

COMMITMENT TO THE SUPERVISOR OR TO THE ORGANIZATION? THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE COMPETENCY AND DOWNWARD INFLUENCE TACTICS

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COMMITMENT TO THE SUPERVISOR OR TO THE ORGANIZATION? THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE COMPETENCY AND DOWNWARD INFLUENCE TACTICS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of employee competency to downward influence tactics (exchange, ingratiation, and consultation tactics), and the effect of these tactics on employee commitment to the supervisor and to the organization. Data collected from 224 employees who work in various industries in Surabaya. This study found that employee competence has significant effect on downward influence tactics in the form consultation, ingratiation, and exchange tactics. This study also showed that consultation and ingratiation tactics have significant effect on employee commitment to the supervisor, but exchange tactic has no significant effect on supervisor-directed commitment. In addition, all the forms of downward influence tactics have no significant effect on organizational commitment.

Keyword: employee competency, downward influence tactics, organizational commitment, supervisor-directed commitment

INTRODUCTION

Organization indeed requires high competence of human resources (HR) for gaining its goals. According to Shields (2016), competency is a factor that contributes to the individual and organizational performance. Competencies can be reflected in the knowledge, skills and behavior of individual employees (Campion, Fink, Ruggerberg, Carr, Phillips, & Odman, 2011). Because of the importance of individuals with high level of competence, it is possible there is dependence of supervisors on their subordinates who perceived to have high competence. Therefore it can be argued that supervisors who consider their subordinates have a certain competencies; they may depend on their subordinates.

According to Lee and Salleh (2008), supervisors need to use downward influence tactics targeted to their subordinates in order to make their subordinates being happy and perform what they wants. On the other hand, managers will seek to control their subordinates attitudes and behaviors by engaged in downward influence tactics (Tepper, Eisenbach, Kirby, & Potter, 1998). The downward influence tactics are used because the effectiveness of leaders is reflected by their success in influencing others and driving their subordinates commitment (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Subordinates will respond to downward influence tactics by being committed and willing to compliance their supervisors (Tepper et al., 1998). In order to successfully influence their subordinates, supervisors must choose the right type of the influence tactics (Lee, Han, Cheong, Kim, and Yun, 2016).

According to Ward and Ravlin (2017), culture can influence the successful use of influence tactics. Therefore, supervisor will be more effective if they have a high cultural awareness and know how to influence others in different cultures (Fu & Yukl, 2000). However, there is a lack of studies conducted to identify what kinds of tactics that are effective used in countries with specific cultural contexts. Therefore, the current study will identify the downward influence tactics that managers use in the Indonesian cultural context - high power distance and high collectivity. In addition, if managers have used downward influence tactics in accordance with the existing context, the issue that arises is how with the consequences. Previous studies tend to emphasize the impact of downward influence tactics on subordinates commitment to the task and to organization. But almost no study identified the impact of downward influence tactics on subordinates commitment directed to their supervisors.

According to social exchange theory, individual employee will repay a good treatment with a good behavior (Organ, 1974). Supervisors might engage in downward influence tactics by doing or promising something or conveying the things that the subordinates enjoy before asking the subordinates to do something. Then it is possible that subordinates will repay supervisors' positive treatment with a commitment directed to them. The issue is whether subordinates prefer to commit to their supervisors rather than to the organization. This study aims to identify the effect of employee competency on downward influence tactics, and the effect of those tactics on employees commitment directed to their supervisor and organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Employee competency and downward influence tactics

Competence is ability or capability (Boyatzis, 2009; on Setyaningdyah et al., 2013). Draganidis and Mentzas (2006; on Setyaningdyah et al., 2013) explain that competence is a combination of knowledge, skill, tacit, and behavior that encourages individuals to perform effectively. While Lee and Salleh (2008) explained that the level of subordinates competence is to the extent to which they can complete their work effectively.

According to Skinner and Wellborn (1997; on Lee & Low, 2012), perception of competence is the feeling that a person is capable of dealing with his environment. In various studies, competence is operated as a behavioral character that significantly differentiates a subordinate from other subordinates (Lee & Low, 2012). In addition, Lee and Low (2012) noted that perceived competence is not the actual competence, but feelings of subordinates about the extent of their competence in doing the work and solving problems.

Yukl and Falbe (1990) suggest that the effectiveness of managers can be measured by their success in influencing others, including their subordinates. Fu and Yukl (2000) explain that influence tactics may form as upward influence, downward influence, and lateral influence. Behavior affecting others is called downward influence tactics, when supervisors use the tactics which targeted to their subordinates. Influence is defined as a person's behavior (i.e. an agent or leader) designed to change the attitudes and/or behavior of others (Soetjipto, 2002). Influence tactics have several goals: benefits for

job completion, benefits for personal agents, and nurturing friendships (Fu & Yukl, 2000).

