

DOWNWARD INFLUENCE STRATEGIES & ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The present paper makes an attempt to investigate the relationship between Downward Influence Strategies and Job Commitment in organizations. This study is based on a sample of 45 middle level executives of 10 private sector organizations. The survey was conducted partly in person and partly in the form of an online survey.

INTRODUCTION

It is observed that in practice, managers implement all policies, take decisions, reward people and motivate employees for goal attainment through different types of strategies. Managers at all levels behave in different ways while dealing with their subordinates, peers and bosses. Their strategies differ depending on who the target is, and what the goal of influence attempt is. Social influence processes are a pervasive aspect of organizational life. The work of organizations is carried out in a setting of power and influence. A manager's job is to read these realities correctly and marshal sufficient power to influence the achievement of organizational objectives.

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Power is exercised through the use of various behavioral strategies or methods. Both superiors and subordinates exercise their power but by using different methods, in different situations, and for different reasons.

The various influence strategies can be classified into three categories:

(a) *Upward Strategies*: Under this category are included ways by which people influence their superior or seniors.

(b) *Downward Strategies* : This category includes methods used by managers to obtain compliance from their subordinates or methods used by persons to make their juniors comply with them.

(c) *Lateral Strategies* : This category contains methods used among peers, husband/spouse, friends, etc. These methods are used, in power relationships where both members have equal power.

For the present study downward influence strategies (DIS) have been used which include

1. *Rationality (R)*: Rational persuasion or rationality involves the use of logical arguments and factual information to convince a target that the agent's request or proposal is feasible and consistent with shared objectives [1]. Writing detailed plans, explaining the reasons for a request, giving facts and data, are all tactics involving rationality.

2. *Assertiveness (A)*: It involves demanding, telling a person to comply, expressing anger verbally, pointing out rules, or becoming a nuisance [2].

3. *Ingratiation (I)*: It involves making the other person feel important, inflating the importance of a request, showing a need, asking politely, acting friendly or humbly, or pretending that the other person is really going to make the decision. It is used to get one's way with the boss as well as to persuade coworkers and subordinates to act in specific ways. This influence strategy has been systematically investigated by some Indian researchers in a number of studies [3].

4. *Use of Sanctions (S)*: The use of sanctions draws upon organizational rewards and punishments. Tactics include preventing salary increases or threatening an employee's job security in the case of negative sanction and increasing salary or promoting the person in the case of positive sanction.

5. *Showing Expertise(E)*: In this strategy, the superior influences subordinates by showing competence and knowledge in work domain, and expects subordinates to comply with his/her superior knowledge.

6. *Personalized Relationship(P)*: This strategy involves superior's warmth, support and care towards subordinates. Even, superior's help extends beyond the work place to subordinates' personal matters, and in exchange for this the superior expects the subordinate to comply.

7. *Exchange of Benefits (B)*: Exchange tactics involve explicit or implicit offers by an agent to provide a favor or benefit to the target in return for doing what the agent requests.

One of the most important determinants of managerial effectiveness is success in influencing people and developing their commitment to task objective, or the Job Commitment [4]. In the study of organizational behavior, organizational commitment is the employee's psychological attachment to the organization. Organizational commitment refers to the strength of an employee's involvement in the organization and identification with it.

Organizational commitment goes beyond loyalty to include an active contribution to accomplishing organizational goals. It can be contrasted with other work-related attitudes, such as Job Satisfaction (an employee's feelings about their job) and Organizational Identification (the degree to which an employee experiences a 'sense of oneness' with their organization). Organizational commitment represents broader work attitude than job satisfaction because it applies to the entire organization rather than just to the job. Further, commitment typically is more stable than satisfaction because day-to-day events are less likely to change it.

Organizational scientists have developed many definitions of organizational commitment, and numerous scales to measure them. Exemplary of this work is Meyer & Allen's model of commitment [5], which was developed to integrate numerous definitions of commitment that had proliferated in the research literature. According to Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of commitment, prior research indicated that there are three "mind sets" which can characterize an employee's commitment to the organization:

- ***Affective Commitment:*** AC is defined as the employee's emotional attachment to the organization. As a result, he or she strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization. This employee commits to the organization because he/she "wants to". In developing this concept, Meyer and Allen drew largely on Mowday, Porter, and Steers's (1982) concept of commitment.
- ***Continuance Commitment:*** The individual commits to the organization because he/she perceives high costs of losing organizational membership (cf. Becker's 1960 "side bet theory"), including economic losses (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) that would have to be given up. The employee remains a member of the organization because he/she "has to".
- ***Normative Commitment:*** The individual commits to and remains with an organization because of feelings of obligation. For instance, the organization may have invested resources in training an employee who then feels an obligation to put forth effort on the job and stay with the organization to 'repay the debt.' It may also reflect an internalized norm, developed before the person joins the organization through family or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization. The employee stays with the organization because he/she "ought to".

