INFLUENCE TACTICS AS A FUNCTION OF PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

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This study aims at investigating the underlying dynamics of the downward influence process in organizations. Two hundred and sixty male executives representing four organizations in northern India participated in the study. Results provide strong support to the hypothesis that the use of power strategies varies as a function of the bases of power, the goals of the attempt to influence, and the personal characteristics of the influencing agent. The perceived climate of the organization is found to have no impact on the use of influence tactics. The implications of these findings for those in managerial roles are discussed, and directions for future research are suggested.

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An important element of managerial work is the exercise of influence. Power and influence as important parts of organizational life become evident in interpersonal interaction between supervisors and subordinates. Yet, little information is available on how managers actually influence their subordinates. The fundamental aim of this study is to investigate the underlying dynamics of influence strategies in organizations.

The Background

The concept of "social power" has generally been used to account for the changes which occur in the course of an interaction sequence. Every social relationship contains potential for the exercise of influence; yet social power is one of the most inadequately articulated concepts in the social sciences. "In the entire lexicon of sociological concepts none is more troublesome than the concept of power. We all know perfectly well what it is – until someone asks us" (Bierstedt, 1950). A number of definitions have been provided for this socially important concept. It has been defined as an attribute of a relationship (Emerson, 1964), as the ability to control the outcome of another person's activity (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), as the net force that one person can exert on another (French, 1956; Lewin, 1951), or simply as control (Dahl, 1957; Heller 1971). In this study power is treated as a "potential influence" that one actor can exert on another (French & Raven, 1959). The terms "power" and "influence" are often used interchangeably while describing the functioning of an organization; but the two are different. Influence is the actual manifestation of the inherent capacity of a person, whereas power is the inherent capacity to influence others.

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Similarly, the distinction between sources (bases) of power and power strategies has not been made explicit (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983). Bases are the sources that give a person the ability to influence and change the behaviour of others. On the other hand, strategies are the ways adopted to influence others. With regard to the bases of power, a number of classification schemes have been proposed by researchers (e.g., French and Raven, 1959; Kelman, 1958). The most popular among them is French and Raven's (1959) five bases of power: rewards, coercion, legitimacy, reference and expertise. Subsequently, two more bases – connection and information – were added to the list (Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer, 1979; Raven and Kruglanski, 1970). It is generally assumed that bases of power and power strategies go hand in hand (Tedeschi, Schlenker and Banoma, 1973). For example, it is believed that negative sanctions (e.g., threats or demotions) are used when the base of power is coercive and that positive sanctions (e.g., pay raises or promotions) are used when the base is rewards. But this assumption may not be correct (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983). For example, in the study by Goodchilds, Quadrado, and Raven (1975), many of the influence tactics described by the students could not be classified into the pre-existing categories. Indeed, several influence tactics, such as the use of expertise, were not even mentioned by the subjects in that study (Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson, 1980). Thus, a description of French and Raven's classification power bases does not fully describe the various strategies used by mangers to influence their subordinates at work.

Recently, some studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between the bases of power and power strategies. Both Ansari (1987) and Singh (1985) found the choice of strategies to vary as a function of the bases of power.

Ansari (1987) reported the use of deviant means of influence by those having both rewarding and coercive bases of power. It was found in Singh's (1985) study that, except expert and referent power, all bases of power were related to the use of various power strategies. Thus, the first question addressed in this study is: How the bases of power determine the use of a particular method of influence? It is expected that the choice and the use of particular influence tactics will vary as a function of the bases of power.

The second question relates to the impact of the personal characteristics of the influencing agent on his use of influence strategies. Some previous studies show that the influence tactics adopted depend on the personal characteristics of the agent. For example, Falbo (1977) found that conformists were more likely than nonconformists to use rational tactics such as reasons, expertise, simple statement and persistence. Singh (1985) found the various facets of the need for power as determining the use of such influence strategies as compromise, reliance, manipulation, etc. In a study by Pandey and Rastogi (1979), high machs were found to be using ingratiatory tactics more often than low machs. In a study by Goodstadt and Kipnis (1970), it was found that leaders low in self-confidence as compared to those high in self-confidence were likely to rely more on impersonal methods of influence. In the light of these studies, it is hypothesized that personal variables may account for some variance in the use of influence strategies. For example those high in the need for power and achievement are likely to use methods such as persuasion, reasoning, and assertion more often than those low in these personality needs.

