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Should Leader Power and Sex Play an Important Role in Predicting Influence Tactics?

- *Power and Influence Tactics in Manufacturing Firms of Klang Valley, Malaysia*

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Abstract

Past researchers have indicated that an agent's power is a determinant of influence outcome on the targeted person. They explain on the relevance of power to organizational influence and leadership. Previous research studies are not well integrated on power and influence. This study examines (1) the implication of seven power bases, namely Expert, Referent, Connection, Information, Legitimacy, Reward, Coerciveness on organizational behaviors in terms of supervisors' influence tactics and (2) whether the gender of the supervisors moderate the relationship between power and downward influence strategies. Manufacturing companies with approximately 300 supervisors and 842 subordinates from the middle and lower management are taken for the study. The findings suggest that power is a direct predictor of hard, soft, and rational influence tactics. It recommends that it would be more effective if the influence tactics are jointly used with some other dimensions of influence rather than used on their own.

Keywords: Power, influence tactics, gender, manufacturing industry

INTRODUCTION

Many manufacturing companies in Malaysia have been downsized, right sized, or made other adjustments in response to the economic pressures of the last decade. The ability to influence subordinates within organizations has become a requisite competency and may be more critical to job-related success for many managers. The issue of tactics which managers use to gain cooperation and compliance from subordinates is critical as

business becomes more and more competitive. Human resource management faces challenges of bringing better fitted workers into the organizations and meeting the workers' needs and expectations. Thus, there is a compelling demand to develop better ideas, strategies to improve the interface between employees and employers, and to elaborate comprehensive insight that can help human resource managers to get better results and improved performance (Vigoda & Cohen, 2003).

Despite the importance of influencing subordinates for leadership effectiveness, managers in organizations are generally not aware of how influential they can be, or explicitly consider the bases of power of managers and employees in exerting influence tactics. For example: Are certain tactics of manager influence more effectively than some other tactics over the subordinates? Do the tactics differentiate among managers at different levels? Problem arises when supervisors want to realize their wishes by influencing their subordinates but managers are unaware of the exact knowledge in applying the most effective influence tactics. This is an important issue since the process of influence determines how managers motivate subordinates, bring about commitment and extra effort, and assist decision-making in an organization. It is believed that both supervisors and subordinates have the ability and tendency to influence one another. This scenario is especially true in large organizations such as manufacturing companies in Malaysia, where there exists the bidirectional relationship of influence between supervisors and their subordinates.

Despite the enormous breadth of the literatures on the relevance of power to organizational influence, and to an understanding of leadership, research studies of power and influence are not well integrated. The research on influence strategies that superiors use to translate power into actual influence is relatively recent (Ansari, 1990; Farrell & Schroder, 1999; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1990). This study examines (1) the implication of seven power bases, namely Expert, Referent, Connection, Information, Legitimacy, Reward, Coerciveness on organizational behaviors in terms of supervisors' influence tactics and (2) whether the gender of the supervisors moderate the relationship between power and downward influence strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Power and influence

Power refers to the ability or potential of an agent to alter a target's behavior, intentions, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, or values, whereas influence refers to the actual use of power in the form of influence tactics such as threats or promises (French & Raven, 1959). Power is distinguished from influence and they have been traditionally viewed as discrete. Past literatures have revealed that bases of power are often known as interdependent, used in combinations or overlapped with one another. Some of the power bases have similar characteristics especially when it is from personal or positional power (Rodrigues, 1995). Others support this view, stating that there should be a balance among the various types of power in the organizations in order to manage exploitation or exploration tension efficiently (Lawrence, Mauws, Dyck, & Kleysen, 2005).