According to Meyer and Allen [6], these components of commitment are not mutually exclusive: an employee can simultaneously be committed to the organization in an affective, normative, and continuance sense, at varying levels of intensity. This idea led Meyer and Herscovitch [7] to argue that at any point in time, an employee has a "commitment profile" that reflects high or low levels of all three of these mind-sets, and that different profiles have different effects on workplace behavior such as job performance, absenteeism, and the chance that they will quit.

Lack of commitment often leads to turnover. The stronger an employee's commitment to the organization, the less likely the person is to quit. Strong commitment also is often correlated with low absenteeism and relatively high productivity. Attendance at work is usually higher for employees with strong organizational commitment. Moreover, committed individuals tend to be more goal directed and waste less time while at work. Thus, organizational success largely depends on commitment of employees towards organization.

Sources of organizational commitment or lack of it are: pay, relationships with supervisors and coworkers, working conditions, opportunities for advancement, and so on. Effective management can foster increased commitment and loyalty to the organization.

Researchers have used Meyer and Allen's Commitment scales to determine the impact of an employee's level of commitment on outcomes such as quitting behavior, job performance, and absenteeism. In our work we aim to research the impact of Downward Influence Strategies on Organizational commitment. We identify our factors used to measure commitment as that in Meyer and Allen's three component model of commitment. Affective commitment is identified as Identification and Involvement (I), Continuance commitment is identified as Accomplishment (A), and Normative commitment is identified as Loyalty (L), respectively.

It may be hypothesized that strategies like negative sanctions and assertiveness may hamper organizational commitment, whereas rationality, personalization and ingratiation would enhance it.

SAMPLE

The study was conducted partly in person and partly in the form of an online survey. The survey conducted in person was conducted in a commercial city of eastern India. The online survey was conducted over a sample spread across the country. For this purpose, 45 middle level managers were contacted personally and were requested to fill the questionnaire comprising measure of DIS and Organizational Commitment.

MEASURES

Strategy measures comprised 38 items drawn from various sources available in current literature [8, 9]. This measure included DIS of Rationality, Assertiveness, Ingratiation, Use of Sanctions, Showing Expertise, Personalized Relationship and Exchange of Benefits. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7 point scale (1-Never; 7-Always) the frequency with which their boss engaged during the past six months in the behaviors indicated by the scale items. The measures contributed to 7 interpretable factors.

Factor 1 consisted of items inducing negative evaluations, withholding further advancements, etc. and this factor was labeled as *Negative Sanction (S)*.

Factor 2 involved the use of politeness, praise and satisfactory performance evaluations with appropriate rationality and it was named *Rationality(R)*.

Factor 3 involved making the other person feel important, inflating the importance of a request, showing a need, asking politely, acting friendly or humbly, or pretending that the other person is really going to make the decision. This factor was named *Ingratiation (I)*.

Factor 4 included items such as help in personal matters and help in the time of need. Therefore, it was labeled as *Personalized Relationship(P)*.

Factor 5 was identified by items including order and demand and it was named *Assertiveness(A)*.

Factor 6 was made up of items promising extra benefits and exchange of favor. So it was named as *Exchange of Benefits(B)*.

Factor 7 consisted of items showing the use of knowledge and expertise to assert the demands and orders. Thus it was labeled *Asserting Expertise(E)*.

The items measuring DIS have been listed in Table 1, and the corresponding factors they measure has also been mentioned alongside.

Organizational commitment (COM) is measured through Mayor and Allen's 9 items Commitment scales, having three dimensions: Identification & Involvement (I), Loyalty (L), and Accomplishment (A). Respondents were asked to respond to these items on a 7 point scale (ranging from 1= No, I strongly disagree to 7= Yes, I strongly agree) indicating the level of their commitment. Thus, the factors in the analysis of organizational commitment, as mentioned in Table 2 are:

Factor 1 included items related to identification with the organization and level of involvement in the organization. It was named *Identification & Involvement (I)*.

Factor 2 consisted of items showing individual's loyalty to the organization. It was named *Loyalty (L)*.

Factor 3 was made up of items like chances to accomplish something worthwhile. This factor was named *Accomplishment (A)*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results are presented in the form of different strategies as directly contributing to the level of commitment in the organization. The zero-order correlations between DIS and organizational commitment variables are presented in Table 5.

As can be seen from table 3, all the DIS factors show significant correlations amongst themselves. All the factors are significantly but negatively correlated to Sanctions.

Similarly, Table 4 shows that the COM factors are significantly correlated amongst themselves.

It is clear from the table that Identification & Involvement shows moderately high correlation with Rational Rewards, Personalization and Exchange of Benefits, but very significant correlations with Ingratiation and Asserting Expertise. As expected, it shows a low correlation with Assertiveness. Loyalty on the other hand shows low correlations with Rational Rewards, Ingratiation and Personalization. Rather, it shows significant correlations with Assertiveness, Exchange of Benefits and Assertive Expertise, indicating that Loyalty is better fostered through a dominant style of leadership.

Though accomplishment shows moderate correlations with all of the DIS factors or strategies, it shows significant correlations with Rational Rewards, Ingratiation and, Assertive Expertise. As expected, all the Commitment measures are negatively correlated to Negative Sanctions.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of the study was to see how the DIS affect organizational commitment.

