A Cross-Cultural Model of Power, Conflict, and Propensity to Leave a Job

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ABSTRACT

This study tested a structural equations model of the French and Raven bases of supervisory power (coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent), strategies of managing conflict with supervisor (problem solving and bargaining), and propensity to leave a job. The LISREL 8 analysis of questionnaire data from the U.S. and Bangladesh indicates that coercive power was negatively associated with expert power in the U.S.; reward power was positively associated with expert power in the U.S. and Bangladesh and it was associated with referent power in Bangladesh; legitimate power was positively associated with expert power in the U.S. and Bangladesh and it was positively associated with referent power in the U.S. In both the countries, expert power was positively associated with referent power; which in turn, was positively associated with problem solving and negatively associated with bargaining. Problem solving was positively associated with propensity to leave a job and bargaining was negatively associated with the same in the U.S., but not in Bangladesh. These findings can be explained in term of individualistic–collectivistic dimension of the national culture. We discuss implications of the findings for organizations, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

Keywords: Power, Conflict, Intent to leave a job

INTRODUCTION

Even though power and conflict are said to be two major areas of study in organization theory and organizational behavior, little has been done to examine the relationship between the two constructs. Raven and Kruglanski (1970) reviewed numerous studies to examine the relationship between social power and social conflict and concluded that the analysis of power provided a fruitful basis for the understanding of interpersonal conflict. Twomey (1978) and Rahim (2009) indicated the need for investigating how managers' power bases affect their subordinates' conflict management so that managers can change or maintain their power bases to achieve optimum results.

Investigation of the relationship between the two constructs and their effects on criterion variables is particularly lacking in cross-cultural contexts. The literature on leader power and conflict, while extensive, suffers from four deficiencies: First, with minor exceptions, the literature has devoted inadequate attention to the interrelationships among power bases. Despite Raven's (1992) call for studying how certain power bases influence the existence and use of the remaining power bases, there has been little systematic attempt to investigate this process. Second, little or no attention has been devoted to investigate whether power bases have direct, as well as mediated effects through conflict-management strategies on other variables, such as propensity to leave a job. Third, the most popular method of data analysis used in the published studies was correlations between variables. This type of analysis is particularly unsuitable because there are significant inter correlations among power bases.

The present study was an attempt to bridge this gap. Specifically, it was designed to develop and test a structural equations model of how subordinates' perception of supervisory power bases are related to each other and subordinates' own strategies of handling conflict, which in turn, are related to propensity to leave a job in the U.S. and Bangladesh. This approach can provide alternative explanations of the relationships among correlated variables.

It is generally agreed that coercive, reward, and legitimate power bases and expert and referent power bases can be reclassified as position and personal power bases, respectively. A second-order exploratory factor analysis of data from 476 managers and employees provides evidence of these two basic dimensions (Rahim, 1988; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). The relationships among position and personal power bases, problem solving and bargaining strategies of handling conflict with a supervisor, and propensity to leave a job are shown in Figure - 1.

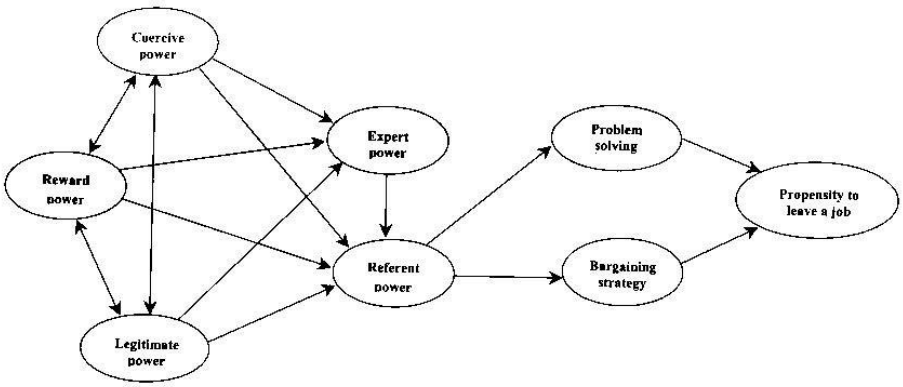

Figure - 1: Model of Power Bases, Conflict Management Strategies, and Propensity to Leave a Job