According to Bass (1990; on Soetjipto, 2002), power will determine how much influence a person has for others. The more power a person has, the greater the influence he/she has. This influence tactic may be used by managers to communicate the request and assignment to their subordinates (Soetjipto, 2002). Yukl and Falbe (1990) provide forms of influence tactics that managers can use to influence others. The forms of influence tactics are:

- a. Inspiration (Inspirational Appeals), perpetrators ask for targets assistance by upholding the values, aspirations, and confidence of the targets so that the targets enthusiastically do their requests.
- b. Consultation, perpetrators invite targets to participate in strategic planning, activities, support and provide assistance to them, or consider what is important for the targets and their suggestions.
- c. Ingratiation, perpetrators use praise, excessive flattery, friendly behavior or help for targets and make them happy, before perpetrators ask for targets help.
- d. Legitimizing tactics, perpetrators seek to demonstrate the legitimacy of their request with the authority or right to make a request or by explaining the consistency of the request with rules, policies or organizational traditions.
- e. Exchange tactics, perpetrators give explicit and implicit promises that they will reward and benefit if their subordinates meet their demands.
- f. Rational persuasion, perpetrators provide a plausible argument and concrete evidence to convince their subordinates.
- g. Pressure tactics, perpetrators use demands, threats, and intimidation to convince their subordinates to carry out their request or support their suggestion.

Kipnis et al. (1980; in Yukl and Falbe, 1990) found that managers tend to use different tactics to achieve different goals depending on their target. The important targets of influence for managers are their subordinates, because the effectiveness of managers can be reflected by how they influence their subordinates to do what they asked for (Yukl & Michel, 2006). Previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of these influence tactics; for example, Yukl et al. (1995) found that there are some significant tactics to influence subordinates. Those tactics are inspirational appeals, consultation, pressure, legitimating tactics, and ingratiation. Yukl and Michel (2006) found that inspiration will lead to trust between superiors and subordinates. While the study of Chong et al. (2013) found that consultation and inspiration tactics have effect on employee commitment to the task and to the organizations in Hong Kong, Taiwan, US and Germany. Furthermore, meta-analysis study by Lee et al. (2016) found that supervisors use influential tactics to their subordinates in the form of tactics of ingratiation, inspiration, rational persuasion, and exchange.

Lee and Salleh (2008) argued that supervisors may use downward influence tactics because of the competence level of subordinates. If subordinate competence is high, supervisors may use downward influence tactics such as inspiration and consultation (Lee & Salleh, 2008). Moreover, Lee and Low (2012) found that subordinate competence positively correlates with downward influence tactics in the form of consultation, inspiration and ingratiation tactics.

Hypothesis 1. Subordinate competence has effect on downward influence tactics (exchange, ingratiation, consultation)

The effect of downward influence tactics on employee commitment

Theory of social exchange explains that people will repay a good treatment with the good things also (Organ, 1974). If supervisors give social present to their subordinates (such as help, praise, and privilege), then subordinates will feel obliged to make reciprocity (Organ, 1974). This theory underlies employee commitment. Subordinates will commit to targets that can provide support and assistance and trust them (Emuwa, 2013).

Organizational commitment is the strength of individual identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization (Porter et al., 1974; on Yang, 2012). While Meyer and Allen (1997, on Yang, 2012) define it as "a psychological condition that (a) characterizes employee relations with the organization, (b) has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization." However, Becker et al (1996) suggested that commitment can have multiple targets, such as commitment to the organization and to the supervisor. The basic of commitment to this particular target is employees desire to get rewards and to avoid punishment and internalization of employee value with a certain target value. Furthermore, Landry and Vandenberghe (2009) explain that employees have a tendency to engage in exchange relationships with various parties, such as their superiors. Thus, we argued that the downward influence tactics may impact not only on organizational commitment but also on employees commitment which directed to their supervisors.

