leadership	Job-focused IM	-0.11	-1.13	0.07	*2.85
	Other-focused IM	0.31	**2.82		
	Self-focused IM	-0.05	-0.58		

\* =  $p < 0.05$ . \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ . IM = Impression Management.

To study Hypothesis 4, we formed three interaction terms by the product of transformational leadership and three impression management strategies – self-focused, job-focused and other-focused impression management strategies. The purpose was to study the moderating effect of impression management strategies between transformational leadership and self-efficacy of the follower. The regression results included in Table 3 highlight that other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and self-efficacy of the follower. The direction of moderation effect is presented in Figures 1 and 2. Transformational leadership is positively related to self-efficacy only when follower's use of job-focused and other-focused impression management strategies is high. Hypothesis 4 was therefore supported.

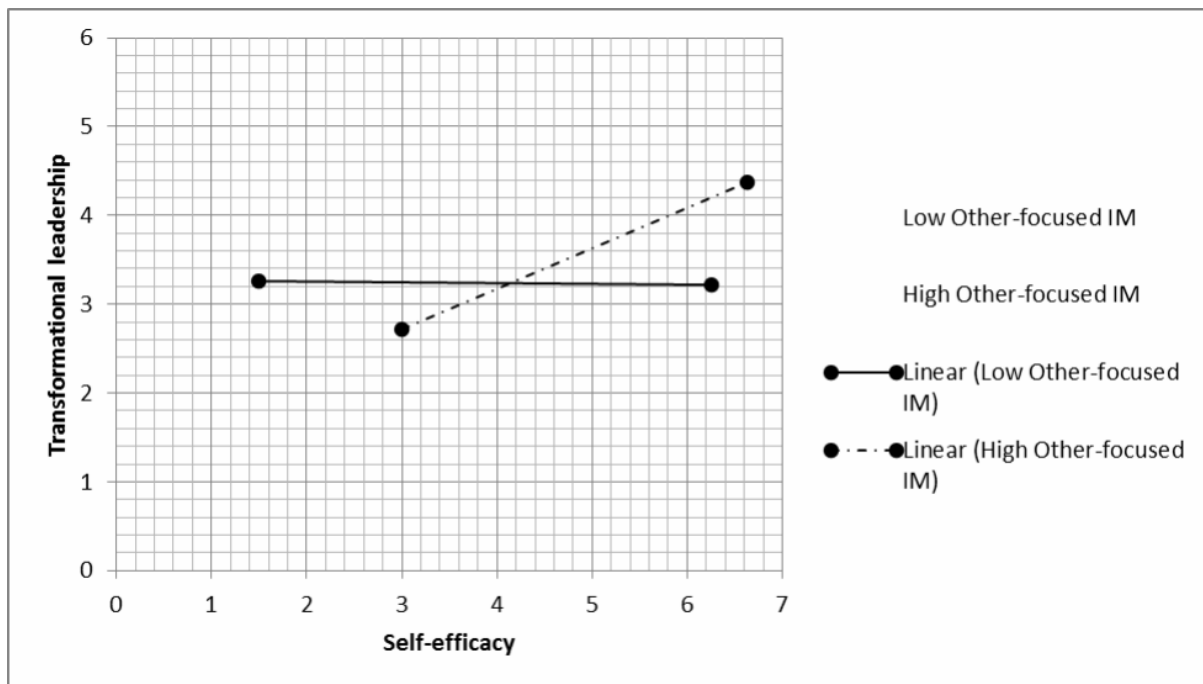
**Table 3. Linear Regression Testing for Moderation**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Parameter estimate	F	Model R <sup>2</sup>	Model F
Self-efficacy	Transformational leadership	0.30	*2.49	0.14	***5.75
	Other-focused IM	0.12	1.26		
	TL*Other-focused	0.38	***3.28		
Self-efficacy	Transformational leadership	0.36	**2.97	0.15	***6.21
	Job-focused IM	0.14	1.73		
	TL*Job-focused	0.29	**2.96		

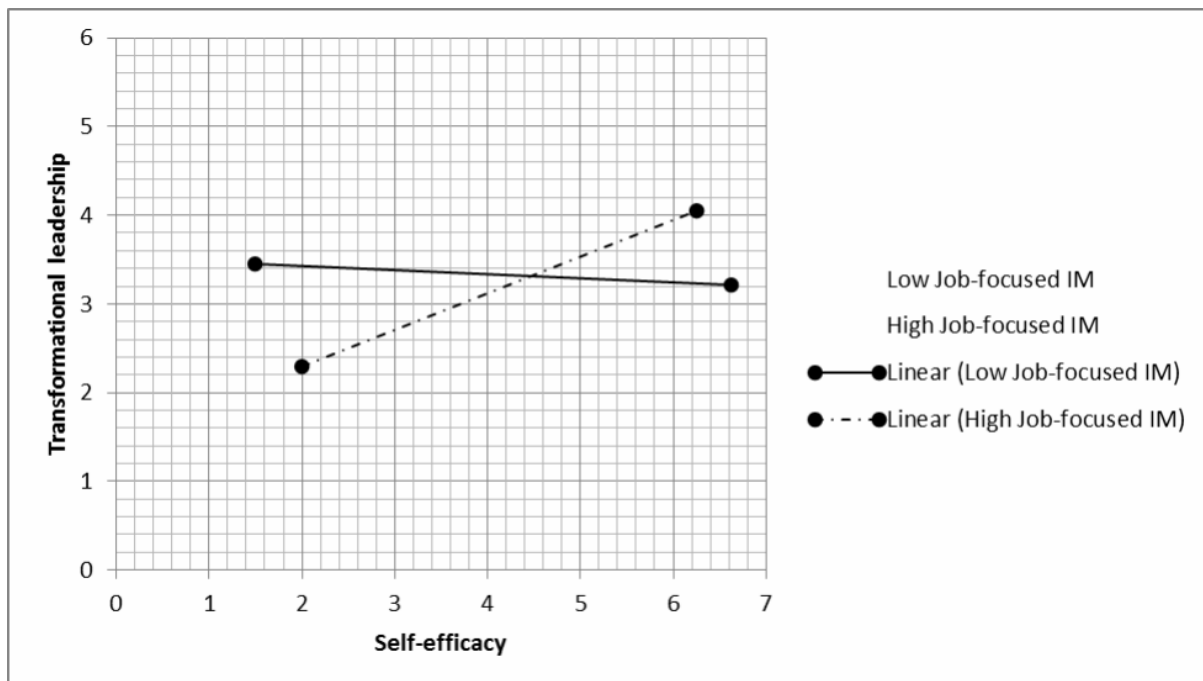
\* =  $p < 0.05$ . \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

