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Influence Tactics in India: Effects of Agent's Values and Perceived Values of Target

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***Abstract.** This paper reports two studies that assessed whether the six factors of assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, friendliness, higher authority, and reasoning best represent the domain of influence tactics in India. Data was collected from 281 graduate business students on their lateral influence tactics and value systems, and from 280 managers on their upward influence tactics, their value systems, and perceived value systems of their superiors (influence targets). Exploratory factor analysis was used to generate several factor solutions. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that a five-factor solution—bargaining, coalition, reasoning, pressure, and meekness—was the best fit. Results of Nonparametric Median test and Wilcoxon rank sum test show that lateral and upward influence tactics are related to both agent's and target's value rankings.*

Key Words: Influence Tactics, India, Value Systems.

Conceptualizations of influencing in the Indian context reflect both culture-specific and universal features (Sinha, 1997). While some tactics of influencing might be universally used, it is possible that some tactics get modified or are used sparingly because of societal culture. The study reported here was an attempt to test whether the factor structure of influence tactics identified by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) was the best conceptualization for the Indian context. Alternative conceptualizations were assessed for their goodness of fit and compared with that of Kipnis et al. model. Value systems form the core of societal culture and therefore the study also looked at the impact of agent's value system and target's perceived value system on influence strategies.

Influence

Influence is the effect, either intended or unintended, of one party (the agent) on another person's (the target's) attitudes, perceptions, behavior, or some combination of these outcomes (Yukl, 1998). The essence of managerial work is influencing, and influence is the exercise of power. Most people however, do not influence for the sheer joy of changing other peoples' behavior. They do so with specific reasons in mind. Influence could be used for such personal reasons as securing better work assignments, or for such organizational reasons as introducing new work procedures, the latter being more common (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). People also resort to greater use of influence when existing sources of power become unavailable (Westphal, 1998). Attempts have been made to classify influence tactics into categories like rational persuasion and ingratiation (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Schilit & Locke,

1982). Kipnis et al. (1980) identified and classified examples of behavioral tactics used to influence superiors, peers, and subordinates. An inductive method was used based on responses from organization members, and the tactics used to influence superiors were grouped into the six categories of assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, friendliness, higher authority, and reasoning. Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) examined the Kipnis et al. upward influence subscales in four studies and found support for the dimensionality of the subscales. They however showed that the Kipnis et al. scales appeared to include several items whose deletion would improve them.

Success is more likely when a combination of several influence strategies is used (Gupta & Case, 1999). Kipnis, Schmidt, Swaffin-Smith, and Wilkinson (1984) showed that people vary their influence strategies in relation to their objectives. People tend to use different influence strategies depending on whether their goals are personal or organizational, and depending on the organizational climate (Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984). Similarly, the characteristics of the target person also affect the choice of influence strategies. Transactional leadership is more strongly related to subordinate upward influencing behavior than transformational leadership (Deluga, 1988a). Followers use reasoning strategy more frequently to influence transformational rather than transactional leaders (Deluga & Souza, 1991), and participative rather than autocratic leaders (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987); they also use less of bargaining and higher authority to influence people-centered leaders rather than task-centered leaders (Deluga, 1988b).

Rao, Hashimoto, and Rao (1997) sought to extend North American measure of managerial influence to Japanese managers. They showed that Japanese managers used some influence tactics previously reported by North American managers, but they also used other tactics that were unique to Japanese managers such as socializing. Culture plays a role even in the effectiveness of various influence tactics. Fu and Yukl (2000) found that rational persuasion and exchange were rated more effective by American managers than by Chinese managers, while coalition tactics, upward appeals and gifts were rated more effective by Chinese managers than by American managers. They did not find any significant difference for pressure and ingratiation. However, Fu et al. (2001), in a study of managers from India, New Zealand, Taiwan, Thailand, United States, and Hong Kong, found that rational persuasion, collaboration, and consultation were universally effective influence tactics, while gifts, preliminary socializing, and pressure were least effective in all cultures.

