Choice of Influence Strategies: Role of Need for Power, Need for Affiliation, and Inhibition

Rama S. Iyer and Venkat R. Krishnan

Abstract. *This study looked at the relationship between need for power, need for affiliation and the level of inhibition on one hand, and the use of influence strategies on the other. The impact of all these on the speed in receiving promotions was also studied. Results indicate that those who have a high need for power use the influence strategy of reason more frequently, and those who have a high need for affiliation use friendliness more frequently. Contrary to what was hypothesized, speed in receiving promotions was negatively related to use of reason.*

Influence has been a much-discussed topic and the tactics used to exert influence on others have been looked upon with dread as well as with awe. Influence also raises many issues like the ethics of using a particular tactic, the match between the personality of an individual and the kind of tactic he or she would use, and the different tactics used in different situations (Westphal, 1998). Besides the process, the outcomes of an influence attempt have also been analyzed (Dulebohn & Ferris, 1999; Wayne, Liden, Graf & Ferris, 1997). Some studies deal with effectiveness of an influence attempt (Yukl, Kim & Falbe, 1996; Yukl & Tracey, 1992), whereas others talk about specific outcomes like performance evaluation by superior, salary, stress and promotions (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). This study looked at the relationship between individual motives (need for power, need for affiliation, and activity inhibition) and upward influence tactics used, as well as the effectiveness of the influence tactics as measured by speed in receiving promotions.

Model and Hypotheses

Influence is the effect of one party (the agent) on another (the target). In case the target is a person, the influence may be over attitudes, perceptions, behavior, or some combinations of these outcomes. *Power* refers to the capacity of an agent, to influence a target person. Yukl (1998) defined power as an agent's potential influence over the attitudes and behavior of one or more target persons.

Outcomes of Influence Attempts

Outcomes of influence attempts can be classified into commitment, compliance, and resistance (Yukl, 1998). Commitment occurs when the target person internally agrees with a decision or request from the agent and makes a great effort to carry out the request or implement the decision effectively. Compliance is when the target is willing to do what the agent asks but is apathetic rather than enthusiastic about it and will make only a minimal effort. Resistance is the outcome when the target person is opposed to the proposal or request, rather than merely indifferent about it and actively tries to avoid carrying out the request. Considering that one's influence can have both functional and dysfunctional outcomes, it is important that we know as to what our style of influence is doing.

Influence Tactics and Styles

The pioneers in classifying and discussing influence tactics were Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980). Influence tactics could be classified into the following seven categories or styles: *Reason* (using facts and data to support the development of a logical argument); *Friendliness* (using impression management, flattery and creation of goodwill); *Coalition* (mobilizing others in the organization to support one's own point); *Bargaining* (negotiation through exchange of favors); *Assertiveness* (using a direct and forceful approach); *Higher authority* (gaining support of higher echelons to back up requests); *Sanctions* (using organizationally derived rewards and punishments).

Yukl and Tracey (1992), studied the following influence styles: *Rational persuasion*; *Inspirational appeal* (arousing enthusiasm and appealing to values); *Consultation* (inviting participation in an activity); *Ingratiation; Exchange; Personal appeal* (appealing to loyalty and friendship*); Coalition; Legitimating* (establishing legitimacy of request by claiming authority to make it or verifying consistency with rules); *Pressure.*

Schilit and Locke (1982) used the following upward influence styles in their study: *Logical or rational presentation of ideas* (using reason based on knowledge and expertise); *Informal or no performance-specific exchange* (promoting interpersonal attraction or ingratiation); *Formal exchange* (agreeing upon an exchange of favors); *Adherence to rules* (being obedient to please the superior); *Upward appeal* (bypassing the immediate boss to pressurize him or her through his or her superiors); *Threats or sanctions* (fear of harm); *Manipulation* (informing or arguing in a way that the recipient is not aware of being influenced); *Formation of coalitions*; *Persistence or assertiveness.*

Since power is the potential to influence, the influence style used may depend on the kind of power that a person has (Yukl et al., 1996). In case an individual has *reward power* (the target person complies in order to obtain rewards he or she believes are controlled by the agent), he or she is likely to use bargaining and assertiveness to influence others. In case of *coercive power* (the target person complies in order to avoid punishments he or she believes are controlled by the agent), sanctions and assertiveness are likely to be used. A person with *legitimate power* (the target person complies because he or she believes the agent has the right to make the request and the target person has the obligation to comply) can assert his or her authority and influence the target. One with *expert power* (the target person complies because he or she believes that the agent has special knowledge about the best way to do something) can simply put forth his arguments logically and use reason to influence others. Lastly, one who has *referent power* (the target person complies

because he or she admires or identifies with the agent and wants to gain the agent's approval) will most likely use friendliness to impress the target even more and thus exert his or her influence (Raven, 1993).