The next question addressed in the present study is: How the perceived climate of the organization affects the use of various methods of influence? Ansari and Rehana (1986) and Cheng (1983) reported that the use of upward influence strategies is a function of the climate of the organization of which

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the individual is a part. In tune with these studies, it is expected that executives would more frequently use such tactics as reasoning and persuasion in a favourable climate, while those working in an unfavourable climate would rely more often on tactics such as blocking and coalition.

The last objective of this study is to understand how individuals vary their strategies in accordance with their goals in exercising influence. The recent studies by Kipnis and his colleagues (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983; Kipnis *et al.,* 1980) point to the fact that managers vary their strategies in relation to their objectives in exerting influence. Thus in a study investigating the process of upward influence attempts, Ansari and Kapoor (1987) found that the subjects used rational persuasion, upward appeal, and blocking when pursuing organizational goals and ingratiation tactics to meet personal ends. Thus, it is anticipated that for pursuing personal goals, ingratiation tactics are likely to be used more often, whereas for obtaining organizational goals rational tactics are likely to be used more often.

Method

Sample and Procedure. The study was conducted in four contrasting business organizations in northern India. They were production units and differed in terms of the production process used and the source of capital investment. The choice of heterogeneous organizations was a deliberate attempt to make the survey findings more generalizable in significantly different settings.

Altogether 260 male executives (lower to middle levels of management) participated in the study. Only those participants were selected who had at least four subordinates directly under them. The bulk of the respondents (70%) were in the age range of 26 to 40 years. About 58% of them were graduates (i.e., holding bachelor's degrees). About 80% were serving in their present organization for between 5 and 10 years. The majority (67%) were working in their present position for two to five years. About 70% of the executives had 5 to 10 immediate subordinates. Finally, about half of them were in the monthly salary range of Rs. 1800 to Rs. 2700.

Respondents filled in the questionnaire during their working hours. They were assured complete anonymity in regard to their individual responses, and the importance of frank and sincere replies was emphasized. On average, the respondents took about 90 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

Statistical Analyses. To test the psychometric properties of the measures employed in the study, factor analysis, coefficients alpha, and descriptive statistics were computed. Most of the measures employed in the present study were subjected to a varimax rotated factor analysis (Nie, Hull, Steinbrenner, and Bent, 1975). The solution was constrained using the criterion of eigenvalue greater than 1.00 and meeting the criteria of factor loadings above .30 on the defining component and no cross – loadings greater than .25. The contribution of the personal and organizational variables to the use of influence strategies was examined by employing sets of stepwise multiple regression analysis.

Criterion Measures (Influence Strategies). The scale consisted of 60 items drawn from recent works (Falbo, 1977; Falbo and Peplau, 1980; Kipnis *et al.,* 1980; Singh, 1985). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*; 5 = *very often*) the frequency with which during the past six months they had used the various scale items to influence their immediate subordinates at work. A partial test of the construct validity of the scale employed a varimax rotated factor analysis. Results disclosed eight factors. The first three factors used in the main analysis, accounted for a total of 47% of the variance. Table 1 reports the factor loadings obtained. It can be seen from this table that the factors loaded rather cleanly.

Factor 1 consisted of items showing the use of competence, persuasion, etc., to induce compliance, and was labelled Showing Expertise. Factor 2 involved the use of warnings, threats, stoppage of further advancement, etc., and was named Threats and Negative Sanctions. Factor 3 included items such as doing a favour to someone, reminding him or her of past favours, challenging the ability of the target person (s), etc; it was named Exchange and Challenge.