Results suggest that rationality, personalization, ingratiation, and exchange of benefits, in general, help to enhance organizational commitment. Assertiveness and asserting expertise may have the impact of affecting organizational commitment adversely. Whereas, Sanctions for sure, hamper organizational commitment.

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Table 1: Downward Influence Strategy Measures (N=45)

S. No.	Items	Factor
02.	He/she gave me unsatisfactory performance evaluation.	S
04.	He/she shouted at me in front of my co-workers.	S
08.	He/she gave me satisfactory performance evaluation.	S
11.	He/she withheld my future advancements.	S
18.	He/she praised me verbally for my outstanding performance.	S
23.	He/she showed a feeling of dislike towards me.	S
27.	He/she recommended (or gave) me extra benefits (e.g., overtime) for getting his/her work done.	S
29.	He/she challenged my ability (e.g., "I bet, you can't do that").	S
35.	He/she recommended or offered a salary increase.	S
01.	He/she convinced me by the urgency and utility of the issue at hand.	R
09.	He/she told me the reasons why his/her plan is the best.	R
12.	Sometimes he/she told me the reasons for making a request to me.	R
19.	He/she argued his/her points logically.	R
26.	He/she told me exactly why he/she needed my help.	R
03.	He/she asked me to do some task in a polite way.	I
06.	He/she made me feel important.	I
16.	He/she praised me with superlatives.	I
32.	He/she used the words which made me feel good.	I
36.	Even when he/she knew he/she would not use my advice he/she consulted me.	I
05.	He/she did personal favors for me.	P
21.	He/she helped me even in personal matters.	P
33.	He/she went out of his/her way to help me at the time of my need.	P
37.	He/she encouraged me to discuss even my personal problems.	P
07.	He/she set a time deadline for me to do what he/she asked.	A
14.	He/she repeatedly checked up to see if his/her directions are followed.	A
15.	He/she demanded me to do what he/she requested.	A
20.	He/she repeatedly reminded about what he/she wanted.	A
31.	He/she simply ordered me to do what was asked.	A
38.	He/she pointed out that the rules required that I comply.	A
10.	He/she promised me to help me in getting further advancement if I helped him/ her now.	B
13.	He/she offered an exchange of favor.	B
25.	He/she reminded me of past favors that he/she had done for me.	B
30.	He/she asked me to cooperate for getting the work done while promising extra benefits for it.	B
34.	He/she offered some personal sacrifice in exchange (e.g., doing part of my job, etc).	B
17.	At times he/she showed his/her knowledge of the specific issue.	E

22.	He/she told me that he/she had a lot of experience with such matters.	E
24.	He/she influenced me because of his/her competence.	E
28.	His/her knowledge of the technical issues won me the favour for him/her.	E

KEY: S- Sanctions, R- Rationality, I- Ingratiation, P- Personalization, A- Assertiveness, B- Exchange of Benefits, E-Assertive Expertise.

S.No.	Items	Factor
01.	I am quite proud to be able to tell people who it is I work for.	I
05.	I feel myself to be part of the organization.	I
08.	I would not recommend a close friend to join our staff.	I
02.	I sometimes feel like leaving the employment for good.	L
04.	Even if the firm were not doing too well financially, I would be reluctant to change to another employer.	L
07.	The offer of a bit more money with another employer would not seriously make me think of changing my job.	L
03.	I am not willing to put myself out just to help the organization.	A
06.	In my work I like to feel I like to feel I am making some effort, not just for myself but for the organization as well.	A
09.	To know that my own work had made a contribution to the good of the organization would please me.	A

KEY: I- Identification & Involvement, L- Loyalty, A- Accomplishment.

Strategy	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Sanctions	1.00						
2. Rationality	-.25	1.00					
3. Ingratiation	-.33*	.50**	1.00				
4. Personalization	-.61**	.37*	.51**	1.00			
5. Assertiveness	-.40**	.41**	.03	.07	1.00		
6. Exchange of Benefits	-.82**	.35*	.49**	.67**	.33*	1.00	
7. Showing expertise	-.47**	.58**	.55**	.54**	.53**	.41**	1.00
Mean	4.93	4.60	4.22	3.10	4.34	2.61	4.38
SD	1.02	1.31	1.69	1.51	1.37	1.31	1.32
Number of items	9	5	5	4	6	5	4

Dimension		1.	2.	3.
1.	Identification & Involvement	1.00		
2.	Loyalty	0.31*	1.00	
3.	Accomplishment	0.40**	0.36*	1.00
Mean		5.10	4.20	5.23
SD		1.12	1.27	1.03
Number of Items		3	3	3

Strategy		Job Commitment		
		Identification & Involvement	Loyalty	Accomplishment
1.	Sanctions	-.19	-.23	-.19
2.	Rationality	.35*	.16	.43**
3.	Ingratiation	.54**	.18	.35*
4.	Personalization	.31*	.10	.23
5.	Exchange of Benefits	.35*	.31*	.28
6.	Assertiveness	.06	.33*	.25
7.	Asserting Expertise	.41**	.31*	.40**

** significant at $p < 0.01$

* significant at $p < 0.05$