Any kind of managerial position will entail dealing with power and influence. It is important both for the routine work of a manager and his long-term prospects, that he or she realize the prime role that influence plays in his or her career (Pfeffer, 1992). The focus of this study, however, is upward influence.

Due to their formal position of power, bosses can play a critical role in linking subordinates to the rest of the organization, in securing key resources for them, in making sure their priorities are consistent with organizational needs, and in seeing that they are rewarded fairly for their performance. If everyone in supervisory positions performed effectively all the time, then relationships with bosses would not be an issue at all. However, such a state is far from reality. Hence, managing one's relationship with one's boss is of prime importance. What follows from this is the need to understand how we influence our boss and how he or she responds to it. In terms of self-awareness, nothing is more important for a subordinate than to know his or her temperamental reaction to a position of dependence on an authority figure (Kotter, 1985).

Managerial Types Based on Influence Styles

Influence strategies have been known to vary with many variables—the personality of the target, the power differences between the target and agent, the social acceptability of the strategy, the cost of using the strategy, the nature of objective and the personality of the agent. The frequency of use of influence strategies has been correlated to the personality types of managers, albeit indirectly. Four types of managers are postulated, depending upon the influence strategies they use most frequently (Kipnis, Schmidt, Swaffin-Smith & Wilkinson, 1984)—tacticians, shotguns, bystanders and ingratiators.

Tacticians use reason most commonly, but also have average scores on the other influence strategies. They are moderately ambitious, successful in achieving their objectives, high on organizational power and satisfied with their work. Shotgun managers use all the seven strategies (assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, higher authority, reason, sanctions and friendliness) very frequently, are highly ambitious with a large number of unfulfilled expectations and lack enough experience in their job. Bystanders score low on all the seven strategies, are low on organizational power, seek few organizational objectives and are dissatisfied with their work because they are unable to influence their environment. Ingratiators are high on the friendliness strategy and have average scores on the other influence strategies. It has also been shown that managers use ingratiation as a strategy when they are asking for personal goals (Kipnis et al., 1984).

Managerial Types Based on Motives

Apart from influence strategies, another aspect of a manager that is relevant to use of power is *inhibition* (McClelland & Burnham, 1995). This feature of a manager determines his or her organization-mindedness. This is the socialized face of power as opposed to the concern for personal power. Those who yearn for personal power are often rude to other people, drink too much, try to exploit others sexually, and collect symbols of power and prestige such as fancy cars and plush offices. However, those with high level of inhibition work with a conscience, put duty

before personal want, are considerate and fair towards other people and do not ascribe too much importance to materialistic symbols of power and prestige.

Managers could be classified according to their personality characteristics and motive profiles into three groups—institutional managers, affiliative managers, and personal power managers (McClelland & Burnham, 1995). Institutional managers are high on their need for power, low on their need for affiliation and high on inhibition. They are organization minded, are satisfied with their work, are willing to sacrifice some of their self-interest for organizational interests, and have a keen sense of justice. Affiliative managers are higher on their need for affiliation than on their need for power. Personal power managers are higher on their need for power than affiliation but have low inhibition. Managers high on affiliation motive will use friendliness frequently. So ingratiators will be either high on personal goal fulfillment or have a very high need for affiliation or both.

Reason has been found to be a widely used influence strategy (Westphal, 1998). It has been postulated that tacticians use reason as their predominant strategy and reason is used most frequently when organizational goals are requested (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Kipnis et al., 1984). Drawing a parallel between tactician and institutional manager indicates that both have high levels of work satisfaction. The latter, being an institution-builder, will be high on organizational power. In addition, being organization-minded will mean that most of their requests to their superiors would pertain to organizational goals. Between a tactician and an institutional manager, this similarity in orientation (both being organization-minded and moderately ambitious, and high on organizational power) and the similarity in end results (both being high on work satisfaction), suggest that they would be using the same kind of influence strategies. An institutional manager is simply one who has a high need for power and high inhibition. This led us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Use of reason as an influence strategy would be positively related to need for power and inhibition.