BASES OF SUPERVISORY POWER

Power is defined as "the ability of one party to change or control the behavior, attitudes, opinions, objectives, needs, and values of another party" (Rahim, 1989). Several classifications of leader or supervisory power have been set forth, but the bases of power taxonomy suggested by French and Raven (1959)—coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent—still appears to be fairly representative and popular in application (Frost & Stahelski, 1988; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Rahim, 1989; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). There have been attempts to expand this set to include "information" and other power bases, but Gaski (1986) has argued that, "these alleged power sources appear to be already captured by the French and Raven framework . . . and it has held up well in extensive empirical usage over the years" (pp. 62–63). Aguinis, Nestler, Quigley, Lee, and Tedeschi (1996), Hinkin and Schriesheim (1989, 1990), Pearce and Robinson (1987), and Rahim (1988) provided empirical evidence of this framework. The French–Raven power bases are as follows:

1. *Coercive power* is based on subordinates' perception that a superior has the ability to punish them if they fail to conform to his or her influence attempt.

2. *Reward power* is based on the perception of subordinates that a superior can reward them for desired behavior.

3. *Legitimate power* is based on the belief of the subordinates that a superior has the right to prescribe and control their behavior.

4. *Expert power* is based on subordinates' belief that a superior has job experience and special knowledge or expertise in a given area.

5. *Referent power* is based on subordinates' interpersonal attraction to and identification with a superior because of their admiration or personal liking of the superior.

There are significant intercorrelations among the five power bases. These interrelationships should be explained so that practitioners can acquire and use appropriate power bases to influence their subordinates' conflict management strategies and propensity to leave a job. Wrong (1979) suggested ways of using power bases in combination because he believed that one type of power source may evolve into another. Greene and Podsakoff's (1981) field experiment indicates that a change in the perception of one power base may affect the perceptions of other

power bases. Knowing how power bases influence each other is important as each power base may influence outcomes, not only directly but also through the mediation of its effects on other power bases (Gaski, 1986). It is possible that the position power base influences criterion variables through the mediation of the personal power base. Stated in another way, the position power base influences the personal power base, which in turn, influences criterion variables. Support for this relationship can be found from Gaski's (1986) study of channels of distribution that reported positive causal relationships of reward to expert and referent power bases. Carson, Carson, and Roe (1993), Rahim and Psenicka (1996), and Munduate and Dorado (1998) reported similar relationships. The studies by Carson et al. and Rahim and Psenicka found positive causal relationships of legitimate power base to expert and referent power bases. These findings make sense, as supervisors who use a performance-contingent reward power base as well as the legitimate power base may be perceived by their subordinates as competent as well as friendly, considerate, and fair.

Several studies indicate that coercive power is generally ineffective in influencing individual outcomes (Rahim, 1989; Podsakoff, Todor, & Skov, 1982). Studies by Munduate and Dorado (1998) and Rahim and Psenicka (1996), that used structural equations, indicate that coercive power negatively influences individual outcomes through the mediation of its effects on expert and referent power bases. Based on this discussion we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis I: Coercive power is negatively associated, and reward and legitimate powers are positively associated with expert and referent powers.

Several studies found that expert and referent power bases were significantly correlated (Gaski, 1986; Rahim, 1989). One possible explanation of this is that subordinates like to identify and associate with a supervisor who possesses expert power. Carson et al.'s (1993) meta-analysis of power bases and outcomes, Munduate and Dorado's (1998) study with 78 Spanish subjects, and Rahim and Psenicka's (1996) study with 578 employees found causal relationship of expert to referent power base. Furthermore, these studies reported that the reverse influence (i.e., referent power influencing expert power) is unlikely to happen. This is very similar to the influence of expert power on the interpersonal attraction of subordinates (Aguinis et al., 1996). In other words, the perception of expert power positively influences the perception of referent power.

