

Influence Strategies used by Development Personnel within the Organization: A Study of an NGO

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ABSTRACT: In any organization, personnel have to interact to each other to achieve the organizational goals. Personnel of the organizations use different behavioral strategies to influence or modify the behavior of their subordinates, superiors and co-workers. A study was conducted in an NGO to analyze the influence strategies used by development personnel within the organization to get the work done from their immediate superior and immediate subordinates. The non-governmental organization 'Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)' working in Nainital district of Uttarakhand was selected for the study. Sample size of the study was 132 employees of the organization. Influence strategies assertion, coalition, diplomacy, exchange of benefits, ingratiation, manipulation, personalized help, persuasion, rationality, sanctions(positive), sanctions(negative), showing dependency, showing expertise, threats and upward appeal were selected for the study.

It was found that the strategy highly being used by most of the employees of the organization in upward (with immediate superior) and downward (with immediate subordinates) influence was rationality. In case of upward influence strategy rationality was followed by showing expertise, ingratiation, diplomacy and persuasion. In case of downward influence strategy rationality was followed by coalition, showing expertise, ingratiation, and diplomacy. The less frequently used influence strategies in the organization were defiance, blocking (upward influence), negative sanctions and threats (downward influence).

In developmental organizations where teamwork is essential requirement for task accomplishment use of rationality, showing expertise, ingratiation and persuasion influence strategy might be a contributing factor in enhancing of group cohesiveness and overall effectiveness.

Key words: Development personnel, Downward influence strategies, NGO, Upward influence strategies

INTRODUCTION

Organization is a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people, that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals [1]. Personnel of the organization have to interact to each other, in respective of their task role in the organization. Exercise of power and influence are the integral part of interpersonal interaction between supervisors and subordinates in the organizational life [2]. Personnel in the organization behave in different ways while dealing with their subordinates, superiors and peers. Their selection of the influence strategies varies with the targets, situations and objectives. Selection of influence strategies by superiors and subordinates in organizational life is a contributing factor in Organizational Success. Sangeetha and Nachiketa [3]

studied the relationship between Downward Influence Strategies and Organizational Success, which includes Job Satisfaction, Effectiveness and Intention to Quit. The findings of the study indicate that less use of Asserting Expertise and Negative Sanction and frequent use of Rational Rewards and Personalized Relationship enhance the Job Satisfaction; and Effectiveness is likely to be enhanced by the use of Rational Rewards.

In the current scenario NGOs have emerged as big development agencies. Now NGOs are addressing wide range of issues such as welfare programs, agricultural development, conscientizing people, empowering women and weaker sections, protecting the rights of the marginalized segments, spreading literacy and education, information technology, environment etc. But, negligible information is

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available on preferences for influence strategies of NGOs personnel in Indian context. Keeping these facts in view preferences for influence strategies prevailing in developmental organization were studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The non-governmental organization 'Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)' working in Nainital district of Uttarakhand was selected for the study on the basis of its larger size, penetration at grass-root level and existence of well-defined hierarchy in the organization .

Downward (superior to immediate subordinates) and upward (subordinates to immediate superior) influence strategies prevailing in the organization were analyzed. To assess the influence strategies measures for downward influence strategies and upward influence strategies developed by Ansari [4] were used. Downward influence strategies considered for the study were assertion, coalition, diplomacy, exchange of benefits, ingratiation, manipulation, personalized help, persuasion, rationality, sanctions (positive), sanctions (negative), showing expertise, showing dependency, threats and up word appeal. In case of upward influence strategies use of sanctions (both negative and positive) were not studied because it requires some authority. 'Assertion' strategy was also replaced with 'blocking' because 'assertion' also requires authority and power while 'blocking' may be done by anybody at any level. Respondents were asked to give score 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 to their frequency of use of each item as 'very often', 'often', 'sometimes', 'seldom' and 'never,' respectively. Based on their total score for each strategy respondents were categorized in three categories *viz.*, low, medium and high.

