

**LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGES  
AND CHOICE OF INFLUENCE TACTICS**

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The present study examined the influence dynamics in leader-member dyads, using role-playing scenarios. The scenarios varied in terms of (a) leaders' perspective and members' perspective and (b) quality of exchange in the dyad (IN/OUT-group). Influence in dyads revealed interesting dynamics, though the study received only limited support for the hypothesis. The leader showed a likelihood of using different influence tactics for IN/OUT-group subordinates. IN/OUT-group subordinates in turn also differed in their use of tactics to influence the leader. The implications of the findings are discussed, and directions for future research are suggested.

The vertical dyad linkage (VDL), or in more recent terminology, leader-member exchange (LMX) model of leadership (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) has seen relatively little research as corroborative evidence, explanation, or extension of the model. The focus in this approach has been on the quality of exchanges in leader-member dyads (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982). To understand the dynamics systematically at the micro-level, attempts have been made to explore the variables that determine (e.g., Snyder & Bruning, 1985; Wakabayashi & Graen, 1984) and the variables that are determined by (Cashman and Graen, 1977; Rosse & Kraut, 1983) the quality of exchange in the dyad. A major problem that stems with the introduction of any new concept lies in its operationalization. LMX too has been operationalized in different ways to suit different purposes (see Dinesch & Liden, 1986 for a complete review). In this connection, Dinesch and Liden have introduced the aspect of "mutuality" in dyadic exchanges which forms the crux of any social exchange theory. The present work attempts to incorporate this concept.

Any mention of leadership implies to a greater extent the exercise of influence. The influence paradigm as arising from the bases of power scheme (French & Raven, 1959) has long been articulated and the reciprocal influence processes between leader and members (Hollander & Julian, 1969) have been highlighted. Social power dynamics in the dyad though was theorized in the field framework of Cartwright (1959) and in the social exchange framework of Thibaut and Kelley (1959), no attention has been given to exact influence operation in leader-member dyads. It is proposed that reciprocity of influence takes a new dimension in the dyadic exchanges.

The present study is an attempt at investigating the influences dynamics in dyadic interactions. For the fulfillment of "mutuality" requirement, both the leader and the subordinate perspectives are taken. Accordingly, two major hypotheses are framed for empirical verifications.

The leader's interaction with the IN-group subordinates (positive LMX) shows influence without authority and is anchored in the interpersonal exchanges. In contrast, the leader's interaction with the OUT-group subordinates is primarily contractual and is deeply rooted in the formal employment contract (Jacobs, 1971). Thus,

*H1: The leader will use different tactics for IN/OUT-group subordinates. Specifically, the leader should show a greater use of tactics like reasoning and personalized help for IN-group subordinates, and assertion and withdrawal for OUT-group subordinates.*

*H2: The IN/OUT-group subordinates will use different strategies to influence their leader. IN/OUT-group subordinates are conjectured to differ in the use of strategies like reasoning, assertion, and withdrawal.*

Dyad-wise, the IN-OUT-dyads are expected to show unique dynamics. Hence, two supplementary hypotheses are in order.

*H3: The IN-group interactions should reveal a congruence in the leader's and member's use of influence tactics.*

*H4: In the OUT-group, the leader and the member should use different strategies to influence each other.*

## **Method**

### ***Sample and Procedure***

The subjects were 100 engineering undergraduates at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India. They ranged in age from 19 to 23, with a mean of 20.70 and a standard deviation of 1.62 years.

The subjects were randomly assigned to four treatments, with 25 subjects per treatment. After reading a paragraph long write-up, they were asked to respond to the dependent measures (influence strategies) and the manipulation check items.

### ***Experimental Manipulations<sup>1</sup>***

The study employed four hypothetical role-playing scenarios that varied in terms of the quality of exchange (positive or negative) in a leader-member dyad. The quality of exchange was operationalized in terms of the perceived efficiency of, the group support for, and the affection towards, the other member of the dyad (see Dinesch & Liden, 1986 for a detailed account).

The IN/OUT-group manipulations varied in terms of both the leader's and the member's

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<sup>1</sup>Copies of all experimental materials are available on request.

perspectives, giving rise to four scenarios: (a) leader's perceptions for the IN-group subordinates, (b) leader's perceptions for the OUT-group subordinates, (c) IN-group subordinate's perceptions for the leader, and (d) OUT-group subordinate's perceptions for the leader.<sup>2</sup>

### *Dependent Measures*<sup>3</sup>

The influence strategy items were taken from a few recent works (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Offermann & Schrier, 1985). The subjects were asked to state on a 9-point scale (1 = *certainly would not do this*; 9 = *certainly would do this*) the *likelihood* of their taking each of the actions after reading the scenario.