Hypothesis II: Expert power is positively associated with referent power.

CONFLICT-HANDLING STRATEGIES

There are various styles of behavior by which interpersonal conflict can be handled. Based on the conceptualizations of Follett (1926, 1940), Blake and Mouton (1964), and Thomas (1976), and Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the styles of handling interpersonal conflict on two basic dimensions, concern for self and for others. The first dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern. The second dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern of others. Combining the two dimensions results in five specific styles of handling conflict, descriptions of these styles are presented below (Rahim, 1983, 2001).

1. *Integrating* (high concern for self and others) style is associated with openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties. It involves the diagnosis of and intervention in conflict so that issues are effectively dealt with.

2. *Obliging* (low concern for self and high concern for others) style is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party.

3. *Dominating* (high concern for self and low concern for others) style has been identified with win–lose orientation or with forcing behavior to win one's position.

4. *Avoiding* (low concern for self and others) style has been associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, or sidestepping situations.

5. *Compromising* (intermediate in concern for self and others) style involves give-and-take whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Further insights into the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict may be obtained by organizing them according to the integrative and distributive dimensions of labor–management bargaining suggested by Walton and McKersie (1965). Following Rahim (2001), these two dimensions are renamed as problem

solving and bargaining strategies, respectively. Figure - 2 shows the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict and their reclassifications into these dimensions.

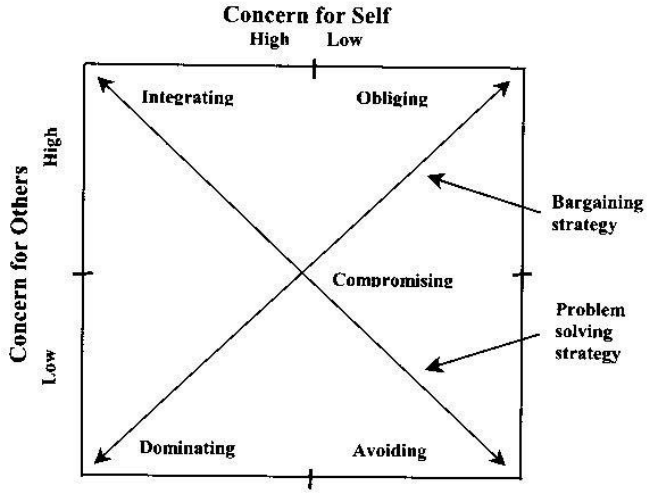

Figure - 2: The Dual-Concern Model: Problem Solving and Bargaining Strategies for Managing Interpersonal Conflict

The problem solving strategy—Integrating style *minus* Avoiding style—represents a party's concern (high–low) for self and others. The distributive dimension—Dominating style *minus* Obliging style—represents a party's concern (high–low) for self or others. These two dimensions represent the *problem solving* and *bargaining* strategies for handling conflict, respectively. A problem solving strategy represents a party's pursuit of own *and* others' concerns, whereas the bargaining strategy represents a party's pursuit of own *or* others' concerns. A High–High use of the problem solving strategy indicates attempts to increase the satisfaction of concerns of both parties by finding unique solutions to the problems acceptable to them. A Low–Low use of this style indicates reduction of satisfaction of the concerns of both parties as a result of their failure to confront and solve their problems. A High–Low use of the bargaining strategy indicates attempts to obtain high satisfaction of concerns of self and providing low satisfaction of concerns of others. A Low–High use of this strategy indicates attempts to obtain the opposite.

Literature on organizational conflict shows that integrating style is positively associated with individual and organizational outcomes. Burke (1970) suggested that, in general, a confrontation (integrating) style was related to the effective management of conflict, while forcing (dominating) and withdrawing (avoiding)

were related to the ineffective management of conflict. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) indicated that a confrontation (integrating) style dealing with intergroup conflict was used to a significantly greater degree in higher than lower performing organizations. A field study with a convenience collegiate sample by Rahim and Buntzman (1989) reported that the referent power base of the supervisor was positively correlated with the use of an integrating style of handling conflict of the subordinates.

