Running head: INFLUENCE, OUTCOMES, LMX, AND SUPPORT

Upward Influence and Career Outcomes:

The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Organizational Support

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Abstract

We hypothesized that leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational support would mediate the differential effectiveness of upward influence behavior on career outcomes. To test this hypothesis, we developed an extended model of influence tactics use and examined it on a sample of 229 employees and their 109 immediate supervisors from 63 manufacturing and service organizations located in Northern Malaysia. As expected, the use of rational tactics positively predicted all three indicators of career outcomes: salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability. The analysis also indicated that supervisor reports of LMX partially mediated the relationship of rational tactics with salary progression and promotability. Interestingly, the full mediation effect of subordinate-rated LMX was evident for the relationship between rational tactics and career satisfaction. Organizational support, however, did not appear to mediate the hypothesized influence-career outcomes relationships. The implications of these findings for future research on career development are discussed.

Keywords: Upward Influence; LMX; Support; Career Success; Promotability

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As studies in the area of upward influence behavior continue to accumulate in the last 20 years, organizational researchers seem to have developed a clearer understanding of the antecedents of influence tactic use in organizations (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). However, the outcomes of or behavioral responses to influence strategies remain an area of inquiry that has received relatively less attention (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Higgins et al., 2003; Judge & Bretz, 1994). In a recent meta-analysis, Higgins et al. (2003) unearthed over 300 empirical studies relating to influence behavior and work outcomes. Of these, only 81 studies examined the effects of upward influence tactics on work-related outcome variables. Although these studies generally reported links of influence tactics to a number of criteria that reflect work outcomes (e.g., Cooper, Graham, & Dyke, 1993; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Ferris, Fedor, & King, 1994; Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Orpen, 1996; Stevens & Kristof, 1995), they are thought to suffer from one palpable shortcoming: They offered astonishingly little consensus on the relative effectiveness of different influence tactics (Higgins et al., 2003), notably, on the objective and subjective dimensions of career outcomes.

Given "the complex nature of interpersonal interactions and the even greater complexity introduced through the use of influence tactics," the relationship between influence tactics and career outcomes could potentially be affected by a number of variables (Higgins et al., 2003, p. 92). In models of influence tactic use, a number of contextual factors have in fact been considered. They include political norms (Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981), affect and liking (Ferris

& Judge, 1991), characteristics of the influence target (Mowday, 1978), and direction of influence (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). There is good reason to believe that there could be variables that might intervene between influence behavior and career outcomes. Accordingly, we argue that two prospective sources of support--LMX and organizational support--are potential mechanisms through which influence tactics affect the outcome variables. Unfortunately, we are aware of no research that has attempted to test this contention.

Further, relatively little research has attempted to link antecedent factors, support (e.g., LMX or organizational support), and outcome factors in a theoretical framework (Epitropaki & Martin, in press). In fact, past researchers have tended to view these perspectives in a piecemeal fashion (e.g., antecedents of LMX, or the relationship between LMX and outcomes factors (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005).

We therefore advance an integrated model that aims to present a relatively direct view of the effectiveness of influence tactics, explore the role played by LMX and organizational support as potential mediators in the influence process, and provide a more comprehensive inquiry of the differential effects of influence tactics on career outcomes. Stated differently, our study is a follow-up to the research on upward influence, support, and career outcomes and makes several contributions to these literatures. (a) It aims at integrating three broad research areas--upward influence, leader-member exchange, and organizational support--in predicting career outcomes. (b) Most studies on these constructs have been conducted in the United States. This study adds to the literature by testing the differential impact of support as mediator of the relationship between upward influence and career outcomes in the Malaysian context.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The criterion variable, career outcomes, was conceptualized both as objective and subjective dimensions comprising three variables--salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability. The predictor variables were three broad categories of influence tactics namely soft, strong, and rational tactics. Also included in the model were LMX and organizational support as potential mediators of the hypothesized relationship. Based on the model, seven hypotheses were formulated for empirical verifications. It should be added that even though the construct of LMX was measured from both supervisor and subordinate perspectives, the related hypotheses were only broadly framed such that no distinction was made between the two LMX ratings. The reason is that specific predictions were not possible in the absence of empirical studies in this area.

Career Outcomes

In tandem with the impressive breadth of career management research conducted over the years, increasingly comprehensive models of career success or outcomes have found their way into the career literature. Similarly, the concept of "career success" has been variously delineated with the trend seemingly moving toward the use of a set of objective and subjective measures (see e.g., Cox & Harquail, 1991; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). Career scholars have contended that these two components of outcomes, though related, are distinct constructs such that they differ in terms of their antecedents (Aryee, Chay, & Tan, 1994; Collin & Young, 1986; Cox & Harquail, 1991; Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Ng, Eby, Sorenson, & Feldman, 2005; Wayne et al., 1999). Past studies (e.g., Ang, 2000; Cox & Harquail, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Judge et al., 1995; Ong, 2001) have in

fact reported that variables that predict the objective dimension do not similarly explain the subjectively defined dimension of career success. Thus, in consistent with the current conceptualization of the success construct, we assessed career outcomes in terms of objective and subjective measures.

