

## Leaders' Power and Downward Influence Tactics: The Impact of Power Congruence

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**Abstract:** Congruency has been a central concept in certain fields such as job design work values, organizational goal, and many others. There are a few factors that suggest that agreement between supervisors' and subordinates' are critical determinants of the liking and exchange processes. This research incorporates a basic distinction between the agent and target. Three hundred and eighty-five pairs of Malaysian managers and executives voluntarily participated in this study. The findings suggested that when both supervisors and subordinates were perceived to have position power, the use of hard influence tactics was most apparent and vice versa. Implications of the findings, potential limitations of the study, and directions for future research were discussed further.

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### 1. Introduction

Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and subordinates where leaders attempt to influence the behavior of their subordinates (Yukl, 2005). Leadership cannot take place without the participation of the subordinates, and power is the essence of leader behavior. Organizational members normally try to influence their peers, supervisors, and subordinates either due to personal factor or their organizational roles. Managers use power to obtain compliance with routine task but obtaining commitment to unusual requests normally requires initiative and extra effort from the target. The impact of a power base may depend on both how it is used and also on the relationship between the power holder and the target. Tjosvold (1995) theorized that managers' use of power and their relationship with their employees strongly affect the dynamics and outcomes of power.

According to previous researchers such as Bergeron, Raymond, and Rivard (2001), congruence is viewed as a pattern of covariation of internal consistency among a set of underlying theoretically related variables. Congruency represents the degree to which two objects are perceived to be similar and it has been suggested as an important factor in the organization of cognition in general (Martin & Stewart, 2001). It has been proven that if an individual sense that others see them congruently, they would know how to act and how their interaction partners would react to them (Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002). In addition, congruency is also a key measure that refers to the degree to which two elements are found to be similar for achieving a particular goal. Therefore, when congruence exists, the actual behavior of both dyad members is likely to

align with the expectations and they would tend to interpret behavior similarly.

Power congruence is defined as the compatibility between supervisors and subordinates' power. Douvan and Veroff (1993) have a different opinion with regards to congruence in a relationship. They argued that, persons in a position of greater power have no great need to understand the person who is in a position of lesser power. This implies that subordinate should be more aware of what is going on and be better able to remember and report on his/her interaction with his/her supervisors. According to Berger and Kellner (1964), differences in perceptions in a dyadic relationship decreases as time goes by. Therefore, supervisors/subordinates who accumulate joint experiences learn about each other's idiosyncrasies and should know the exact tactics the other version tends to use whenever he/she wants to realize his/her objectives.

Past research in the management literature on manager-employee attitudinal congruence has generally found that attitude similarity between managers and employees is linked positively to job-related outcomes. What remains unclear is the extent of the common understanding between the supervisors and subordinates' power towards supervisors' choices of influence tactics. To date, the author had failed to detect any references from previous literature on this actual/perceptual congruence between the bases of power of the supervisor and subordinate with regards to the influence tactics. According to Ansari (1990), an agent should not restrict the use of bases of power to a single base since the bases of power and influence strategies do not go hand in hand. This is congruent with the study by French and Raven (1959) which suggested an agent might use several bases of power