It has also been postulated that friendliness is used when personal goals are sought. Due to their organization-mindedness and the fact that they can sacrifice their personal goals for the organization, institutional managers will seek personal goals rarely.

Hypothesis 2. Use of friendliness as an influence strategy would be negatively related to need for power and inhibition.

Affiliative managers have a constant need to please their superiors and hence all their efforts are directed towards creating a good impression in front of their superior. Thus, every issue is a personal agenda for them because everything is geared towards increasing their favor in the eyes of their superior. In addition, since personal goals usually are sought after through friendliness, our next hypothesis followed:

Hypothesis 3. Use of friendliness as an influence strategy would be positively related to need for affiliation.

Promotions

Influence tactics have a strong independent effect on the success or failure of an outcome (Yukl et al., 1996). Various studies have come out with contradicting results on which of these tactics is most effective. There is evidence that the most commonly used tactic and the most commonly cited in successful influence attempts was logical presentation of ideas i.e. the use of

reason (Schilit & Locke, 1982; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Nevertheless, others claim that manipulation has the highest citation by the most successful managers (Mowday, 1978). The former two studies were conducted with managers as sample, but Mowday conducted his study on a group of elementary school principals. Though Mowday draws a parallel between the principals and managers, saying that both have command over and need for resources, the work environment and the objectives of each are different.

Influence tactics have been found to affect perceptions of performance evaluation (Dulebohn & Ferris, 1999) and human resource decisions (Wayne t al., 1997). Kipnis and Schmidt (1988) studied the relationship between different influence styles on the one hand and performance evaluation, salary and reported stress on the other. They found that shotgun managers received less favorable evaluations than those using other styles did. Performance evaluations were the highest for male tacticians, whose primary influence strategy is reason. Therefore, it follows that use of reason as an influence tactic would lead to the best performance evaluation. This could be because of the relationship between the use of rational persuasion and the perception of the subordinate's expertise, by the superior.

Hypothesis 4. Use of reason as an influence strategy would be positively related to success in getting promotions.

Methodology

Our sample consisted of 52 managers from all levels above E6 (sixth level from the top in the organization's hierarchy), but from the same organization (to keep uniformity in promotion procedures). The organization surveyed was a steel manufacturing company with its main production facilities situated in an eastern state of India. The company was established during the British rule and has expanded since then, to become a major steel manufacturer in the country.

Success in promotion was measured by the number of years one took to be promoted from the E6 to the E5 level. This was answered by all the managers who were currently at the E5 level, and had risen to this level through promotions. Any manager, who had gained lateral entry, directly at a higher managerial level, was not a part of our sample.

The *profile of our sample* was as follows. Their average age was 51 years. This is because they belonged to the senior management level, and most had stayed with the company since the beginning of their careers. This was corroborated by the fact that 30 out of the 52 respondents had no work experience before their job in this company. The median "prior work-experience" for the rest of the respondents was 5 years only. Most of the managers surveyed had postgraduate degrees, and more than two-thirds of the postgraduates had MBA degrees.

Instruments Used

Questionnaire to measure the need for power and need for affiliation was taken from Steers and Braunstein (1976). Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) Form M (Kipnis, et al., 1980) was used to measure the six influence strategies of assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, higher authority, friendliness, and reason.

We developed a new scale for measuring level of inhibition in a manager. We prepared a preliminary 16-item questionnaire and administered it to 15 respondents. We correlated the response for each item with the mean score of responses for all the 16 items. Only 5 out of the 16 items were significantly (p < .05) correlated with the mean response for all 16 items together. The Cronbach's Alpha for these 5 items was .72 indicating high internal consistency. The items on the questionnaire related to organization-mindedness, propensity to help others by using one's influence and power, consideration for others, and sharing of due credit. We also interviewed the same respondents on other measures of inhibition, namely, uncontrolled urge to drink and indulge oneself, placing of personal goals vis-à-vis desire to serve others, and desire to amass symbols of power and prestige. Based on the interview, we categorized the respondents into the ones who are high on inhibition and those low on inhibition. We did an analysis of variance which revealed that the scores on the five items differed significantly between the high-inhibition and low-inhibition groups (F = 6.33, p < .05). The five items seem to be reliably measuring what they are supposed to measure, and we used these to capture level of inhibition. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree.