With respect to objective dimension, salary progression is considered to be one of the most salient criteria against which individuals evaluate their careers, since pay increases as one's career progresses (Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992; Markham, Harlan, & Hackett, 1987; Maume, 1999). As opposed to objective measures, subjective outcomes refer to an individual's subjective reactions to his or her own career, and are most commonly conceptualized as career satisfaction (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Judge et al., 1995; Seibert et al., 1999). Career satisfaction has been treated as a significant aspect of subjective career outcomes, since those who are dissatisfied with their career or current jobs would not be regarded as experiencing positive career outcomes. Research has also suggested that relevant others may make judgments about individual's career outcomes based on objective indicators (Jaskolka, Beyer, & Trice, 1985). It follows that an important "other person" assessment will be the supervisor's judgment of the subordinate's promotability (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Promotability, hence, represents the second subjective indicator of career outcomes (Wayne et al., 1999) in the present research.

Upward Influence

Upward influence represents a set of behaviors that subordinates display to impact their career environment or influence their supervisors (Ansari, 1990; Kapoor, Ansari, & Shukla, 1986; Ringer & Boss, 2000; Schilit, 1986; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Studies of career advancement have constantly indicated the association between upward influence tactics and employee career advancement and career outcomes (Higgins et al., 2003). Also, it has been

reported that different tactics lead to different effects. For instance, it has been found that self-focused tactics (e.g., self-promotion and showing dependency) have little or no bearing on supervisory reactions. Conversely, supervisor-focused tactics (e.g., ingratiation and exchange) are more effective (Colella & Varma, 2001; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) in that employees who used more supervisor-focused tactics experienced greater career satisfaction and significantly higher level of objective career success such as salary, job level, number of promotions with the current organization, and number of promotions throughout the career (Judge & Bretz, 1994).

The above body of research collectively suggests that using soft tactics such as ingratiation and showing dependency may be more rewarding. This is because they are means by which the supervisor's liking toward the employee may be increased (Ferris et al., 1994; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Employing rational tactics such as rational persuasion, exchange of benefits, and showing expertise may also prove to be worthwhile (Ansari, 1990; Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). In contrast, the use of strong tactics such as defiance, upward appeal, and manipulation has been reported to be negatively correlated with target liking and career outcomes (Judge & Bretz, 1994). And indeed, the use of strong tactics in the Malaysian context that dislikes "overt display of anger and aggressive behavior" (Abdullah, 1992, p. 10) may actually be detrimental to one's career outcomes. Based on these findings, it is hypothesized that:

> *H1: Upward influence tactics will be related to career outcomes. Specifically, soft and rational tactics will be positively related to salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability, whereas strong tactics will be negatively related to salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability.*

Influence tactics can be used to target two potential sources of support: the supervisor as a proximal source of support and approbation for employees, and the organization (i.e., top management) with which employees build more distal relationships. Researchers (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1998; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999; Wayne et al., 1997) have argued that LMX and organizational support, though correlated, are largely independent dimensions of support. Recently, Brandes, Dharwadkar, and Wheatley (2004) found local social exchanges (interpersonal exchanges with supervisors) and global exchanges (exchanges with top management and the organization) to have different effects on work performance and that local social exchanges appear to have a greater influence on career outcomes than global social exchanges. These findings clearly indicate that the two constructs of support warrant to be examined separately in relation to the use of influence tactics.

When influence tactics are targeted at the supervisor, these tactics can directly influence the quality of dyadic exchanges (Deluga & Perry, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). It seems plausible to assume that influence tactics could also trigger support from the organization in terms of provisions of favorable treatment in the workplace or even a work environment that allows employees to pursue their career goals successfully. Hence the following hypotheses are framed:

H2: Upward influence tactics will be related to LMX. Specifically, soft and rational tactics will be positively related to LMX, whereas strong tactics will be negatively related to LMX.

H3: Upward influence tactics will be related to organizational support. Specifically, soft and rational tactics will be positively related to organizational support, whereas strong tactics will be negatively related to organizational support.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory contends that leaders develop different quality of work relationships with different subordinates (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Scandura & Graen, 1984; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). LMX has been defined as the quality of exchange relationship between the supervisor and each of his or her subordinates (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). High LMX members enjoy high exchange quality relationships as characterized by liking, loyalty, professional respect, and contributory behaviors (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Past research (e.g., Gerstner & Day, 1997; Martin et al., 2005; Varma & Stroh, 2001) has demonstrated that LMX is correlated with a number of important outcomes for employees. Consistent with exchange theory, high LMX members who receive more support may in fact be empowered to perform at higher level or exhibit positive work attitudes (Gagnon & Michael, 2004; Hui, Law, & Cheri, 1999; Randall et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 1997). Ultimately, they may be rewarded via favorable career outcomes that include salary increase (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Wakabayashi & Graen, 1984; Wakabayashi, Graen, Graen, & Graen, 1988), career or job satisfaction (Hackett & Lapierre, 2004; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Masterson et al., 2000; Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004; Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998), and promotions (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Wakabayashi et al., 1988).

While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive review of the outcomes of dyadic exchanges, we concur with Sagas and Cunningham (2004) that developing

and maintaining high quality relationships between a supervisor and subordinate is vital to dyad members—especially, the subordinate. Furthermore, we believe that LMX can affect not only the objective career outcome (i.e., salary progression) but also the subjective outcomes (i.e., career satisfaction and promotability). We further speculate that supervisor-rated LMX will be more strongly related to salary progression and promotability, since these two outcome indicators are clearly within the jurisdiction of the supervisor. On the contrary, subordinate-rated LMX will better predict career satisfaction because career satisfaction is a self-reported measure. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H4: LMX will be positively related to career outcomes. Specifically, LMX will be positively related to salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability.