The way in which the Kipnis et al. (1980) influence scales were developed implies that the deliberate meaning assigned to each strategy is culturally specific to North American managers. To enable comparisons without making false assumptions of universality or eliminating culture-specific information, phenomena in different cultures could be examined iteratively. Attempts could be made to discover if a construct is similar in different countries, but by beginning with a construct that has a North American origin (Rao et al., 1997). In this paper, I started with the Kipnis et al. influence tactics and tried to see if their underlying factor structure was the best way to represent the tactics in the Indian context. The research being exploratory, I did not have any specific hypothesis as to which kind of factor structure should be expected.

Value System

Rokeach (1973: 5) defined a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.” A belief concerning a desirable mode of conduct is an instrumental value and a belief concerning a desirable end-state of existence is a terminal value. Values can be conceptualized in two distinct ways—ipsative in which values are rank-ordered, and non-ipsative in which various values are measured independent of each

other. The ipsative approach looks upon values as being hierarchical in nature, leading to the idea of a value system. Rokeach (1973: 5) defined a value system as “an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.”

Schwartz (1992) identified 10 common value types that form the underlying dimensions of various values. The 10 value types are: Achievement, benevolence, conformity, hedonism, power, security, self-direction, stimulation, tradition, and universalism. These 10 value types have been found to be distinct from each other, universal in content, recognized across cultures and used to express value priorities (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). I used this 10-value framework in my second study.

Values form the very core of personality, and they influence the choices people make, the appeals they respond to, and the way they invest their time and energy (Posner & Schmidt, 1992). Value systems have been found to predict several outcomes including shopping selections and weight losses, and several studies have demonstrated empirically how values affect personal and organizational effectiveness (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Values influence job choice decisions, job satisfaction, and commitment (Judge & Bretz, 1992). Blickle (2000) found that work values predicted the frequency of use of influence strategies measured one year later. Therefore, I broadly hypothesized that value systems of the influencing agent and the perceived value systems of the target of influence would affect the frequency of use of influence strategies.

METHOD

The first study reported here looked at frequency of use of lateral influence tactics and the influencing agent’s terminal and instrumental value systems. The second study looked at frequency of use of upward influence tactics, value system of influencing agent, and the perceived value system of the target of influence. Two sets of data were collected separately for the two studies.

Lateral Influence

Data for the first study on lateral influence tactics was collected from 281 fulltime students of two leading business schools in northern India. Most of the students surveyed were males and did not have any working experience. The median age of the respondents was 22 years. I used Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982) consisting of 27 items, to measure the frequency with which respondents used the six groups of tactics—assertiveness (6 items), bargaining (5 items), coalition (2 items), friendliness (6 items), higher authority (4 items), and reasoning (4 items)—to influence their classmates. The items were modified to make classmates as targets instead of co-workers. Each item represented an influence tactic, and respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Occasionally; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Almost always), how often they generally used each of the 27 tactics.

The respondents were asked to answer Rokeach’s (1973) Value Survey to measure their terminal and instrumental value systems. It has two lists of values arranged alphabetically—one consisting of 18 terminal values and the other consisting of 18 instrumental values. Each value is presented along with a brief definition in parenthesis and respondents are asked to arrange the values in each set in order of importance to and as guiding principles in their life, thereby recording their value systems. The survey has been found to be both reliable and valid.

Upward Influence

I collected data for the second study from 281 managers working at different levels in various organizations in India. Of those 281 managers, 66 were junior and middle level managers from two public sector (government owned) banks in southern and eastern India, 48 were senior officers from a government department in charge of natural resources in western India, and 48 were junior managers from a large private sector engineering and locomotive firm in eastern India. The rest of the sample consisted of junior and middle level fulltime managers attending evening MBA, executive MBA, and executive development programs at a prominent business school in eastern India. Of the 229 who reported their gender, 222 were males and 7 were females. Respondents were not asked to give any form of identification. All responses were thus anonymous, and this was made clear to every respondent. The questionnaires measured respondents' value systems, the value systems of their superiors as perceived by them, and the frequency of their usage of different upward influence tactics. A majority of respondents surveyed were at least 39 years old, and they had been working with the supervisor they were rating, for at least 3 years.