Results

Correlations between all variables included in the study are given in Table 1. Influence strategies other than reason were positively correlated to each other, all correlations being significant at .05 level except the one between friendliness and assertiveness which was only moderately positively related (r = .25, p < .10). Reason was significantly positively related to friendliness (r= .34, p < .05). Reason was the most frequently used strategy followed by friendliness, coalition, assertiveness, bargaining and higher authority in that order.

Reason was significantly positively related to need for power (r= .44, p < .001) but was not related to level of inhibition. Thus, hypothesis 1 was only partially supported. Friendliness was not related to need for power and level of inhibition, thereby providing no support for our hypothesis 2. Friendliness was however significantly positively related to need for affiliation (r = .50, p < .001). This supported hypothesis 3. Influence strategies other than reason and friendliness (assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, and higher authority) were not related to need for power, need for affiliation, or level of inhibition.

Reason was the only strategy to which promotion was related. Reason was significantly negatively related to the speed in receiving promotions (r = -.31, p < .05). This contradicts our hypothesis 4 instead of supporting it. There was a significant positive correlation between the use of reason and that of friendliness. To see if the relationship between reason and promotions could have been diluted by that between reason and friendliness, we did a partial correlation analysis of promotion, reason, and friendliness. Reason continued to be correlated significantly and negatively to the speed in receiving promotions even after controlling for friendliness (r = -.32, p < .05).

Speed in receiving promotions was not related to need for power, need for affiliation, or level of inhibition. We did some further analysis to see if the combination of need for power, need for affiliation and inhibition was related to reason, friendliness and promotions. We started with reason as the dependent variable and need for power as the independent variable in a regression equation. We found that adding need for affiliation and inhibition to need for power in the regression equation did not add significant variance in explaining use of reason as influence strategy. There was

a significant effect of the need for power on the frequency of use of reason as an influence strategy (F = 11.78, p < .01) and when we added the need for affiliation and the level of inhibition, the results were still significant (F = 4.52, p < .01). However, the need for affiliation and the inhibition level were not all significantly correlated with reason, when taken individually. This means that the need for power was so strongly correlated with the frequency of use of reason that when any other variable was added to it, the relationship remained significant. Also, the addition of the need for affiliation and the inhibition level, to the need for power, only weakened the existing relationship between the need for power and the frequency of use of reason.

Similarly, adding need for power and inhibition to need for affiliation did not add significant variance in explaining use of friendliness. The frequency of use of friendliness as an influence tactic was not significantly related to need for power alone, but was significantly related to the need for affiliation combined with the need for power. When the level of inhibition was added to these two variables, the relationship was significant but less so. Moreover, the correlation between the frequency of use of friendliness as an influence tactic, and the need for affiliation was highly significant, though the former was not significantly correlated with the need for power and the level of inhibition, individually. Thus, we can conclude that the main relationship existed between the need for affiliation and the frequency of use of friendliness as a strategy. The need for power and level of inhibition related significantly to the latter only when combined with the need for affiliation. Hence, the relationship between the need for affiliation and the frequency of use of reason was so strong that the addition of the other two variables could reduce the significance of this relationship, but the relationship remained significant.

We also found that the combination of need for power, need for affiliation and inhibition was not significantly related to speed in receiving promotions. The speed with which promotions were gained, was not significantly related to the need for power alone, or to the latter combined with the need for affiliation. Even when the level of inhibition was added to these two variables, there was no significant relationship with the dependent variable. Also, there was no significant correlation between the speed of receiving promotions and the need for power, the need for affiliation and the level of inhibition, individually.

Discussion

Explaining the first hypothesis, we can say that the frequency of use of reason as an influence tactic is higher for those who have a higher need for power because they control their environment through foolproof methods. Any other tactic is recipient-specific, but the use of reason in a formal argument is irrefutable by any boss. Similarly, a person with a high need for power or high inhibition may or may not use friendliness frequently.

One implication of the fact that none of the interacting effects between the need for power, the need for affiliation and the level of inhibition, are significantly related to either the use of reason or friendliness, or the success in achieving fast promotions, is that the influence styles depend more on just one need rather than the overall personality of a person. It is not only an institutional manager, but anyone who is high on need for power, that will use reason frequently. A further prospect of research emerges here if we hypothesize that since they use reason frequently, tacticians are high on the need for power.