Drawing from the observation of Higgins et al. (2003) and other researchers (e.g., Ansari, 1990; Varma & Stroh, 2001; Wayne & Ferris, 1990), it is argued that the role of LMX as a potential mediator of the impact of upward influence on outcome variables could be an area worthy of empirical investigations. As noted earlier, upward influence tactics are typically employed to motivate the supervisor to produce the outcomes desired by the subordinate. It follows that influence tactics may more proximally influence the quality of LMX relationship, thus suggesting that their effect on outcomes (i.e., salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability) is probably only indirect.

Further, ingratiation has been found to be associated with the formation of LMX and its quality (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). One plausible explanation has been that ingratiatory behavior, through its influence on liking, will in turn enhance LMX relationship, since liking is thought to be an important determinant of the quality of LMX relationship (Varma & Stroh, 2001). Similarly, it has been argued that a supervisor's liking for a subordinate is an important

determinant of the subordinate's probable status: in-group or out-group (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Hence, ingratiation and perhaps rational tactics, through the social psychological process of affect and liking (Ansari, 1990; Wayne & Ferris, 1990), may lead to favorable exchanges in terms of individual outcomes that include performance ratings, promotability, and salary progression (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Kipnis et al., 1980; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Simply put, the use of appropriate influence tactics induces high-quality LMX relationships that involve a high level of support, trust, fairness, respect, loyalty, and contribution (Avolio, 1999; Liden, Mitchell, & Wayne, 1997; Yukl, 1998), which in turn have fundamental influence on individual outcomes. The reverse would be true in the case of the use of strong tactics. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H5: LMX will mediate the relationship between upward influence tactics and career outcomes in such a way that the direct impact of influence tactics will weaken after LMX is considered.

Organizational Support

Organizational support is defined as employees' global beliefs about the extent to which the organization values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). It is also viewed as an exchange between employees and the employing organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). What has been consistently reported in the literature is that organizational support is crucial to organizational effectiveness as well as the eventual career outcomes of employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Greenhaus et al., 1990). Specifically, it has been found to positively contribute to higher performance motivations and ratings (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-La Mastro, 1990; Littlepage, Cowart, & Kerr, 1989), innovation and commitment (Basu & Green, 1997), career and job satisfaction (Cable & DeRue,

2002; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Nye & Witt, 1993; Randall et al., 1999), in-role performance, citizenship behaviors, and organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Organ, 1988; Randall et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 1997), but negatively to turnover intentions (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Randall et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 1997).

The exchange theory states that when the needed support is made available to an employee, there exists an imbalance in the exchange between the employee and the source of support. Randall et al. (1999) postulate that an employee will always attempt to maintain balance between efforts expended and support received. Hence, reciprocity on the part of the employee is inevitable in that he or she is likely to fulfill his or her feelings of indebtedness--for instance, by displaying positive work behaviors. As demonstrated in Wayne et al.'s (1997) study, organizational support is likely to induce affective commitment toward the organization and as such an employee is less likely to leave. Besides feeling satisfied, he or she may be empowered to perform well for the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The employee's good performance is subsequently rewarded with positive outcomes that could include favorable promotion ratings or salary growth. Alternatively, the support given may directly help employees perform better. Their good performance will be subsequently compensated through favorable career outcomes in terms of salary progression, higher promotability ratings, and satisfaction. Thus we hypothesize:

H6: Organizational support will be positively related to career outcomes: salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability.

Organizational support can also mediate the relationship between influence behavior and career outcomes much in the same way as does LMX. Specifically, influence behavior that is

directed at the organization will induce the organization to offer the desired support. Upon obtaining the support from the organization, employees will reciprocate through demonstrating positive work-related behaviors that will eventually be rewarded via favorable career outcomes (e.g., salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability). However, we conjecture that the mediating effect of organizational support will be more evident with regard to the relationship between influence tactics and salary progression than that of the influence-promotability relationship. One possible explanation is that salary progression is typically within the control of the organization, whereas the evaluation of an employee's promotion potential is subject largely to supervisor perceptions (Higgins et al., 2003). Thus we state the following hypothesis:

H7: Organizational support will mediate the relationship between upward influence tactics and career outcomes in such a way that the direct impact of influence tactics will weaken after organizational support is considered.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We obtained data from 229 employees and their 109 supervisors representing 63 private organizations in the manufacturing and service industries in Northern Malaysia. Participation in the research was absolutely voluntary, and anonymity of individual responses was completely guaranteed. Of the 229 subordinates, 111 (48.5%) were female. They were between the ages of 17 and 64 years (M = 35.03; SD = 9.49). In terms of ethnicity, the 103 (45.0%) Chinese respondents constituted the majority, whereas 90 (39.3%) were Malay, 34 (14.8%) were Indian, and 2 (.9%) were of other ethnic origin. As for educational attainment, only 6 (2.6%) of the subordinate sample had tertiary education while the rest (204 or 89.1%) had obtained at least a high school qualification. A total of 109 subordinates (47.6%) came from manufacturing

facilities, whereas the remaining 120 (52.4%) were from various service sectors. Their average organizational tenure, job tenure, and dyadic tenure were 8.75 years (*SD* = 6.36), 2.03 years (*SD* = 1.22), and 5 years (*SD* = 4.26), respectively. The majority of them (216 or 94.3%) represented lower organizational level. The remaining 13 (5.7%) occupied the middle level of management.