I used Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982) to measure the frequency with which subordinates (respondents) used the six groups of tactics to influence their immediate supervisors.

I used the 10 value types identified by Schwartz (1992) to measure value systems of agents and perceived value systems of targets. Respondents were provided a list of the 10 value types, with the individual values associated with each value type being mentioned within parenthesis. Respondents were first requested to rank the 10 value types in order of importance to themselves in their life, thus measuring value systems of influencing agents. They were then requested to rank the same 10 value types in order of importance to their immediate supervisor, thus measuring value systems of influence targets as perceived by respondents (influencing agents).

RESULTS

The data on influence tactics from the two studies was combined, and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine the dimensions underlying the 27 items of POIS, and to see if they were the same as the ones identified by Kipnis et al. (1980). In the principal components analysis (prior communality=1), only seven factors had latent root or eigenvalue greater than 1 (Comrey & Lee, 1992). Following Kipnis et al. (1980), forced two-factor through seven-factor solutions were carried out to aid in interpreting the findings. In exploratory factor analysis, orthogonal rotation using the varimax procedure is most commonly used (Floyd & Widaman, 1995). Therefore, I used orthogonal rotation of factors. Kipnis et al. (1980) used a scale construction procedure that selected items that loaded over .40 on a given dimension and did not load above .25 on any of the remaining dimensions. According to Floyd and Widaman (1995), in exploratory analyses, factor loadings are generally considered meaningful when they exceed .30 or .40. I used an absolute value of .40 as the minimum factor loading for interpretation. I also excluded those items that had a loading above .30 on any of the other dimensions.

I did a confirmatory factor analysis of the influence items to see which of the various factor solutions that emerged from the exploratory factor analysis best explained the underlying dimensions of influencing (Hurley et al., 1997). The various factor solutions were also compared to the factor structure derived by Kipnis et al. (1980). The item-level correlation matrix was analyzed using maximum likelihood estimation to determine if the data were best represented by one general factor, six factors of Kipnis et al., or two-factor through seven-factor structures that emerged from the exploratory factor analysis. To assess the relative fit of the models, I used the following six indices: (a) Goodness of Fit Index (GFI),

(b) GFI Adjusted for degrees of freedom (AGFI), (c) Root Mean square Residual (RMR), (d) James, Mulaik, and Brett's (1982) Parsimonious GFI (PGFI), (e) Bentler's (1990) Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and (f) Bentler and Bonett's (1980) Non-Normed Index (NNI).

The confirmatory factor analysis indices suggested that the five-factor model was a better fit than the other models. There was a decrease in normed chi-square (ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom) and an improvement in AGFI—which control for increases in the number of parameters estimated and thus avoid an automatic improvement because of greater number of free parameters—as one progressed from the most restricted model with one general factor to the five-factor model. Further, the normed chi-square was closest to the recommended level of 2.0 only in the case of the five-factor model. The five-factor structure best represented the influence tactics, and they were therefore used for further analysis.

Of the 27 items, 12 items were excluded from the five factor solution because of factor loading being less than .40 or cross loading being above .30. First factor (bargaining) included all the five bargaining items. Second factor included two higher authority items and one assertiveness item, and it was termed pressure. Third factor (reasoning) included three of the four reasoning items. Fourth factor (coalition) included the two coalition items. Fifth factor included two of the six friendliness items, and it was termed meekness. Thus, three factors of Kipnis et al. (1980)—bargaining, reasoning, and coalition—remained, and two new factors emerged—a combination of some aspects of higher authority and assertiveness termed pressure, and a subset of friendliness termed meekness. The mean of the items comprising each factor was taken as the score on that factor or influence strategy. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and standardized Cronbach coefficient alphas are given in Table 1 for lateral influence and upward influence separately.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations ^a