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and intercorrelations among the downward strategies are reported in Table 5. The reliabilities of the scales were within the acceptable range. The average correlation between the factors was .03, indicating a considerable

Table 1 **: Factor Loadings Obtained: Downward Strategy Measures (*N* = 260)**

Items	Factor		
	1	2	3
At times I showed my knowledge of the specific issue	**.55**	-.10	-.06
I influenced them because of my competence	**.65**	-.12	.02
I got my way by convincing them that mine was the best way	**.57**	.14	.05
My knowledge of the technical issues won their favour for me	**.64**	-.16	-.04
I withheld their future advancements	-.09	**.67**	.05
I threatened to fire them if my request was not followed	-.11	**.56**	.00
I threatened to give them an unsatisfactory performance evaluation	.00	**.47**	.24
I showed a feeling of dislike towards them	-.09	**.53**	.07
I threatened to curtail further advancement	-.11	**.48**	.07
I promised to help them in getting further advancement if they helped me now	-.04	-.03	**.62**
I offered a favour in exchange	-.24	.23	**.46**
I reminded them of past favours I had done for them	.00	.26	**.61**
I challenged their ability (e, g., "I bet you can't do that")	-.01	.13	**.44**
I asked them to cooperate to get the work done, while promising extra benefit for it	.12	.02	**.66**
Eigenvalue	7.40	4.47	2.35
Variance explained	24.9%	15.0%	7.9%

non-overlapping variance in the dimensions.

Predictors. Four sets of predictors were employed in the study. They were: Bases of Power, Personal Orientations, Influence Goals, and Perceived Climate. A brief description of these measures is given below:

Bases of Power. Seven items were used, each referring to a particular power base. The items were drawn from the recent works of Hersey *et al.* (1979) and Singh (1985). The subjects were asked to state what made them influential. T hey were required to describe on a 5-point scale (1= *to almost no extent*; 5 = *to a very great extent*) the extent to which each statement was true with respect to their immediate subordinates. These items have been shown to have concurrent or predictive validity in a number of previous studies (see for example, Student, 1968).

Personal Orientation. The measures consisted of three scales. The first referred to achievement, affiliation, and risk (with 16 items, Ansari, Baumgartel and Sullivan, 1982; Steers and Braunstein, 1976); the second referred to the need for power (with 18 items, Sinha, 1979; and the third comprised 24 items concerning locus of control (Levenson and Miller, 1976). Each item was rated on a 5-point

scale (1 = *does not describe me at all well*; 5 = *fits me very well, I'm like this*) in the first two scales, while the third scale was anchored on a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*).

Factor analysis of the first scale (personal orientations) revealed only one neat and interpretable factor accounting for 74.3% of the variance. It consisted of 4 items (with factor loadings of .66, .63, .53, and .63) relating to setting goals, improving performance, taking responsibilities, etc. This factor was named *Achievement.* It had a coefficient alpha of .73.

The second scale (need for power) was also subjected to a factor analysis. Factor loadings obtained are depicted in Table 2.

The solution constrained to two usable factors, accounting for 73.6% of the variance: (a) Need for Justice and Control (dealing with items relating to the need to have control over others and to maintain discipline) and (b) Need for Happy Relations (containing items related to the maintenance of good relations). The co-efficients alpha of these scales were found to be .73 and .69, respectively. The two factors were significantly intercorrelated (see Table 3).

The third scale (Locus of Control) comprised

Table 2 : **Factor Loadings Obtained: Need for Power Scale (*N* =260)**

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
As an officer it is my duty to maintain discipline in my department/organization	**.70**	.12
I aspire to be an instrument for justice and fairplay in my organization	**.60**	.13
I want to feel strong from inside.	**.57**	.18
I want to have full control over my men	.43	**.49**
I enjoy being the favourite of my boss	-.10	**.49**
I want to have lots of admirers	-.16	**.65**
I wish to have strong influence over my superior	.18	**.45**
Eigenvalues	3.77	1.41
Variance explained	53.6%	20.0%

three subscales: Internal (consisting of items showing that actions are internally guided), Powerful Others (dealing with items showing that actions are guided by powerful persons, and Chance (consisting of items showing that actions are guided by accidental events, luck, etc.). Coefficients alpha ranged from .65 to .80. As expected (see Table 3), Powerful Others and Chance scales were significantly and positively correlated with each other.