With a span of control between 2 and 268 employees, 57 (52.3%) of the supervisors were men and 52 (47.7%) were women. In general, compared to the subordinates, the supervisors were slightly older with ages ranging between 24 and 71 years (*M* = 40.72; *SD* = 9.16). With regard to ethnicity, 49 (45.0%) of the supervisors identified themselves as Chinese, 33 (30.3%) as Malay, 24 (22.0%) as Indian, and 3 (2.7%) as of foreign origin (1 Thai and 2 Bangladeshis). The majority of the supervisors (102 or 93.6%) obtained a diploma or at least a high school qualification. Five (4.6%) held bachelor's or master's degrees and 2 (1.8%) had some professional qualifications.

Measures

Data on the use of influence tactics, LMX, organizational support, salary, and career satisfaction were obtained from employees in a face-to-face interview setting. On the other hand, their supervisors provided information on LMX and promotability via a survey questionnaire. This study used two sets of LMX data, with a view to better understanding the dynamics of LMX when viewed from both parties to the exchange, the supervisor and the subordinate. Moreover, past researchers (e.g., Bhal & Ansari, 1996; Graen, 1976; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Scandura et al., 1986; Schriesheim et al., 1998; Varma & Stroh, 2001) have emphasized the importance of measuring the quality of dyadic relationships from both supervisor and subordinate perspectives. Salary progression was assessed with a salary-age ratio. As is evident, the data came from three different sources (i.e., from the supervisor, the subordinate,

and the salary-age ratio). Hopefully, this can in turn help to partially alleviate common-rater and self-serving biases (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

As English was not widely spoken among most of the respondents, the instrument was made available in two languages (i.e., English and the Malay language) using back translation technique (Brislin, 1980). Except for the measures of demographics and salary progression, 7-point scales were used to assess all of the constructs employed in the present study. A brief description of the measures is presented below.

Control variables. Background characteristics or demographic variables have been reported to explain more variance in career outcomes than any other sets of variables. These variables include age, educational level (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988, 1989, 1990; Jaskolka et al., 1985; Judge et al., 1995; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991), hierarchical level (Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982), organizational tenure (Cox & Harquail, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1994; Judge et al., 1995; Whitely et al., 1991), and gender (Carlson & Swartz, 1988; Gattiker & Larwood, 1988, 1989; Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982; Wayne & Liden, 1994). Accordingly, we incorporated three demographics as control variables--gender, educational level, and dyadic tenure. We controlled for dyadic tenure based on the possibility that the quality of LMX might change across the course of an employee's work history such as when there is a change in supervisors (Graen & Scandura, 1987). Age was not included as a control variable because its effect would have been weeded out in the computation of salary progression-age ratio.

Organizational tenure and organizational level, despite being cited as relevant exogenous variables, were also not controlled for in the current study since we deem the two to be likely correlated with age. As a matter of fact, we found a strong correlation between organizational

tenure and age ($r = .52$, $p < .01$); a finding that is congruent with a recent meta-analysis by Ng et al. (2005). Further, organizational level and age were only weakly correlated ($r = .12$, $p < .10$). By contrast, organizational tenure and organizational level appear to be almost unrelated ($r = .04$, $p > .52$); possibly, a reflection of the employees being plateaued in their position (Judge et al., 1995).

Criterion variables. These consisted of three variables namely salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability.

Past literature (see, e.g., Ansari, Baumgartel, & Sullivan, 1982; Bray & Grant, 1966; Grant & Bray, 1969; Jaques, 1968; England & Lee, 1974; Watson & Williams, 1977) suggests that salary relative to age would provide a reliable index of salary progression. Hence, this criterion (Salary Range/Age) was used to measure salary progression on the assumption that compensation is related to general performance. Salary range was preferred over actual income as respondents might be reluctant to disclose their actual income.

Eight items, taken and modified from Greenhaus et al. (1990) and Turban and Dougherty (1994), were used to gauge respondents' level of career satisfaction. This scale had been used previously in the Malaysian context, and was reported to have good internal consistency reliabilities of .83 (Ang, 2000) and .94 (Ong, 2001). Three of the items were reverse-coded to prevent common response bias. A 5-item construct, rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*), emerged after a varimax rotated principal components analysis.

Promotability was measured with 4 items asking the supervisor to assess the subordinate's promotion potential, on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*). This 4-item measure was taken from Wayne et al. (1999) who combined two modified items

from Landau and Hammer (1986) with two of their own. All four items were retained under one single construct after factor analysis.

