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Abstract

In order to develop and bring to fruition strategic IT initiatives, Chief Information Officers (CIOs) must be able to effectively influence their peers. However, little is known about how this is accomplished. Accordingly, this research examines the relationship between CIO influence behaviors and successful influence outcomes. Focused interviews were first conducted with CIOs and their peers so as to gain insights into the phenomenon and to refine a research model. Then a survey instrument was developed and distributed to CIOs and their peers to gather data with which to test the research model. The findings showed that rational persuasion and personal appeal led to peer commitment whereas exchange and pressure did not. These results provide guidance to CIOs who propose strategic information systems to peers.

1. INTRODUCTION

As an increasing number of CIOs have become part of their firms' top management teams (Maruca 2000), there is a growing need for these CIOs to possess excellent skills at applying *lateral* influence in order to convince other top managers to implement strategic information systems. However, little research has focused on the issue of CIO influence (e.g., Hayashi 1997), despite the fact that effective influence exertion is of interest to CIOs (Smith 1998) and persuasion skills have been identified as necessary to accompany the traditional technical skills and business knowledge required of CIOs (Lederer and Mendelow 1988). Thus, it is important to determine how CIOs are able to successfully convince peers to commit to strategically focused information systems.

The sparse literature on the topic of CIO influence has only discussed a few specific CIO influence behaviors. For example, coalition and consultation tactics have been used to convince executives of the potential strategic impact of IS (Earl and Feeny 1994) and to gain executive acceptance (Stephens et al. 1992). Another tactic associated with CIOs' influence behavior is rational persuasion, used to identify new uses of IT (Rockart 1988). In addition, knowledge about the business has been identified as a potential basis for a CIO to influence organizational members (Armstrong and Sambamurthy 1999).

There has also been little systematic research on top executives' lateral influence behavior. For instance, what we do know is based on anecdotal evidence gleaned from interview data (e.g., Cohen and Bradford 1989). In short, the extant literature has not systematically explored the lateral influence behaviors of top executives and CIOs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH MODEL

Since there has been little systematic research on the phenomenon of CIO influence, this study examined related work done with middle-level managers. A series of influence behavior studies was conducted by Kipnis et al. (1980). The authors examined "influence tactics," in which the agent (i.e., initiator) of an influence attempt tried to gain something from the target (i.e., recipient). The researchers developed a survey instrument from narratives and published it as the Kipnis-Schmidt (1982) Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS).

Two studies were conducted to replicate and extend Kipnis et al.'s study on influence tactics (Yukl and Falbe 1990). Yukl and Falbe modified the POIS instrument, which they administered to part-time MBA students. Following additional refinements, the Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) was developed (Yukl et al. 1992). Some of the influence tactics measured by the IBQ are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Influence Behaviors and Definitions (Yukl 1994)

Influence Behavior	Definition
Rational Persuasion	The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the target that a proposal or request is viable and likely to result in the attainment of task objectives
Consultation	The agent seeks target participation in planning a strategy, activity, or change for which target support and assistance are desired, or is willing to modify a proposal to deal with target concerns and suggestions.
Ingratiation	The agent uses praise, flattery, friendly behavior, or helpful behavior to get the target in a good mood or to think favorably of him or her when asking for something
Personal Appeals	The agent appeals to target feelings of loyalty and friendship toward him or her when asking for something.
Exchange	The agent offers an exchange of favors, indicates willingness to reciprocate at a later time, or promises a share of the benefits if the target helps accomplish a task.
Coalition Tactics	The agent seeks the aid of others to persuade the target to do something, or uses the support of others as a reason for the target to agree also.
Pressure	The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do what he or she wants.

The exercise of influence behaviors leads to potential outcomes (e.g., Falbe and Yukl 1992; Kipnis et al. 1980; Yukl and Tracey 1992). The authors propose three possible outcomes: commitment, compliance, and resistance. Commitment means enthusiasm and special effort beyond what is normally expected. Compliance happens when the target accords with the request but makes minimal effort. Finally, resistance occurs when the target avoids complying by arguing, delaying, etc. (Falbe and Yukl 1992). The research model (see Figure 1) summarizes the previous discussion.