Hypothesis 2a. Downward influence tactics (exchange, ingratiation, consultation) have effect on organizational commitment

Hypothesis 2b. Downward influence tactics (exchange, ingratiation, consultation) have effect on supervisor-directed commitment

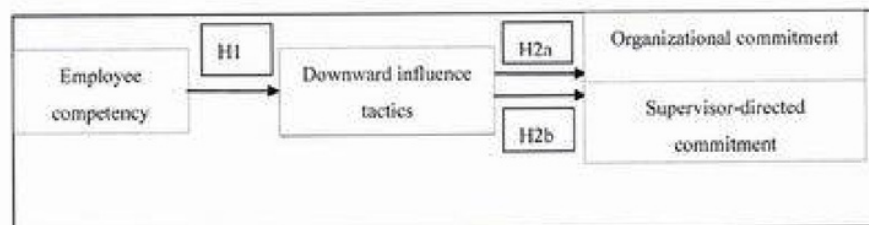


Figure 1. Model of downward influence tactics:
The role of employee competency and employee commitment

METHOD

Data collection is done by distributing questionnaires to 250 respondents in Surabaya, 26 copies are not filled completely. Therefore, we could process as many as 224 copies (response rate 90%). Characteristics of the respondents are most women as many as 119 people (53%), aged less than 35 years as many as 142 people (63%), have tenure less than 5 years as many as 127 people (57%), educated S1 as many as 127 people (57 %).

Employee competency is measured using 5-item short version of Sense of Competence instrument from Wagner and Morse (1975) that have used by Sekaran and Wagner (1980), downward influence tactics using 4-item of exchange tactic, 4-item of consultation tactic, and 4-item of ingratiation tactic from the Influence Behavior Questionnaire-2000 (IBQ-2000) that used by Soetjipto (2002), Organizational commitment was measured using 15-item from Mowday and Steers (1979; on Price, 1997). While commitment to the supervisor is measured using 10-item from Stinglhamber et al. (2002) that have used by Landry and Vandenberghe (2009). Hypothesis testing is done by using Structural Equation Modeling, AMOS 24. We tested validity by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and reliability examination by Cronbach's Alpha.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 showed the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for the study variables. All the variables significantly have inter-correlations. Based on the results of reliability test, all the variables proved reliable and can be used for the further analysis in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, reliability, and inter-correlation among variables

Correlations	Mean	Std.Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6
Employee competency	4.0614	.72191	.879					
Downward influence tactics (exchange)	2.8705	1.06461	.266**	.765				
Downward influence tactics (ingratiation)	3.1265	.98082	.279**	.570**	.823			
Downward influence tactics (consultation)	3.2768	.91152	.447**	.537**	.527**	.825		
Organizational commitment	3.8013	.69956	.616**	.205**	.275**	.378**	.851	
Supervisor-directed commitment	3.6042	.82443	.423**	.290**	.414**	.494**	.509**	.848

N = 15 N = 224, Cronbach's alpha in parentheses along the diagonal

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis for the model which is consisted six factors: employee competency, exchange tactic, consultation tactic, ingratiation tactic, organizational commitment, and supervisor-directed commitment. The result indicated that the six-factor model provided the good fit to the data, χ^2 (df = 177, α = 0.05) = 409.511, CMIN/df = 2.314, RMSEA=0.077, CFI =0.903, and IFI=0.905.

We used Structural Equation Modeling - AMOS 24 to examine our hypotheses. The results showed that employee competency has significant effect on exchange tactic (β = 0.557), ingratiation (β = 0.409), and consultation (β = 0.718) which used by supervisor. These results suggest that the first hypothesis is supported. The study also showed that downward influence tactics in the form of ingratiation and consultation significantly have effect on supervisor-directed commitment (β = 0.274, β = 0.301), while exchange tactic has no significant effect on this commitment (β = -0.061). Thus the hypothesis 2b is partially supported. Furthermore, the results showed that downward influence tactics in the form of exchange, ingratiation, and consultation, have no significant effect on organizational commitment (β = -0.026, β = 0.023, β = 0.012), thus the hypothesis 2a is not supported.

Table 2. Hypothesized structural model

Hypothesis	Relationship	beta	CR	Hypothesis support
H1	Employee competency → exchange tactic	0.557	4.034	Supported
	Employee competency → ingratiation tactic	0.409	4.568	Supported
	Employee competency → consultation tactic	0.718	6.696	Supported
H2a	Exchange tactic → organizational commitment	-0.026	-0.652	Unsupported
	Ingratiation tactic → organizational commitment	0.023	0.429	Unsupported
	Consultation tactic → organizational commitment	0.012	0.211	Unsupported
H2b	Exchange tactic → supervisor-directed commitment	-0.061	-1.033	Unsupported
	Ingratiation tactic → supervisor-directed commitment	0.274	3.306	Supported
	Consultation tactic → supervisor-directed commitment	0.301	3.468	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study showed that employees competency significantly have effect on downward influence tactics (exchange, ingratiation, and consultation). Our result also indicated that supervisors tend to choose consultation tactic when face their competence subordinates. This results support the study of Yukl et al. (1995), Yukl and Michel (2006), Chong et al. (2013), and Lee et al. (2016). We argued that context of this study, respondents are the part of society with high power distance culture, can explain these result. Wei et al. (2017) shows that individuals with high power distance prefer good and favorable superiors, compared to individuals with low power distance culture. In

