

Despite the enormous breadth of the literature on the relevance of power to organizational influence in general, and to an understanding of leadership in particular, research studies of power and influence are not well integrated. This is evidenced where the research on influence strategies that superiors use to translate power into actual influence is relatively recent (Ansari, Farrell & Schroder, 1999; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1990; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002; Venkatesh, Kohli, & Zaltman, 1995). In addition to that, no known researches have focused specifically on the factors that contribute to the interaction effects between the supervisors' self-perceptions of power and their subordinates' perceptions of them and vice versa, and their impact on supervisors' influence tactics. Even though the concept of fit has served as an important building block in several areas of research, there is still a lack of corresponding schemes by which fit has been tested (Venkatraman, 1989). Hence this study has two objectives in mind. First is to examine whether congruence between supervisors' perception of subordinates' power and subordinates' self-reported power predict the use of influence tactics and secondly, whether the congruence between supervisors' self-reported power and subordinates' perception of supervisors' power predict the use of influence tactics.

Social power relationship occurs naturally when people with different levels of potential power interact to accomplish organizational goals (Mossholder, Kemery, Bennett, & Wesolowski, 1998). Theorists such as Barnard (1938), Blau (1964), Mechanic (1962), and Weick (1969) contended that supervisors' relationship with subordinates represented an important source of power to exert influence in their organizations. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory was built upon Goulander's (1960) norm of reciprocity which stated that: "(i) people should help those who have helped them, and (ii) people should not injure those who have helped them" (Goulander, 1960, p. 171). Past studies on leadership have not found conclusive evidence on Malaysian leadership style. For example, Gill (1998) suggested that Malaysian managers are found to be more direct, less delegate, and are more transactional. However, Govindan (2000) reported that Malaysian leaders lean more towards participative and consultative styles. This is in line with the assertion of Abdullah (1992) that the use of stronger tactics in Malaysian context is not likable as Malaysians generally are not in favor of overt display of anger and aggressive behavior.

1. Introduction

Keywords: Malaysia manufacturing industry, Power congruence, Downward influence tactics

It has been proposed that issues of power and influence should be incorporated in the dyadic study of leadership. Building upon social exchange theory which explains how power is gained and lost in the process of influence between an agent and the target (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962), this paper hypothesized that the power congruence of supervisors and subordinates was anchored on 9 types of influence tactics. Three hundred and eighty-five pairs of Malaysian managers and executives working in manufacturing companies voluntarily participated in this study. The findings suggested that supervisors would use a combination of hard and soft tactics when their subordinates perceived them to have position or personal power. Implications of the findings, potential limitations of the study, and directions for future research were further discussed.

Abstract

We thank Mahfooz A. Ansari for his helpful comments.

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Power Congruence Approaches to Downward Influence in Malaysia Manufacturing Industry

www.ccsenet.org/journal.html



International Journal of Business and Management

November 2008

Vol. 3, No. 11