Predictor variables. Higgins et al. (2003) have noted that fewer than 10 studies have empirically tested the effects of rational tactics on career outcomes. Even fewer were studies that focused on exchange and upward appeal. With this in mind, three categories of upward influence behaviors--soft, strong, and rational--were devised using 36 items drawn from various sources (Ansari, 1990; Bhal & Ansari, 1996; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis et al., 1980; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Pandey & Bohra, 1984; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Specifically, ingratiation, dependency, and self-degradation were categorized as soft tactics, whereas strong tactics comprised upward appeal, defiance, assertiveness, and manipulation. Personalized help, exchange, rational persuasion, and showing expertise were grouped as rational tactics. Participants were asked to indicate, on a 7-point scale (1 = *Never*; 7 = *Always*), how frequently they used these eleven influence tactics at work. A varimax rotated principal components analysis was performed on the 36 items resulting in 10 factors that accounted for a total of 60.58 per cent of the variance. But since our objective was to study only three categories of tactics, we opted for a specified factor analysis to extract 3 clean factors. A total of 21 items--9 soft tactics items, 6 strong tactics items, and 6 rational tactics items--were retained and they substantially loaded on the appropriate, a priori factors. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) have argued that factor analysis should consider the need for a conceptual basis for the variables analyzed. Since the measure adopted was based on theoretical grounds and support from prior studies that conceptualized influence behavior into three broad categories of soft, strong (hard), and rational (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1985), employing the specified principal components analysis technique was considered appropriate.

Mediator variables. The ratings of LMX quality were obtained from the employees and their supervisors using Liden and Maslyn's (1998) 12-item scale. This scale was accordingly modified to reflect supervisor perceptions of LMX. Although the scale was originally developed to capture four distinct dimensions of LMX (i.e., affect, professional respect, loyalty, and contribution), the proponents (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) have themselves suggested that these four dimensions fell under a second-order factor, hence making the scale suitable for measurements of overall LMX as well as LMX dimensions (Erdogan et al., 2004). Given this observation and following the recommendation of most recent researchers (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2004; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2004), we used an overall measure of LMX, rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *Very much*). We further tested this assertion by employing a specified principal components analysis, followed by internal consistency reliability, and found all items to be converging.

Organizational support. To measure perceptions of support from the organization, a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*) was used. This scale, taken from Eisenberger et al. (1990), consisted of 8 items that were chosen on the basis of highest factor loadings. A principal components analysis produced a one-solution factor that contained 5 items.

Results

Prior to hypothesis testing, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis for all the constructs of interest. A "general factor" was not apparent, which means common method variance is unlikely to be present in this study (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and internal consistency reliabilities for the study variables were also computed. As shown in Table 1, standard deviations were near to or greater than 1.0, indicating that the study variables were discriminatory. The reliabilities of all scales

were between .69 and .92, exceeding the recommended value of .60 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and therefore acceptable.

The correlations among the outcome indicators are noteworthy. While salary progression and promotability were very much related with each other, the correlations between career satisfaction and the other two outcomes indicators (i.e., salary progression and promotability) were negligible. This finding could be attributed to the fact that a different sample type has been selected in this research. Unlike the managerial sample in the past research, the subordinate sample of the current study was predominantly operative workers, with 89.1 per cent of them having only high school qualifications. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that given these employees' low qualifications that in turn implies low bargaining power, they may have lower expectations regarding career attainments (such as salary progression and promotability). Based on this reasoning, these employees would feel satisfied so long as they are employed.

The direct hypotheses were tested using a two-step hierarchical regression analysis. Specifically, a separate set of analysis was performed for each outcome variable (i.e., salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability). The demographic control variables were first entered in Step 1. In Step 2, the outcome variable was regressed on influence tactics. The results disclosed that for the control variables, only educational level was significantly and positively related to salary progression (ß = .42, $p < .01$) and career satisfaction (ß = .15, $p < .05$). Additionally, rational persuasion tactics were found to positively predict all three indicators of career outcomes (see Table 2). But no significant association was found for the relationship between the other two categories of influence tactics (i.e., soft and strong) and outcome variables. Thus H1 is only partially substantiated.

The analysis regarding the impact of influence tactics on LMX indicates a significant pattern in the relationships between the three categories of influence tactics and subordinate ratings of LMX quality (see Table 3). Specifically, soft tactics and rational tactics positively influenced LMX quality, whereas the use of strong tactics was evidently detrimental to the quality of dyadic exchanges. Interestingly, the above-noted findings were not replicated in the case of supervisor-rated LMX. Only the use of rational tactics was found to be positively related to supervisor-reported LMX quality (see Table 2). Thus H2 also receives only partial support.

In testing the direct impact of influence tactics on organizational support, the only significant negative relationship found was that between the use of strong tactics and organizational support (see Table 4). This relationship was evident in the expected direction. Thus H3 too receives partial support from the data.

Similarly, Hypothesis 4 is partially substantiated in that supervisor reports of LMX significantly predicted salary progression and promotability (see Table 2), whereas the impact of LMX on career satisfaction was only evident with regard to subordinate-rated LMX (see Table 3). Moreover, organizational support was found to significantly predict career satisfaction (see Table 4). Hence, Hypothesis 6 is partially substantiated.

Finally, with respect to testing mediation hypotheses (i.e., H5 & H7), we followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step mediated regression procedures. Specifically, the three-step process entails regressing (a) the mediator variable on the predictor variable, (b) the criterion variable on the predictor variable, and (c) the criterion variable simultaneously on the predictor and mediator variables. Mediation is indicated only when the following four conditions are met (Baron & Kenny, 1986): (i) The mediator is significantly related to the predictor variable at Step 1; (ii) There is a significant relationship between the predictor and criterion variable at Step 2;

(iii) There is a significant relationship between the mediator and criterion variable at Step 3; (iv) The effect of the predictor on the criterion variable is smaller in Step 3 than in Step 2. Full mediation occurs when the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable becomes nonsignificant when the effect of mediator is considered. Partial mediation occurs when the predictor effect is weakened, but is still significant when the mediator is considered.