What is most perplexing is that there is a significant negative relationship between the speed of promotions and use of reason as influence strategy. We had hypothesized that if tacticians are most successful in receiving promotions and their main influence style is reason, those using reason should be successful in obtaining promotions. However, it is possible that tacticians who are successful in receiving promotions may be so, due to a combination of factors, like the nature of job, the kind of organizations sampled, their personality type, etc. However, this result needs to be researched and explained further. Use of reason may also be seen as harsh, and could bring out ideas that displease the boss. This possibly explains the negative relationship between reason and promotions.

A serious limitation of our findings could be the nature of the organization chosen as sample for surveying. The company studied has certain peculiarities in the promotion process. The main determinant of promotions is vacancies in the respective posts. Even with exceptional ratings in the performance appraisal, certain officers are asked to wait for a vacancy to arise. Moreover, the immediate superior is responsible only for 40% of the performance rating. The rest is done by his or her superior (the reviewer). Hence, the effect of the influence style used on one's immediate superior can be diluted. In addition, at the E6 to E5 level, the promotions are decided by a board of top management executives consisting of the chairperson and managing director. Therefore, the mood of the top management is a big decider. This means that the person who gets a promotion is a person who has connectedness, i.e. proximity to power due to his or her close relations with an influential person at the top, rather than merely the influence strategy he or she uses. This latter may in turn, affect the former, but since the interaction between the top management and the officers is not very high, a person's individual influence style may not be very effective and impressions get dispersed in the process. In a company with approximately 5500 officers, the individual influence styles of managers lose significance. What is more important is the influence wielded by a department as a whole because many times, there are mass promotions. Lastly, a very important method of rewards is giving double increments. In fact, every department head has a yearly quota of granting double increments to two officers. So, any officer who is not promoted is pacified using this method and this may continue for a long time.

One implication of the findings about frequency of use of various strategies is that people use reason and friendliness more frequently probably because these strategies need individual specific abilities like a logical mind, expertise, a cheerful nature, etc. However, the other four influence styles—assertiveness, bargaining, coalition, and higher authority—all require some external factors, namely, power, bargaining chip, external support and support of superiors, respectively.

Brass (1984) conducted a study and his conclusions were that the strongest predictors of promotions were the least easily perceived measures of centrality—the control or betweenness measures. However, this study restricted itself to the effects of influence tactics on outcomes and structural factors were ignored altogether. While being a limitation in this study, this would open an area for further research using this structural factor and examining its effects also. Another area of research may be the effect of the need for achievement on the use of a particular influence style. Lastly, we have not considered the personality of the boss in this study. It could be argued that influence styles are customized to suit the recipient, i.e. the boss. Hence, this variable could also be added in future studies. Both the need for power and that for affiliation require that the individual attempt to influence his or her surroundings. However, the need for achievement is intrinsic to an individual and he or she may not bother about what others think, or what he or she can get from the

others. Therefore, all influence strategy scores may be lower than that of a person who has either a high need for power or affiliation. This comparison is a further possibility.

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that those who have a high need for power tend to use reason as an influence strategy more frequently. Similarly, those having a high need for affiliation tend to use friendliness more frequently. Considering that need for power has been linked to enhanced performance, use of reason assumes importance. While reason and friendliness are positively related, those who want to be highly influential should probably increase their use of reason and reduce their use of friendliness.

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Table 1

Correlations Between Variables

(N=52)	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Assertiveness	2.54										
2. Bargaining	2.24	***.51									
3. Coalition	2.81	**.40	**.43								
4. Friendliness	3.28	†.25	***.45	**.36							
5. Higher authority	1.79	***.56	***.45	***.53	*.27						
6. Reason	4.20	.07	-.01	.20	*.34	.15					
7. Need for Power	3.77	.12	.12	-.01	.06	.17	***.44				
8. Need for Affiliation	3.45	.06	.22	.10	***.50	.18	-.03	*.27			
9. Inhibition	4.27	-.14	-.04	-.15	-.04	-.22	-.00	-.20	-.17		
10. Years taken for promotion from E6 to E5 level	5.04	-.04	.16	-.07	-.02	.02	*-.31	-.01	.21	.07	

† = p<0.10. * = p<0.05. ** = p<0.01. *** = p<0.001.