3. RESEARCH STUDIES AND RESULTS

A preliminary study was designed to assess the model posed in Figure 1. This study employed 14 focused interviews, conducted with both the CIO and the CIO's peer. The interviews demonstrated that the concepts in the research model were meaningful to the informants. Consequently, a survey-based study was initiated. This involved the development of hypotheses for the research model (see Figure 1) as follows:
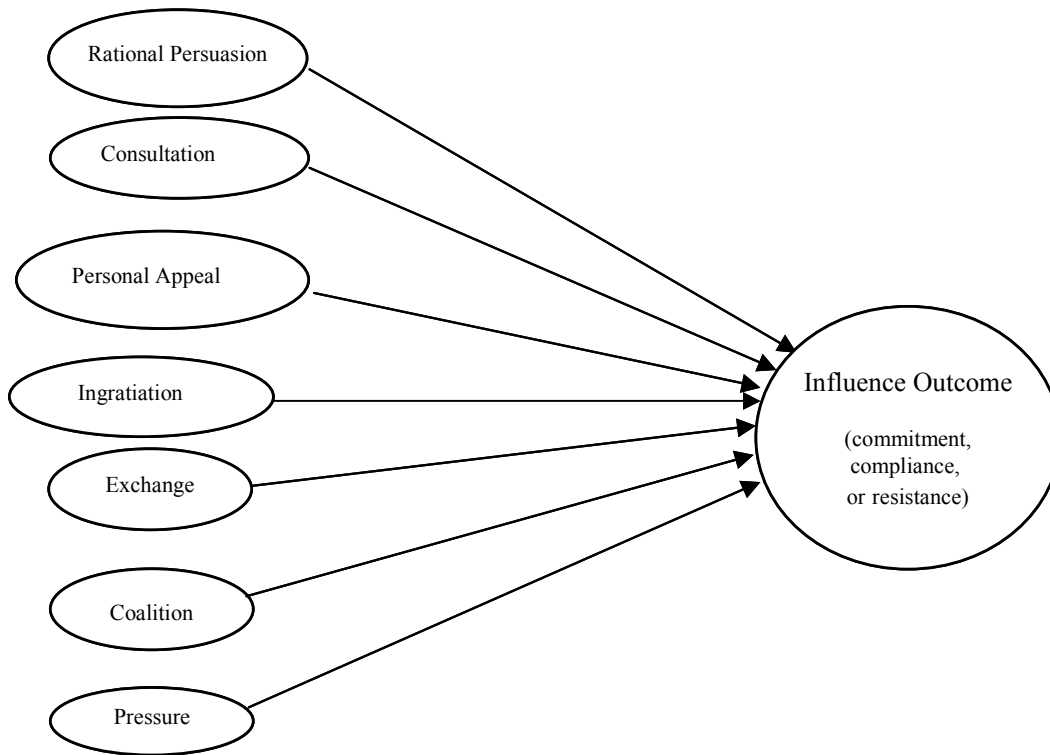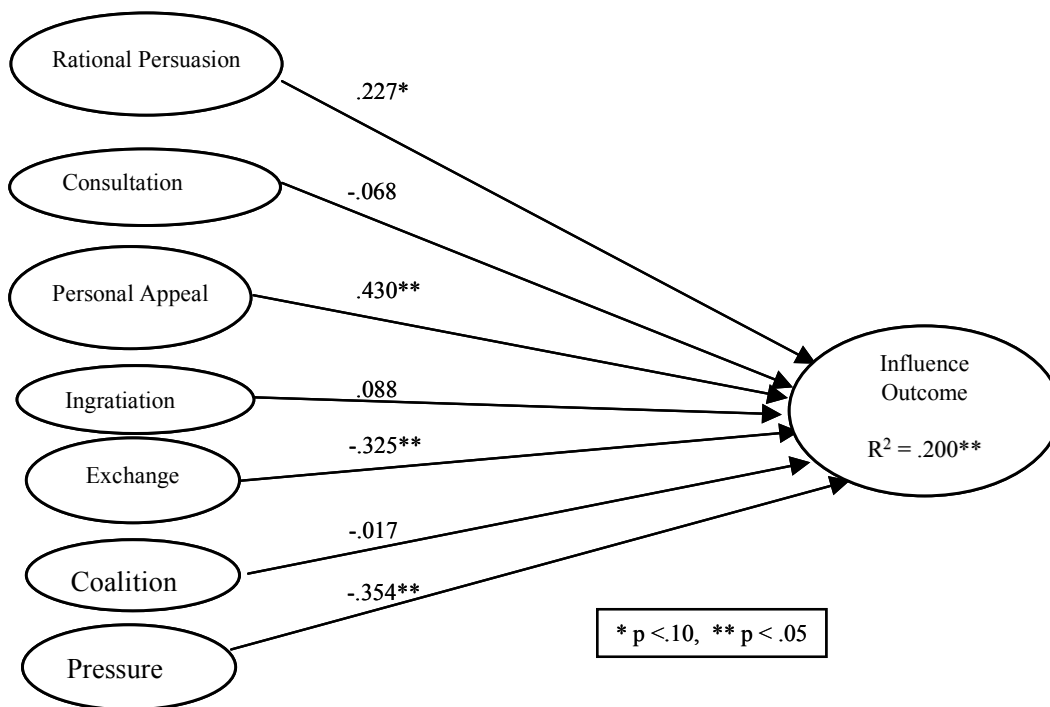
Figure 1. Research Model

Figure 2. Multiple Regression Results

Hypothesis 1: Rational persuasion will be positively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 2: Consultation will be positively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 3: Personal appeal will be positively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 4: Ingratiation will be negatively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 5: Exchange will be negatively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 6: Coalition will be negatively related to the influence outcome.
Hypothesis 7: Pressure will be negatively related to the influence outcome.

A total of 459 eligible CIOs were contacted and 69 useable matched pair surveys (i.e., a CIO and peer from the same company) were returned. A multiple regression model was constructed to test the model. The regression model used peers' assessments of CIO influence behavior and CIOs' views of peer reactions.

As Figure 2 suggests, rational persuasion exhibits a positive impact on the influence outcome, consistent with other top executive literature (Nutt 1986). Similarly, personal appeal is effective in lateral influence attempts. On the other hand, exchange has a negative impact on the influence outcome. CIOs who use this behavior are more likely to encounter resistance to the strategic IS projects they promote. This result is consistent with previous anecdotal evidence in the IS context (e.g., Kotter 1979). Finally, pressure will negatively impact the result, consistent with prior research on lateral influence behaviors (e.g., Tinnirello 1996).

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper has contributed to research examining CIO influence behaviors by systematically examining this phenomenon. From a practitioner point of view, the study identified a number of influence behaviors that either did or did not lead to success. For instance, the findings suggested that the use of personal appeal brought about a positive outcome whereas the use of pressure led to resistance. Understanding the effectiveness of these CIO behaviors contributes to our knowledge of IS management and the CIO's strategic role.

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