A partial test of the construct validity of the scales employed a varimax rotated factor analysis, with iteration (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Hunt, 1975). A total of six factors (with 20 significant items) were generated, explaining a total of 73.7% of the variance. The criterion for extracting a factor was eigenvalue greater than 1.0, and that for item to be retained was loadings greater than .35 and cross-loadings less than .25. To obtain mean factor scores, item responses were summed up for each subject dividing by the number of items on the factor. The following are the factors generated. (i) Expertise and Reason: Use of logical explanations and competence, (ii) Ingratiation: Use of flattery and pleasant words, (iii) Reasoning: Use of generally logical explanations, (iv) Personalized Help: Use of personal favors, (v) Assertion: Use of authority and force, and (vi) Withdrawal: Stepping or backing out of situation. The scales showed fairly high reliability coefficients (ranging from .57 to .77) and substantially low intercorrelations (Average  $r = .03$ ), indicating strong independence of the scales.

## **Results and Discussion**

Although the support for hypothesized relationships was limited, investigating influence dynamics in leader-member dyads yielded some interesting insights.

The first hypothesis suggested that the leader uses different strategies for IN/OUT-group subordinates. The results showed a significant difference in the use of expertise and reason,  $t(98) = 2.00, p < .05$ , and assertion,  $t(98) = 5.52, p < .01$ , by the leader. The IN-group subordinates saw a greater use of expertise and reason ( $M = 6.52$ ) as compared to their OUT-group counterparts ( $M = 5.67$ ). Since the interaction between the leader and the IN-group subordinates is characterized by open and honest communications (Dansereau et al., 1975), the influence tactics in this situation should be rational. A greater use of reasoning for the IN-group

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<sup>2</sup>Built into the stimulus material were the five manipulation check items which were taken and modified from the LMX measure (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982). These items were highly interrelated ( $\alpha = .93$ ). The analysis showed that the quality of exchange (IN/OUT) was perceived by the subjects as portrayed in the scenario; that is, the quality of exchange score was significantly ( $p < .001$ ) higher in the IN-group condition than in the OUT-group condition.

<sup>3</sup>The presentations summarize highlights of the data; statistical information (e.g., factor loadings) not reported explicitly are available on request.

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subordinates, then, is in keeping with the rational interaction in the dyad. For the OUT-group subordinates, the leader displayed a greater use of assertion ( $M = 5.34$ ) than for the IN-group subordinates ( $M = 3.76$ ). Since the OUT-group interactions are based on authority relationships (Jacobs, 1971), the use of assertion is an expected consequence.

The second hypothesis sought to study the difference between IN/OUT-group subordinates' use of influence tactics for the leader. The hypothesis received partial support. The results revealed a difference in the exercise of assertion  $t(98) = 2.47, p < .05$ . The OUT-group subordinates displayed a greater use of assertion ( $M = 5.40$ ) for their leader as compared to the IN-group subordinates ( $M = 4.48$ ) which could be a response to the leader's use of assertion on them.

The congruence hypothesis for the IN-group interactions could not find enough evidence in its favor. Since the results did not reveal the use of any distinct tactics by the IN-group subordinates to influence their leader, concordance could not be studied. The last hypothesis conjectured incongruence in the OUT-group influence dynamics, which proved on the contrary. The use of assertion by one member of the dyad reinforces the other also to assert.

Influence tactics in the context of leadership have been studied at both the level: upward and downward (see, e.g., Ansari, 1987; Ansari & Kapoor, 1987). The tendency in all these works has been to take the subordinates as a homogeneous group and generalize the findings over the subordinates. They all seemed to have overlooked the uniqueness of influence operations at the dyadic level. Once this aspect is reliably ascertained, it can be effectively used in the training and development programs and also in the appraisals of the managers.

Before taking the results of this study too far, a word about methodology is in order. Since the study was based on role-playing scenarios, the findings are to be viewed with caution. Thus, the study might not be the last word in the dyadic influence dynamics but it opens new doors for the explorations in real-life settings.

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