a society with high power distance culture, power and decision-making power are centralized, and power may mean privileges. As a consequence there is less exchange of ideas and discussions between superiors and subordinates (Ralston, Hallinger, Egri, & Naothinsuhk, 2005). Furthermore, in this cultural dimension, a society may engage in impression management behavior (Zaidman & Drory, 2001) to get closer to power and gain privileges. The competence shown by employees may be as their effort to make a good impression to their supervisors.

The results of this study indicated that supervisors are perceived to be more using consultation and exchange tactics, rather than ingratiation. Consultation tactic is the forms of soft influence tactics, while exchange tactic is the form of hard influence tactics (Tepper et al., 1998). Soft influence tactics reflect the supervisor's concern for subordinates, recognition of subordinate abilities, and strengthen the relationships between them and their subordinates (Tepper et al., 1998). This study indicated that supervisors have chosen a form of influence tactics that match the needs of a society on the dimensions of high power distance. Employees who are asked for advice and invited to discuss will feel that their supervisors appreciated their ability and have a close relationship with them. In addition, supervisors also tend to use exchange tactic to influence their subordinates. This tactic will make easier for subordinates to get valuable resources from their superiors. As a consequence, through these consultation and exchange tactics, subordinates may get some privileges because of their closeness to their supervisors.

In addition, the study found that downward influence tactics have no effect on organizational commitment, but ingratiation and consultation have positive effect on commitment to the supervisor. Individuals who are targeted for consultation tactic will feel trustworthy and as a consequence, it will show a positive attitude towards the tactics and ingratiation tactic will make the offender considered friendliness (Lee et al., 2016). In the theory of social exchange, subordinates will feel obliged to reciprocate their supervisors if their supervisors show high confidence in their intelligence, abilities, or other personal attributes (Organ, 1974). Instead, this study found that exchange tactics had no significant effect on supervisor-directed commitment. Supervisors who use hard influence tactics more question the ability of their subordinates (Tepper et al., 1998). Furthermore, in exchange tactic, rewards will be awarded if the target can complete the assigned task (Lee et al., 2016). Then it is possible that because of this gifting situation is a conditional, subordinate unlikely to respond to this tactic with a commitment to his/her supervisor.

IMPLICATION

This current study found that employee competency has a positive effect on downward influence tactics. Supervisors might use some form of influence tactics, such as an offer to help carry out a given task, motivating that the subordinate is the one who is capable of performing the task, asking for help and advice on performing a job, and demonstrating that the subordinate will be useful if gives any helps. This study showed that downward influence tactics will increase employees commitment to supervisors, but not to organization. The consequence of this result is that subordinates will be more concerned with following and caring for their supervisors, rather than organization. In addition, if a subordinate has multiple supervisors, supervisors ability to engage in interesting downward tactics might allow subordinate

to care more about their preferred supervisor. Therefore, organizations need to provide understanding and training to individuals in managerial positions to have effective downward influence tactics.

Wei et al. (2017) suggest that when choosing a manager, organization need to consider an individual who have character of pleasant and competent. Supervisors who have careful profile and giving support will encourage their subordinates to commit to them (Emuwa, 2013). This study also indicated that the organization can provide understanding and training for supervisors of various downward influence tactics that can be used to increase the willingness of their subordinates to support for the tasks assigned. In addition, companies need to pay attention and tighten the process of selection and training to employees in general. This is because the more employees perceived to have competence, will be more attention by supervisors. This is because supervisors will prefer subordinates who perceived to have a certain competence to provide job duties.

In addition to these findings, there are a number of limitations that are related to the use of cross-sectional data. The next study may be able to capture phenomena over different time spans. Although data in this study were obtained based on self-report, this survey based on anonym data. This study investigates the effect of subordinate competence on downward influence tactics and the consequences of these tactics on employee commitment to the organization and to the supervisor. For the future study, it is necessary to investigate the role of individual employee attachment to supervisors, which may increase or decrease the willingness of supervisors for using certain influence tactics. The future study needs to identify the consequences of downward influence tactics, such as subordinate performance and the relationship quality between supervisor and subordinate.

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