As is evident in Tables 2 through 4 and Figure 1, the data provided only partial support to hypotheses 5 and 7. Specifically, supervisor ratings of LMX partially mediated the relationship of rational tactics with salary progression and promotability. Also, the full mediation effect of subordinate-rated LMX was evident for the relationship between rational tactics and career satisfaction. Organizational support, however, did not appear to mediate the hypothesized relationship.

Discussion

Among career aspirants and career scholars, there is a wide consensus that influence tactics can be effectively used to attain desirable outcomes. The present study provided some support to this notion. First, the use of rational tactics positively predicted salary progression, career satisfaction, and promotability. This finding is congruent with those from past studies (e.g., Ferris & Judge, 1991; Higgins et al., 2003; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). In this light, rational tactics could be useful as a means for aspiring employees to get ahead in their career or to obtain desirable career outcomes. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find soft or strong tactics to be significantly associated with outcome dimensions. One explanation is that people tend to perceive the use of soft tactics such as ingratiation as taboo and as having negative connotations attached to it (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Porter et al., 1981). Moreover, soft tactics such as pretending to be dependent or helpless could have been considered as deceitful and illicit when

used just to gain the approbation of a superior who control significant rewards for the agent. But even if the use of soft tactics does increase the target's liking for the agent, the eventual effect on salary and promotions is probably indirect.

As for the use of strong tactics, the employees generally reported employing less of these tactics. This could be indicative of self-serving or social desirability biases, whereby respondents reported using less of strong tactics in a deliberate attempt to project themselves positively. Still, the respondents could have in reality used less of strong tactics since being impudent, assertive, defiant, and the like are undesirable in Malaysian society (Abdullah, 1992). In short, cultural inhibitions and the strong preference for relationships and hierarchy that typically characterize the Malaysian workforce (Ansari, Ahmad, & Aafaqi, 2004) could possibly restrain both the use and effect of soft tactics and strong tactics as influence strategies (Ong, 2001).

Second, as hypothesized, a significant relationship was found between the three categories of influence tactics and subordinate ratings of LMX quality. Specifically, soft tactics and rational tactics significantly and positively predicted LMX quality perceived from the subordinate's standpoint. Conversely, the use of strong tactics was detrimental to LMX quality. This is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Judge & Bretz, 1994; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne et al., 1997). Nonetheless, only the use of rational tactics was found to have significant impact on supervisor ratings of LMX quality. Taken as a whole, these findings point to two important observations. One, employees might be aware of the differential effects of the various tactics on enhancing their interpersonal relationships. They might also perceive themselves as having employed these tactics effectively to their advantage. Two, in establishing and enhancing the quality of exchanges between them and their subordinates, it is the use of rational tactics (rather than soft tactics or strong tactics) that seems to gain the approval of the supervisors.

Third, whereas the use of strong tactics negatively predicted organizational support, the use of soft tactics and rational tactics did not significantly influence organizational support. This finding is reasonable in that the use of strong tactics like upward appeal and defiance may be more noticeable at the organizational level, and is certainly unacceptable. We also could not ascertain the impact of soft tactics and rational tactics on organizational support, possibly because these tactics are typically intended to influence the supervisor (Higgins et al., 2003), and hence they are likely to be less influential on the organization.

Collectively, the findings on the impact of influence tactics use appear to suggest that rational tactics are the most widely used tactics in upward influence attempts, as has been reported in past studies (e.g., Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Kipnis et al., 1980; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). More importantly, in the Malaysian context, rational tactics appear to be relatively more effective in obtaining desirable outcomes compared to soft and strong tactics. Taking this further, we can conclude that employing rational tactics as an influence strategy transcends cultures.

Finally, the current study found that LMX quality, at least that of supervisor-reported, significantly predicted more outcomes than did organizational support. Brandes et al.'s (2004) study likewise found dyadic exchanges to have a greater impact on career outcomes than global social exchanges (exchanges with top management and organization).

There are several other important conclusions to be drawn from the findings relating to mediating effects. First, the evidence of full mediation of subordinate-rated LMX on the relationship between rational tactics and career satisfaction implies that when high quality LMX is absent, the impact of rational tactics on employee satisfaction will be nonsignificant.

Second, the fact that supervisor-rated LMX acted as a partial mediator for the relationship of rational tactics with salary progression and promotability shows that there might be direct

relationship between rational tactics and salary progression or promotability. Alternatively, additional variables, other than supervisor-rated LMX, might account for the relationship. Of particular interest is that the same does not hold for subordinate-rated LMX. These findings may suggest that subordinates' perceptions of LMX quality are not in harmony with those of their supervisors. Several researchers (e.g., Varma & Stroh; 2001; Xin, 2004) have come up with a similar conclusion. The implication is that subordinates need to be in tune with their superiors' perceptions of LMX relationships. But more importantly, employees need to be informed that the presence of high quality LMX relationship (especially as viewed from the supervisor's standpoint) is instrumental to tapping the effectiveness of rational tactics in producing desirable career outcomes such as salary progression and promotability. Contrary to our expectation, organizational support did not mediate the relationship between influence behavior and career outcomes. One possible reason could be that organizational support may act as a moderator rather than a mediator in the proposed relationships.