IM = Impression Management. TL = Transformational Leadership.

**Figure 1. Moderating Effect of Other-Focused Impression Management**



**Figure 2. Moderating Effect of Job-Focused Impression Management**



## **Discussion**

Earlier research has established that transformational leadership has significant impact on the employees' empowerment in the organizational setting. This study adds another dimension by studying the relationship between the self-efficacy of the subordinates and their impression management strategies. It also explores the impact of transformational leadership on the self-efficacy of the subordinate in the presence of impression management strategies.

Results of the study show that self-efficacy of the subordinate is positively related to both transformational leadership and the job-focused and self-focused impression management strategies applied by the subordinate on the supervisor. Results also show a positive relationship between transformational leadership and the other-focused impression management strategies. Further, other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and the self-efficacy of the subordinate. Transformational leadership is positively related to self-efficacy only when follower's job-focused and other-focused impression management strategies are high.

### ***Managerial and Organizational Implications***

With increasing reliance on sophisticated technological techniques and innovative platforms, smaller number of employees are capable of delivering more work now. However, every organization's foundation is the quality of relationship between the leader and the follower. If the leader is high on transformational leadership, the study testifies the presence of enhanced self-efficacy in the subordinates. In other words, self-belief in the follower to perform a particular task is higher if the follower is associated with a transformational leader. Leaders by the virtue of being charismatic can enhance the self-efficacy of the followers by removing the roadblocks and in effect increase the quality of work delivered by them and self-belief in their ability to perform work.

At work, interaction between the supervisor and the subordinate is one of the most frequent activities. The study supports our hypothesis that the subordinates who use self-focused impression management techniques on their supervisors have enhanced levels of self-efficacy. Employees with high levels of self-efficacy are more effective at work and more valuable to the organization.

Employees who focus their attention on managing their own image and highlighting their performance or achievements at work in high probability do not spend sufficient time understanding their superiors and therefore are unable to bring out the transformational leadership dimensions of their supervisors such as idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. This could also be because when employees' attention is mostly centered around their work and themselves, they cannot appreciate the leadership traits of their supervisors. However, employees who conform to the superiors or are in agreement with the leader's viewpoints have the ability to make the most of their supervisor's transformational leadership. This might explain why transformational leadership is positively related to only other-focused impression management strategies and not to self-focused or job-focused impression management strategies.

Subordinates whose reporting supervisors are transformational leaders develop higher levels of self-efficacy. Supervisors might better acknowledge those subordinates who indulge

more in highlighting their performance and achievements at work and who express conformity with the thought process and values of the leader. This might make the subordinate perceive his or her supervisor more charismatic, considerate, and inspiring, etc. This reason might be an explanation for the moderation effect of other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies between transformational leadership and self-efficacy of the follower.

This study is clearly a step forward in the area of transformational leadership and impression management. This study contributes and adds critical observations in the field of research.

### ***Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research***

The sample comprised 112 respondents from one industry and from one geographical area. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be generalizable. The three impression management strategies are highly correlated. The reason for high correlation could be influenced by reasons such as respondent's bias, differences in measurement accuracy among the impression management strategies, difficulty in understanding the difference between the three impression management strategies, and the organizational structure and regulations on the attitude of the employees. Subordinates who were asked to rate themselves, might not have been clear regarding the impression management strategies they used. Subordinates might have also been biased towards their supervisor's transformational leadership ratings.

Further research could focus on the relationship between different impression management strategies and the components of transformational leadership. In addition, the organizational structure, hierarchical or flat, could be included to study the impact on the self-efficacy of the subordinate. This study did not consider the duration of the leader and subordinate relationship. The duration of the relationship of subordinate with his or her supervisor may have significant impact on subordinate's level of self-efficacy and his or her perception of the transformational leadership traits of the supervisor.

### ***Conclusion***

Earlier research in the field of impression management has done limited work in the sphere of impression management strategies and their relation with the self-efficacy of the employees who use them on their supervisors. This study investigates the relationship of transformational leadership with the self-efficacy of the follower and the role played by the impression management strategies.

Our results indicate that transformational leaders play a vital role in motivating their subordinates to perform beyond the call of duty and enhance their ability to perform tasks. Employees use various impression management techniques, of which self-focused impression management strategies positively relate to the self-efficacy of the follower and other-focused impression management strategies are positively related to transformational leadership. The application of more of other-focused and job-focused impression management strategies on the leaders have been shown to strengthen the impact of transformational leadership on the self-efficacy of the followers. This study examined impression management within organizations in addition to transformational leadership and self-efficacy, which becomes a strong basis for further theoretical and empirical development.

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