Influence Goals. Based on the studies of Kipnis *et al.* (1980) and Schmidt and Kipnis (1984), respondents were given six possible reasons or goals that they might have sought from their subordinates. Subjects rated each goal on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*; 5 = *very often*) indicating how frequently it had been the cause of their trying to influence their subordinates to do something. These goals were found to be highly interrelated (see Table 3).

Climate. Ansari (1987) used a modified version (Schnake, 1983) of Litwin and Stringer's (1968) Organizational Climate Questionnaire. In his factor analysis, three climate dimensions (with a total of 13 items) emerged: Reward and Participation, Structure, Warmth and Support. The present study employed only 11 items. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *to almost no extent*; 5 = *to a very great extent*) indicating the extent to which it was true for the respondents' organization. Coefficients alpha of the three climate dimensions were well over .50. In addition, the three factors were moderately intercorrelated (see Table 3).

Results

Interdependence Among Predictors. In order to test the interdependence among the four sets of predictors (7 Bases of Power, 6 Goals of Influence, 6 Personal Orientations, and 3 Dimensions of Perceived Climate), a correlation matrix was prepared which is presented in Table 3 along with coefficients alpha.

An inspection of Table 3 suggests that the predictors are not really independent as they were thought to be. Thus, considering the multicollinearity of the predictors, a varimax rotated factor analysis was once again run. The analysis sharply reduced the number of predictors from 22 to 4 interpretable and meaningful factors. The four factors accounted for a total of 78.9% of the variance. Factor loading obtained are reported in Table 4. Factor 1 consisted of all the six goals and was named Influence Goals. Factor 2 was made up of such power bases as coercive, informational, rewarding, legitimate, and connection, and was labelled Bases of Power. Factor 3 consisted of all the three climate dimensions and was named Climate. Factor 4 clustered together with achievement orientation and need for power dimensions and was termed Personal Orientations.

Descriptive statistics, alphas and interrelationships of the reduced predictors and criterion measures are displayed in Table 5. It is clear from Table 5 that all the measures have substantial reliability documentation: coefficients alpha ranging from .66

Table 3: Reliabilities and Intercorrelations of the Predictors of Influence Strategies

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
BOP																					
1. REW	(*)																				
2. COE	35	(*)																			
3. LEG	32	36	(*)																		
4. REF	17	08	15	(*)																	
5. EXP	14	07	33	34	(*)																
6. INF	24	24	08	25	10	(*)															
7. CON	39	28	29	14	08	26	(*)														
IGS																					
8. AOJ	04	17	06	-09	-07	08	-02	(*)													
9. OBT	36	10	18	03	07	12	17	23	(*)												
10. IPR	20	-06	15	09	18	-02	09	06	31	(*)											
11. AWK	11	05	24	05	22	10	-13	19	22	32	(*)										
12. IPC	17	04	23	11	17	-01	04	07	26	34	28	(*)									
13. ICG	14	00	17	16	14	15	00	16	30	32	41	38	(*)								
POS																					
14. ACH	05	07	22	-15	09	-20	-07	08	05	23	21	23	26	(73)							
15. JAC	06	09	22	-12	13	-09	03	15	12	27	32	21	30	68	(73)						
16. HRS	05	10	25	02	09	00	08	07	25	26	15	24	23	32	48	(69)					
17. INT.	05	11	12	06	12	07	03	-07	-05	09	12	13	13	27	26	09	(65				
1 8. POW	13	01	-02	11	-09	-06	08	02	20	06	00	1O	04	-02	07	11	-11	(75)			
19. CHA	12	-04	13	00	00	-14	-06	12	28	27	24	26	23	20	24	26	-10	51	(80)		
CLI																					
20. RAP	13	17	16	12	05	-02	09	04	01	-09	10	26	12	25	19	07	20	04	00	(79)	
21. STR	11	19	11	08	05	-01	05	06	06	-08	15	12	10	32	18	-03	14	02	07	63	(78)
22. WAS	11	-07	-05	-02	11	-03	04	-11	14	-04	-04	05	-08	07	-08	00	01	00	03	24	32