In summary, the findings of the current study have demonstrated that if influence tactics are effectively applied, employees are likely to develop high quality exchanges with their supervisors, which will in turn promote favorable career outcomes. Given that, employees need to recognize the type of tactics that can assist them in attaining desirable outcomes. Equally important is developing and maintaining exchange quality with their supervisors. This is because LMX, as demonstrated in the current study, is clearly a salient dimension in differentiating the effectiveness of influence strategies on employee career outcomes. Finally, organizations that are serious about helping their employees experience favorable career outcomes should be more cognizant of the importance of providing support and encouraging the development of high quality LMX relationships. Organizations would do well to examine and monitor these

relationships closely, as the potential impact of support is clearly significant. Ultimately, support, be it from the supervisor or the organization, benefits employees as well as the organization.

As with all other organizational research, the present study is not without potential limitations. First, this study has rallied primarily on a relatively small sample (N = 229) drawn from only manufacturing and service industries in Northern Malaysia. Further, the respondents were predominantly concentrated at low hierarchical level. As such, generalizing the present findings to other settings is, to some degree, constrained. Thus, in the future, the line of research may be replicated using diverse sample as well as bigger sample size so that the effectiveness of influence tactics on career outcomes could be further clarified, since this area of inquiry is deemed to be still sporadic (Higgins et al., 2003). Secondly, we recommend that future research should consider a broader range of outcome variables to assess the extent to which the relationships we observed would generalize to other outcomes such as in-role performance, turnover, extra-role behaviors, and organizational commitment. Another direction for future researchers is to investigate the impact of other intervening variables such as organizational justice climate on the influence-outcome relationships.

In conclusion, this study has attempted to provide not only a relatively direct view of the effectiveness of influence tactics on career outcomes, but has also explored the mediating role of LMX quality and organizational support in this relationship. It is hoped that the findings of this study would, to some extent, add to career research stream by substantiating the importance of engaging in influence tactics that might pay off in improved LMX relationships. High-quality LMX relationships would in turn lead to favorable career outcomes.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Zero-order Correlations, and Coefficients Alpha of Study Variables

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Control variables												
1 Gender	SIM											
2 EL	05	SIM										
3 DT	13*	-00	SIM									
Predictor variables												
4 Soft	-01	19**	16*	(69)								
5 Strong	-15	14*	03	14*	(71)							
6 Rational	00	28**	15*	42*	27**	(74)						
Mediator variables												
7 LMX-L	12	12	08	16*	02	31**	(92)					
8 LMX-M	14*	14*	08	40*	-07	47**	26**	(87)				
9 OS	13*	06	13*	16*	-16*	11	09	39**	(71)			
Criterion variables												
10 SP	-09	47**	11	19**	16*	38**	30**	15*	05	SIM		
11 CS	00	-11	16*	11	-08	14*	07	27**	49**	06	(73)	
12 PR	-01	19**	04	17*	11	39**	62**	24**	-04	39**	-03	(86)
M	-	-	5.00	3.34	1.65	3.45	5.02	4.92	5.04	12.73	4.44	4.22
SD	-	-	4.26	1.23	0.82	1.10	1.03	1.30	1.02	7.22	1.09	1.45

Note. $N = 229$; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; Diagonal entries in parentheses indicate Cronbach's coefficients alpha; SIM = Single item measure; Decimals in correlation matrix and alpha are omitted; EL = Educational level; DT = Dyadic tenure; LMX-L = Supervisor-rated LMX; LMX-M = Subordinate-rated LMX; OS = Organizational support; SP = Salary progression; CS = Career satisfaction; PR = Promotability.

Table 2

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis (Supervisor-rated LMX as a Mediator)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables								
	E1 LMX-L ß	E2 SP ß	E3 SP ß	E1 LMX-L ß	E2 CS ß	E3 CS ß	E1 LMX-L ß	E2 PR ß	E3 PR ß
Step 1: Control variables									
Gender	.13	-.11	-.14*	.13	-.02	-.03	.13	-.02	-.07
Educational level	.03	.42**	.40**	.03	-.15*	-.15*	.03	.09	.07
Dyadic tenure	.03	.08	.09	.03	.13	.13	.03	-.01	-.03
Step 2: Predictor variables									
Soft tactics	.04	-.03	-.02	.04	.07	.07	.04	-.00	-.03
Strong tactics	-.06	.03	.03	-.06	-.12	-.12	-.06	-.01	.04
Rational tactics	.30**	.25**	.19**	.30**	.16*	.16*	.30**	.37**	.20**
Step 3: Mediating variable									
LMX-L	-	-	.21**	-	-	.03	-	-	.58**
R Square	.12	.31	.34	.12	.08	.08	.12	.16	.45

Note. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; E = Equation; SP = Salary progression; CS = Career satisfaction; PR = Promotability; LMX-L = Supervisor-rated LMX; ß = Standardized regression coefficients.

