Validation of the extended Influence Behavior Questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

We conducted four studies to evaluate the extended version of the Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ), which measures proactive tactics used to influence people in organizations. The results provide support for the reliability and validity of the 11 tactic scales in the newest version of the IBQ. The questionnaire has widespread potential applications for both research and practice, and it is the most comprehensive and best validated measure of proactive influence tactics. However, the IBQ is not equally useful for all purposes, and we describe some limitations and potential problems that could reduce the validity of the scales.

1. Introduction

Influence is essential for effective performance by managers. To be effective a manager must influence others to carry out requests, support proposals, and implement decisions. The success of an attempt by one person (the "agent") to influence another person ("the target") depends to a great extent on the influence tactics used by the agent. Influence tactics can be classified according to their primary purpose and time frame. Proactive tactics are used in an attempt to influence someone to carry out an immediate request, and they are especially important in situations where the agent has little authority over target persons. Impression management tactics are used to create a favorable image and build a better relationship (e.g., Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Political tactics are used to influence policy decisions or the allocation of scarce resources (Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Pfeffer, 1992). Some types of influence tactics can be used for more than one purpose, but a tactic may not be equally effective for different purposes (Yukl & Chavez, 2002).

Influence behavior can be studied with several research methods, including coding of qualitative descriptions of influence behavior (e.g., from critical incidents or diaries), manipulation of influence tactics in laboratory experiments (e.g., with actors, role play exercises, or scenarios), and manipulation of influence behavior in field experiments (e.g., with feedback and training). The method used most often to study proactive influence tactics is a behavior description questionnaire. Since 1980 two different questionnaires were developed for survey research on proactive influence tactics.

1.1. Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS)

Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson (1980) collected critical incidents that described successful and unsuccessful influence attempts by the respondents. The researchers analyzed these critical incidents to identify distinct influence tactics. Based on their findings the researchers developed an agent self-report questionnaire called the POIS to measure eight influence tactics. Schriesheim & Hinkin (1990) later conducted a factor analysis of the POIS using data from respondents who indicated how often they used each type of tactic in upward influence attempts with their boss. This study found support for six of the proposed tactics (i.e., rationality,

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exchange, ingratiation, assertiveness, coalition, and upward appeal), but not for the remaining two tactics (blocking and sanctions). The revised agent POIS with six tactic scales and three items per scale was tested in a subsequent study of upward influence (Hochwarter, Harrison, Ferris, Perrewe & Ralston, 2000). The results provided only limited support for the tactic scales. Scale reliabilities were low for some samples, and some of the fit statistics for the confirmatory factor analysis were outside the acceptable range.

Both the original and revised versions of the agent POIS have been used in many studies on the determinants and consequences of proactive tactics used to influence bosses (e.g., Deluga, 1988, 1991; Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984; Thacker & Wayne, 1995; Wayne, Liden, Graef & Ferris, 1997). Only a few studies (e.g., Erez & Rim, 1982; Kipnis et al., 1980) have used the POIS to measure influence behavior directed at subordinates or peers, and there is no systematic validation evidence for this use of the tactic scales. Another limitation of the POIS is that self reports of behavior are usually not as accurate as ratings of a person's behavior by other people. Finally, the POIS does not include scales to measure some tactics likely to be important for managers and professionals. A more accurate and comprehensive questionnaire was needed for research on interpersonal influence in organizations.

1.2. Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ)

Unlike the POIS, the IBQ was developed as a target questionnaire. A respondent rates how often a designated agent (e.g., the boss or a peer) uses examples of each proactive tactic in attempts to influence the respondent. The early version of the IBQ included scales for six tactics that are similar to ones in the POIS (i.e., rational persuasion, exchange, ingratiation, pressure, coalition, and upward appeals), but new items were developed for these scales rather than merely revising items from the POIS. In addition, the IBQ included scales to measure four proactive tactics based on the leadership and power literature (i.e., consultation, inspirational appeals, personal appeals, and legitimating). Early validation research provided support for nine of the ten tactics (Yukl, Lepsinger & Lucia, 1992). The factor analysis for target subordinates and peers indicated that there was not sufficient justification for a separate scale on upward appeals, because they were viewed as just another form of coalition tactic. Research with critical incidents provided evidence from an entirely different method that the remaining nine tactics are distinct and meaningful for managers and professionals in business organizations (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, Kim & Falbe, 1996). The early version of the target IBQ was used in several studies on antecedents and consequences of proactive tactics (e.g., Barbuto & Scholl, 1999; Gravenhorst & Boonstra, 1998; Douglas & Gardner, 2004; Sparrowe, Soetjipto & Kraimer, 2006; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992).

Several years ago the IBQ was revised and extended to include two additional tactics (Yukl & Seifert, 2002). The 11 proactive tactics in the extended IBQ are listed and defined in Table 1. This version of the questionnaire (called the IBQ-R) used the same approach for ordering items as in the earlier IBQ. The order of items was essentially random, and the only constraint was to have each tactic represented equally in the initial, middle, and final parts of the questionnaire.

Two methods were used to select items for scales in the IBQ-R. To assess whether an item is perceived to be a relevant example of the tactic it was intended to measure, 20 doctoral students read definitions of the tactics and coded each item according to the primary type of tactic it represented. The coders could indicate if an item fit two or more tactics equally well, or if the item did not fit any of the tactics very well. The order of items in the coding task was randomized. An item was retained for a tactic scale only if at least 75% of the coders accurately classified it, and for most items the coding accuracy exceeded 80%.

The other method for item selection was an exploratory factor analysis, which was conducted for a sample of target managers in several companies who rated the influence behavior of a boss, peer, or subordinate (Yukl & Seifert, 2002). The analysis (using principal components, orthogonal rotation, and eigenvalues greater than 1.0) indicated support for the 11 tactics. Items with high loadings on their intended factor and low loadings on other factors were selected for the IBQ-R, and at least four items were selected for each scale.

Table 1
Definition of the 11 proactive influence tactics

Rational persuasion	The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a request or proposal is feasible and relevant for important task objectives.
Consultation	The agent asks the target person to suggest improvements or help plan a proposed activity or change for which the target person's support is desired.
Inspirational appeals	The agent appeals to the target's values and ideals or seeks to arouse the target person's emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal.
Collaboration	The agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change.
Apprising	The agent explains how carrying out a request or supporting a proposal will benefit the target personally or help to advance the target's career.
Ingratiation	The agent uses praise and flattery before or during an attempt to influence the target person to carry out a request or support a proposal.
Personal appeals	The agent asks the target to carry out a request or support a proposal out of friendship, or asks for a personal favor before saying what it is.
Exchange	The agent offers something the target person wants, or offers to reciprocate at a later time, if the target will do what the agent requests.
Legitimating tactics	The agent seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request or to verify that he/she has the authority to make it.
Pressure	The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do something.
Coalition tactics	The agent enlists the aid of others, or uses the support of others, as a way to influence the target to do something.