Note. Decimal points in correlation matrix and alphas have been omitted; figures in parentheses indicate coefficients alpha; N= 260; r's required to be significant at.05 and .0l levels of confidence are. 10 and. 15, respectively; *single item variable; BOP= Bases of Power, REW=Reward; COE=Coercive; LEG= Legitimate; REF=Referent; EXP=Expert; INF =Informational; CON = Connection; IGS = Influence Goals; AOJ = Assistance on job; OBT =Obtain benefits; IPR = Improve personal relationship; AWK = Assign work; IPC=Improve performance; ICG = Initiate change; POS = Personal orientations; ACH = Achievement; JAC = Justice and Control; HRS = Happy Relations; INT = Internal; POW =Powerful Others; CHA = Chance; CLI = Climate; RAP = Reward and Participation; STR = Structure; WAS = Warmth and Support.

***Table 4* : Factor Loadings Obtained: Predictors of Downward Influence Strategies (*N* = 260)**

Variables	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Influence Goals				
Assistance on the job	**.32**	.12	.06	.00
Assign work	**.63**	-.01	.10	.16
Obtain benefits	**.49**	.34	-.07	-.01
Improve performance	**.43**	.07	.11	.21
Initiate change	**.62**	.04	.05	.17
Improve personal relationship	**.46**	.07	-.23	.27
Bases of Power				
Coercive	-.01	**.59**	.19	.08
Informational	.16	**.39**	.00	-.22
Rewarding	.17	**.62**	.06	.01
Legitimate	.19	**.45**	.06	.29
Connectional	-.11	**.61**	-.03	.03
Climate				
Reward and Participation	.05	.10	**.72**	.15
Structure	.08	.07	**.83**	.10
Warmth and Support	-.03	-.03	**.31**	-.05
Personal Orientations				
Achievement	.16	-.07	.25	**.76**
Justice and Control	.25	.03	.10	**.79**
Happy Relations	.22	.13	-.08	**.45**
Eigenvalue	3.42	1.70	1.57	1.15
Variance explained	34.4%	17.1%	15.8%	11.6%

to .72. The average correlation among predictors was .14, indicating a considerable non-overlapping variance in the dimensions.

Impact of Predictors on Influence Strategies. The relationships between the four predictors and three criterion measures were tested by employing step-wise multiple regression analyses. The results are summarized in Table 6.

As is evident from Table 6, influence goals and personal orientations best predicted the use of the display of expertise strategy. Taken together, they contributed a total of 12% of the variance. Bases of power emerged as the most significant predictor of the strategy of threats and negative sanctions, explaining a total of 5% of the variance. Bases of power also appeared as the most significant predictor (5% of the variance) of the exchange and challenge strategy; personal orientations added 4% of the variance to that strategy.

Surprisingly, perceived climate did not account for any significant variance in any of the influence methods.

Discussion

The present findings provide strong support for the hypothesis that the choice of strategies varies as a function of the bases of power. It was found that those executives who perceive themselves as possessing bases of power such as the coercion, information, reward, legitimate or connection more often use negative means of influence such as threats and negative sanctions and exchange and challenge. This funding is consistent with that of Ansari (1987) who also reported that both reward and coercive power bases give rise to the use of such deviant means as exchange and challenge, threats, and

Table 5 : **Descriptive Statistics, Alphas, and Intercorrelations of the Reduced Predictors and Criterion Variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Predictors							
Personal Orientations	(.72)						
Climate	.19	(.67)					
Bases of Power	.12	.14	(.66)				
Influence Goals	.40	.09	.23	(.66)			
Criterion Variables							
Showing Expertise	.26	.14	.16	.32	(.76)		
Threats and Negative Sanction	-.02	.12	.22	.12	-.13	(.68)	
Exchange and Challenge	-.18	.07	.23	.05	-.04	.26	(.69)
Mean	43.43	31.75	12.85	18.13	11.95	6.86	8.61
SD	7.21	6.64	3.23	3.52	3.08	2.34	3.15

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate coefficient alpha; $N = 260$; [a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .01$.