A structured questionnaire was given to all the 102 full- time employees and 50 per cent of part- time employees (i.e. sixty four) of the organization to gather the desired data. However, the filled questionnaire was returned by ninety- four full time employees and thirty- eight part time employees. Thus, sample size of the study was 132. In case of downward influence strategies, the responses were given by 64 respondents because for rest of the respondents, there was not any immediate subordinate in the organization in term of hierarchy of authority. In case of upward influence strategies, the responses were given by 131 respondents because for head of the organization, there was no superior in the organization in term of hierarchy of authority.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief description of upward (subordinates to superior) and downward (superior to subordinates) influence strategies found prevailing in the organization is as follows:

Downward (immediate superior to subordinates) influence strategies within the organization

In the organization superiors use different influence strategies to get the work done from their subordinates. Even superiors apply different strategies with same subordinates at different occasion. Results presented in Table 1 indicates that influence strategies rationality, ingratiation, coalition and showing dependency were highly being used by near about one-fourth of the superiors to get the work done from their immediate subordinates. Near about one-fifth superiors reported high frequency of use of showing expertise, diplomacy, sanctions (positive), persuasion and manipulation influence strategies. Highly use of assertion influence strategy was reported by 17.18 per cent respondents. High frequency of use of influence strategies upward appeal, sanction (negative) and exchange of benefits were reported by 15.62 per cent respondents. Only 7.81 per cent respondents reported high frequency of use of threat influence strategy.

Medium frequency of use of rationality, showing expertise, assertion, diplomacy, sanctions (positive) and persuasion influence strategies was reported by near about half of the respondents. Medium frequency of use of coalition, personalized help, upward appeal, ingratiation and showing dependency was reported by 46.87, 45.31, 45.31, 43.75, and 42.19 percent respondents, respectively. Near about one-third of the respondents reported medium extent of use of manipulation influence strategy. Medium extent of use of exchange of benefits, threats and sanctions (negative) was reported by 29.69, 25.00 and 20.31 percent respondents, respectively.

Low extent of use of threat, sanctions (negative), exchanges of benefits, and manipulation strategies was reported by 67.18, 64.06, 54.69, 46.87 per cent respondents, respectively. Up to low extent of use upward appeal was used by 39.06 per cent respondents. It was followed by personalized help (35.93 per cent), assertion, showing dependency (both 32.81 per cent), ingratiation, sanctions (positive), persuasion (all three 31.25 per cent). Low extent of use of coalition, diplomacy and showing expertise strategies was reported by near about one-fourth of the respondents. Rationality strategy was used by

only 18.75 per cent respondents at low extent to influence their subordinates.

Table 1
Extent of use of downward (by superior with subordinates) influence strategies within the organization

S.N.	Influence strategies	Extent of use		
		Low	Medium	High
1.	Assertion	21 (32.81)	32 (50.00)	11 (17.19)
2.	Coalition	18 (28.13)	30 (46.87)	16 (25.00)
3.	Diplomacy	18 (28.13)	32 (50.00)	14 (21.87)
4.	Exchange of benefits	35 (54.69)	19 (29.69)	10 (15.62)
5.	Ingratiation	20 (31.25)	28 (43.75)	16 (25.00)
6.	Manipulation	30 (46.87)	22 (34.37)	12 (18.75)
7.	Personalized help	23 (35.94)	29 (45.31)	12 (18.75)
8.	Persuasion	20 (31.25)	31 (48.44)	13 (20.31)
9.	Rationality	12 (18.75)	34 (53.12)	18 (28.13)
10.	Upward appeal	25 (39.06)	29 (45.31)	10 (15.62)
11.	Showing dependency	21 (32.81)	27 (42.19)	16 (25.00)
12.	Showing expertise	17 (26.56)	33 (51.56)	14 (21.87)
13.	Sanctions (positive)	20 (31.25)	31 (48.44)	13 (20.31)
14.	Sanctions (negative)	41 (64.06)	13 (20.31)	10 (15.62)
15.	Threats	43 (67.19)	16 (25.00)	5 (7.81)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the percentage

Upward (Subordinates to immediate superior) influence strategies within the organization

It is clear from Table 2 that up to high extent persuasion, showing expertise, rationality, diplomacy and ingratiation strategies were used by near about one-fourth of the employees of the organization to influence the behavior of their immediate superiors. Up to high level of the extent use of upward appeal and coalition influence strategies was reported by 17.55 per cent respondents. The strategy exchange of benefits was used by 14.50 per cent respondents. Personalized help, blocking, showing dependency, manipulation and defiance were used up to high extent by near about only one-tenth of the respondents.

Up to medium extent rationality and ingratiation were used by maximum number of respondents (61.07

and 56.48 per cent respectively) followed by diplomacy (48.09 per cent), upward appeal (47.33 per cent) and showing expertise (44.27 per cent). Influence strategies showing dependency and coalition were used by 38.17 per cent respondents up to medium level of extent. Near about one-third of the respondents reported use of persuasion and exchange of benefits influence strategies up to medium level of extent. Up to medium level of extent use of defiance and manipulation influence strategies was reported by near about one-fifth of the respondents. Personalized help (16.79 per cent) and blocking (13.74 per cent) were used by least number of respondents up to medium level of extent.