Variable	Mdn	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Lateral (N = 280)</u>								
1. Bargaining	2.80	2.82	0.86	(.56)				
2. Pressure	1.83	1.90	0.75	***.30	(.60)			
3. Reasoning	4.00	3.99	0.78	*.14	†-.11	(.67)		
4. Coalition	3.00	3.03	0.97	***.20	** .18	***.25	(.65)	
5. Meekness	3.50	3.56	0.86	***.23	-.03	***.32	†.11	(.34)
<u>Upward (N = 281)</u>								
1. Bargaining	2.40	2.42	0.88	(.72)				
2. Pressure	2.33	2.28	0.76	***.45	(.48)			
3. Reasoning	4.33	4.22	0.70	.03	.05	(.59)		
4. Coalition	3.00	2.98	1.05	***.35	***.28	** .17	(.59)	
5. Meekness	4.00	4.03	0.86	** .18	** .16	*.14	†.11	(.48)

^a n=78. Alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal.

† p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

To look at the relationship between value rankings and influence strategies, I used nonparametric tests since value system was measured using the ipsative (rank order) design (Siegel, 1956). For each influence strategy, I used the median score on that influence strategy as the basis to first split either sample of respondents into two groups—those who used the strategy less frequently, and those who used it more frequently. The differences in value rankings between the two groups of respondents were analyzed for each influence strategy using the nonparametric Median test and Wilcoxon rank sum test (with normal approximation

and continuity correction). Value rankings were treated as different only if the differences were statistically significant at .05 level in both the tests.

Meekness strategy for influencing peers was positively related to the relative importance given to a world of beauty, salvation, and being clean, obedient, and polite, and negatively related to the relative importance for family security, freedom, and being broadminded, independent, and responsible. The remaining four lateral influence strategies (bargaining, pressure, reasoning, and coalition) were not related to value rankings.

Coming to upward influence strategies and agents' value systems, reasoning strategy for influencing superiors was negatively related to tradition, and meekness was related positively to conformity and negatively to self-direction and stimulation. Value rankings of agents did not differ between less and more frequent users of the remaining three upward influence strategies (bargaining, pressure, and coalition).

Coming to upward influence strategies and targets' value systems, reasoning was positively related to self-direction, and meekness was positively related to benevolence and self-direction. Perceived value rankings of targets of upward influence did not differ between less and more frequent users of the remaining three upward influence strategies (bargaining, pressure, and coalition).

DISCUSSION

Findings suggest that some influence tactics like bargaining, coalition, and reasoning might be universally used, while some other tactics might be culture-specific. For example, assertiveness might be more relevant for a society based on individual rights than for a society based on interpersonal obligations. It is also possible that a strategy like friendliness could mean different things in different societies. The studies reported in this paper provide some evidence for influence tactics being both universal to some extent and culture-specific to some extent.

Results show that pressure and meekness might be tactics that are culture-specific. However, pressure appears to be used toward both peers and superiors by everyone. Value systems of neither the agent nor the target appear to affect the use of pressure strategy. This is probably because people might end up using pressure tactics based on the demands of the situation, rather than because of agent or target characteristics. Meekness on the other hand, appears to be affected by agent's and target's values, in the case of both lateral and upward influencing. Thus two sets of factors affect the use of influence tactics—the culture of the larger society, and the values of people involved in the influence process.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Both values and influence tactics were measured by surveying the same source. The same source being used for measuring both the variables could have caused some measurement error. In addition, the Cronbach Alpha for the two-item measure of meekness is only .34 for lateral influence and .48 for upward influence, which makes the relationship of meekness with value rankings less reliable. The scale needs to be expanded or reconstructed to enhance reliability. Future research might benefit from extending this study to include measures of influence outcomes like effectiveness of influence strategies.

Conclusion

This paper sought to assess the extent to which the six-factor structure of influence tactics of Kipnis et al. (1980) contains both universal elements and culture-specific elements. The studies reported in this paper show that a five-factor structure represents the various influence tactics in India—bargaining, coalition, and reasoning being universal, and pressure

and meekness being culture-specific. The use of meekness tactics is also affected by the value system of the influencing agent and by the perceived value system of the target of influence. As further research in different cultures provides greater support, our understanding of influence tactics would be enriched, thereby facilitating effective use of influence in organizations.

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