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis (Subordinate-rated LMX as a Mediator)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables								
	E1 LMX-M ß	E2 SP ß	E3 SP ß	E1 LMX-M ß	E2 CS ß	E3 CS ß	E1 LMX-M ß	E2 PR ß	E3 PR ß
Step 1: Control variables									
Gender	.12*	-.11	-.10	.12*	-.02	-.05	.12*	-.02	-.03
Educational level	-.00	.42**	.42**	-.00	-.15*	-.15*	-.00	.09	.09
Dyadic tenure	-.04	.08	.08	-.04	.13	.14*	-.04	-.01	-.01
Step 2: Predictor variables									
Soft tactics	.26**	-.03	-.02	.26**	.07	.00	.26**	-.00	-.02
Strong tactics	-.20**	.03	.02	-.20**	-.12	-.07	-.20**	-.01	.01
Rational tactics	.42**	.25**	.27**	.42**	.16*	.06	.42**	.37**	.33**
Step 3: Mediating variable									
LMX-M	-	-	-.04	-	-	.26**	-	-	.08
R Square	.33	.31	.31	.33	.08	.12	.33	.16	.16

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; E = Equation; SP = Salary progression; CS = Career satisfaction; PR = Promotability; LMX-M = Subordinate-rated LMX; ß = Standardized regression coefficients.

Table 4

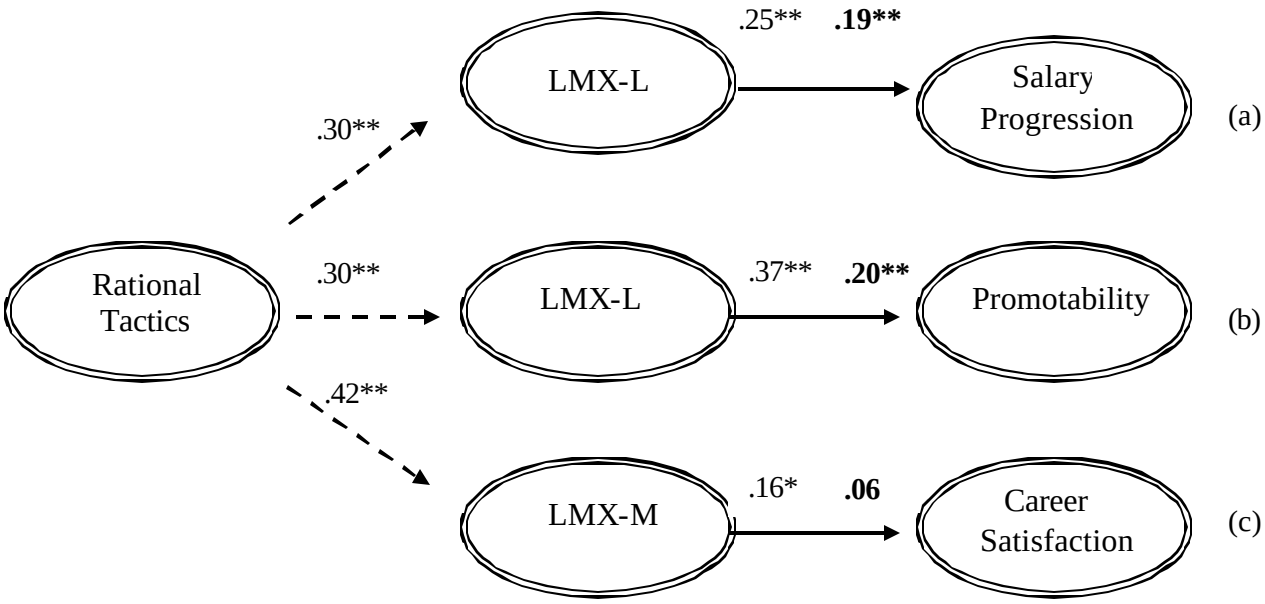
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis (Organizational Support as a Mediator)

Predictor variables	Criterion variables								
	E1 OS ß	E2 SP ß	E3 SP ß	E1 OS ß	E2 CS ß	E3 CS ß	E1 OS ß	E2 PR ß	E3 PR ß
Step 1: Control variables									
Gender	.08	-.11	-.11*	.08	-.02	-.06	.08	-.02	-.01
Educational level	.03	.42**	.42**	.03	-.15*	-.18**	.03	.09	.09
Dyadic tenure	.10	.08	.08	.10	.13	.09	.10	-.01	-.01
Step 2: Predictor variables									
Soft tactics	.12	-.03	-.03	.12	.07	-.00	.12	-.00	.01
Strong tactics	-.19**	.03	.03	-.19**	-.12	-.04	-.19**	-.01	-.02
Rational tactics	.08	.25**	.25**	.08	.16*	.13*	.08	.37**	.38**
Step 3: Mediating variable									
OS	-	-	-.01	-	-	.49**	-	-	-.09
R Square	.08	.31	.31	.08	.08	.30	.08	.16	.17

Note. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; E = Equation; SP = Salary progression; CS = Career satisfaction; PR = Promotability; OS = Organizational support; ß = Standardized regression coefficients.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. The partial mediating impact of supervisor-rated LMX (LMX-L) on the relationship of rational tactics with salary progression (a) and promotability (b), and the full mediating impact of subordinate-rated LMX (LMX-M) on the relationship between rational tactics and career satisfaction (c). [The numbers above broken arrows represent standardized betas in equation 1; numbers above solid arrows show betas in equation 2; numbers in bold above solid arrows show standardized betas based on regression equation including the mediator, equation 3; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$.]


LMX-L
.25** **.19**
Salary Progression
(a)
.30**
Rational Tactics
.30**
LMX-L
.37** **.20**
Promotability
(b)
.42**
LMX-M
.16* **.06**
Career Satisfaction
(c)