Maximum numbers of respondents used blocking, personalized help, manipulation and defiance up to only up to low level of extent. Near about fifty per cent of the respondents used exchange of benefits and showing dependency strategies up to low level of extent to influence the behavior of their immediate superiors. Influence strategies coalition, persuasion upward appeal and diplomacy were used

Table 2
Extent of use of upward (by subordinates with superior) influence strategies within organization

S.N.	Influence strategies	Extent of use		
		Low	Medium	High
1.	Blocking	96 (73.28)	18 (13.74)	17 (12.98)
2.	Coalition	58 (44.27)	50 (38.17)	23 (17.56)
3.	Defiance	90 (68.70)	27 (20.61)	14 (10.69)
4.	Diplomacy	38 (29.00)	63 (48.09)	30 (22.90)
5.	Exchange of Benefits	70 (53.44)	42 (32.06)	19 (14.50)
6.	Ingratiation	28 (21.37)	74 (56.49)	29 (22.14)
7.	Manipulation	90 (68.70)	26 (19.85)	15 (11.45)
8.	Personalized help	92 (70.23)	22 (16.79)	17 (12.98)
9.	Persuasion	50 (38.17)	44 (33.59)	37 (28.24)
10.	Rationality	15 (11.45)	80 (61.07)	36 (27.48)
11.	Showing dependency	66 (50.38)	50 (38.17)	15 (11.45)
12.	Showing expertise	36 (27.48)	58 (44.27)	37 (28.24)
13.	Up word appeal	46 (35.11)	62 (47.33)	23 (17.56)
14.	Unclassified	84 (64.12)	30 (22.90)	17 (12.97)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the percentage

Table 3
Influence strategies prevailing in the organization

Extent of prevalence	Influence Strategies	
	Downward	Upward
Most prevalent to least prevalent	Rationality Coalition Showing expertise Ingratiation and diplomacy Showing dependency Sanctions (positive) and Persuasion Assertion Personalized help Upward appeal Manipulation Exchange of benefits Sanctions (negative) Threats	Rationality Ingratiation and Showing expertise diplomacy Persuasion Upward appeal Coalition Showing dependency and Exchange of benefits Manipulation and Personalized help Defiance Blocking

up to low level of extent by 44.27, 38.16, and 35.11 and 29.00 per cent respondents, respectively. Low extent use of influence strategies showing expertise and ingratiation was reported by 27.48 and 21.37 per cent respondents, respectively. Only 11.45 per cent respondents reported use of rationality influence strategy only up to low level of extent to influence the behavior of their immediate superior.

Cumulative analysis of downward and upward influence strategies prevailing in the organization is presented in table 3. It is clear from the table that rationality, coalition, ingratiation and showing expertise are the most prevailing tactics in the organization for both superiors and subordinates. The non-rational tactics [5] such as defiance, blocking, (upward influence), negative sanctions and threats (downward influence) found least frequently used influence strategies in the organization. Findings of the study are in line of findings of Kipnis *et al.* [6], Kapoor [7] and Ansari [4]. Kipnis *et al.* [6] reported rationality as the most popular strategy for influencing both superiors and subordinates. While blocking and sanctions were found less frequently used influence strategies. Kapoor [7] also found high frequency of use of reasons (rationality) influence strategies in both upward and downward influence; and in downward influence, least frequently used strategies were threats and negative sanctions. Based on study of seven Indian organizations Ansari [4] reported showing expertise and reasons (rationality) as most popular tactics for influencing both immediate subordinates and the immediate superior. Less frequently used tactics found in his study were exchange, negative sanctions, threats (downward influence), coalition, blocking and defiance (upward influence).

CONCLUSION

It might be concluded that the strategy highly being used by most of the employees of the organization in upward and downward influence was rationality. In case of upward influence strategy rationality was followed by showing ingratiation, expertise, diplomacy and persuasion. In case of downward influence strategy rationality was followed by coalition, showing expertise, ingratiation, and diplomacy. The less frequently used influence strategies in the organization were defiance, blocking (in upward influence), negative sanctions and threats (in downward influence).

In developmental organizations where teamwork is essential requirement for task accomplishment, the use of rationality, showing expertise, ingratiation and persuasion influence strategy might be a contributing factor in enhancing group cohesiveness and overall effectiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Author is highly thankful to the Executive Director of the non-governmental organization 'Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)' for giving permission to conduct the study on organization. Author is also thankful to the employees of the organization for their cooperation in conducting the study.

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