Table 6 : **Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Results - Reduced Predictors and Downward Influence Strategies (Criterion Variables)**

Strategy	Predictors			
	Personal Orientations	**Climate**	**Goals**	**Bases**
Showing Expertise				
R^2 change	0.02	0.01	0.10	0.01
Beta	0.14	0.08	0.24	0.07
Order	2	3	1	4
Threats and Negative Sanctions				
R^2 change	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.05
Beta	-0.11	0.11	0.10	0.19
Order	3	2	4	1
Exchange and Challenge				
R^2 change	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.05
Beta	-0.26	0.08	0.10	0.23
Order	2	4	3	1

Note : $N = 260$; [a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .01$

Negative sanctions.

Results suggest that those respondents who are high on both the need for achievement and the need for power report the use of display of expertise more often, while those who are low on these personal characteristics report the use of the exchange and challenge strategy more often in order to get their work done. This implies that those executives who want to achieve (i.e., who strive for excellence) and those who try to have an impact on others (i.e., who have a

It was found that those executives who perceive themselves as possessing bases of power such as the coercive, informational, rewarding, legitimate or connectional more often use negative means of influence such as threats and negative sanctions and exchange and challenge.

need for power) make greater use of rational tactics and less use of exchange tactics. Earlier managerial motivation research on power conducted by McClelland and his associates (McClelland, 1975; McClelland and Burnham, 1976) also supports this finding. According to McClelland, the need for achievement (n-Ach) is an important motivator for people who run their own businesses; but the need for power (n-Pow) is a more important motivator than n-Ach for those who manage on behalf of owners. Supportive evidence also comes from Mowday's study (1978) which reports that individuals with high power and achievement needs actively attempt to influence others.

The present findings do not support the hypothesis that the use of influence strategies varies with the organizational climate. It may be reasoned that climate alone is not sufficient to trigger the use of the influence tactics employed in the present study. For example, the exchange and challenge strategy may be used by executives to influence their subordinates only when they can offer them something in return for the work done or the favour bestowed. In an experimental study, Ansari, Tandon, and Lakhtakia (1987) also found that climate has little or no influence on the use of influence strategies. It may be reasoned that the climate of an organization may be a possible predictor of upward influence tactics rather than downward influence tactics, as has been found in previous studies (e.g., Ansari and Rehana, 1986; Ansari and Kapoor, 1987). However, more research in this direction is needed.

The use of strategies varied as a function of the goals or objectives of the attempts to influence. For pursuing goals (whether personal or organizational), executives more frequently used the showing of expertise method. This finding is in line with the previous studies conducted by Kipnis *et al.* (1980)

and Kipnis and Schmidt (1983) who reported the use of downward influence strategies varying as a function of goals of influence attempt. For example, Kipnis *et al.* (1980) found that the strategy of assertiveness was significantly related to both the personal and organizational goals of attempts to influence. It may be concluded that the more different reasons for influencing the subordinates a manager has, the greater is the likelihood of his or her using such tactics as showing expertise.

Taken as a whole, the present findings provide additional support to the fact that both personal and organizational factors make a significant contribution to the variance in influence attempts. Personal orientations and bases of power are more salient and closely related to influence strategies. Similarly, the goals of exercising influence appear to affect the choice of the strategies used. However, there is a need to validate the present findings by employing experimental methodologies. Such experimental

It may be concluded that the more different reasons for influencing the subordinates a manager has, the greater is the likelihood of his or using such tactics as showing expertise.

studies may be able to investigate the causal link between independent and dependent variables which are difficult to ascertain in correlational studies such as this one. Another area for future research may be the relationship between leadership styles and the influence tactics used by the executives.

Practical Implications

This study has some obvious implications for individual managers and for organizations. The decision to employ a particular strategy has important implications for the success or failure of both initial and subsequent attempts (see, e.g., Cartwright, 1959) at influence. It will also affect subordinate satisfaction (e.g., Bachman, 1968), and productivity (e.g., Student, 1968). Managers can learn to use a variety of techniques depending upon the situation and the nature of the target person. They should use

a strategy appropriate to the time, one which is less costly for them and will employ the available re sources. Finally, managers should use influence strategies only in those situations over which they have control.

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