

Bases of Power and Influence Strategies: The Impact of Leader-Member Exchange*

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Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and subordinates where a leader attempts to influence the behavior of their subordinates (Yukl, 2002). Leadership cannot take place without the participation of the subordinates, and power is the essence of leaders' behavior. The scope of the present study is to investigate the effect of perceived supervisors' power in their choice of a particular influence strategy. The authors investigated the pervasiveness of each of the seven influence tactics in a study of 102 managers working in manufacturing companies and compared the findings to previous research. This research has applied the seven power bases to examine the bases of power of supervisors as perceived by their subordinates and types of influence tactics that the supervisors would apply. Since this study also focused on both the supervisors and subordinates perspective in the dyadic framework, it would be of interest to examine whether leader-member exchange (LMX) plays a moderating effect on the processes of social influence. Findings suggested that the use of an influence strategy is positively correlated to the corresponding type of power.

Introduction

Power can be defined as the ability of one party to change or control the behavior, attitudes, values, opinions, objectives, and needs of another party (Rahim, 1989). Arnon (2002) has defined power as a property or an attribute of actors which means that all that power conveys is that actors have something that they could actualize, and that they possess this power independently of the context in which it might be manifested. Traditionally, power and influence have been viewed as discrete. Power is typically defined as the inferred potential of the agents to cause the targets to act in accordance with the agents' wishes, whereas influence behavior is referred as the agents' actual behavior that caused behavioral or attitudinal change in the targets (Stahelski & Paynton, 1995). French and Raven (1959) distinguished power from influence, where power refers to the ability or potential of an agent to alter a target's behavior, intentions, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, or value, while influence refers to the actual use of power, for example, in the form of influence tactics such as threats and promises. In interpersonal influence, French and Raven's typology has been among the most famous approaches to the conceptualization of the bases of power.