Hypothesis III: Referent power is positively associated with a problem solving strategy.

Hypothesis IV: Referent power is negatively associated with a bargaining strategy.

PROPENSITY TO LEAVE A JOB

Numerous studies were conducted on leader power, conflict management strategies, or propensity to leave a job, but little has been done to investigate the relationships among these constructs. Propensity to leave refers to the inclination or predisposition to leave the job. Student (1968) argued that employees' withdrawal measure was negatively related to supervisor's referent power base. Ivancevich and Donnelly (1970) found an inverse relationship between sale managers' expert and referent powers and sales representatives' excused absences. Busch (1980) reported that sales managers' expert and referent powers were negatively related to the salespersons' propensity to leave in two out of three firms surveyed.

Likert and Likert (1976) strongly argued and provided some evidence to suggest that an organization that encourages participation and problem solving behaviors attains a higher level of effectiveness. Several studies consistently show that integrating style of handling conflict results in high joint benefit for the parties, better decisions, and greater satisfaction of the partner (Korbanik, Baril, & Watson, 1993; Tutzauer & Roloff, 1988; Wall & Galanes, 1986). Vigil-King's (2000) study shows that teams that use more integrative conflict management strategies are likely to have higher commitment than teams using less integrative strategies.

As discussed before, in the present study problem solving strategy was conceptualized as the difference between one's integrating style and avoiding style. A positive score in problem solving indicates joint gains, but negative scores indicate losses for both parties. Bargaining strategy was conceptualized as the difference between one's dominating style and obliging style. This is a zero-sum strategy, where a positive score indicates one's gain, but loss to the other party. A negative score indicates one's loss, but gain to the other party.

Hypothesis V: A problem solving strategy is negatively associated with propensity to leave a job.

Hypothesis VI: A bargaining strategy is positively associated with propensity to leave a job.

The model tested with the hypothesized causal relationships is presented in Figure-1. To summarize, in this study we wanted to investigate the causal relationships of power bases to each other and to conflict management strategies and the relationships of conflict strategies to propensity to leave a job. The hypothesized relationships presented in the model were formulated on the basis of the theoretical work and empirical studies mainly in the U.S., but there are cultural differences among the two countries involved in this investigation that may affect these relationships.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

Since our study tested a model of power bases, conflict management strategies, and propensity to leave a job in the U.S. and Bangladesh, it is appropriate to discuss cultural differences between these countries. Hofstede's study (1983) shows that the U.S. and Bangladesh differ greatly on the cultural dimension of *individualism–collectivism*. In individualistic cultures, individuals primarily look after their own and immediate family's interests (husband, wife, and children), but in collectivist cultures, individuals belong to one or more close groups created by birth and later events, from which they cannot separate themselves (Hofstede, 1984). "Overall, individualistic cultures (such as Australia and the United States) value individual goals over group goals, individual concerns over group concerns, and individual rights and needs over collective responsibilities and obligations. Collectivistic cultures (such as China, Japan, and Bangladesh), in contrast, value group goals over individual goals, group concerns over individual concerns, and collective needs over individual needs" (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). On the *individualism–collectivism* dimension, the United States is extremely individualistic [it ranked 1 (1 = highest) in Individualism score] among the 50 countries studied by Hofstede. Bangladesh on the other hand, is a highly collectivistic [it ranked 47–48 (1 = highest) in Individualism score] nation. Given this cultural difference between these countries, a central issue is whether the managers and employees in these countries significantly differ on the relationships of power bases to conflict management strategies, and propensity to leave a job.

Hofstede's other cultural dimensions are power distance (i.e., the extent to which the less powerful members of an organization believe and accept that power is unevenly distributed), uncertainty avoidance (i.e., the extent to which people avoid unclear or unpredictable situations), and masculinity (i.e., the extent to which there is sex role differentiation). Power distance could be considered a relevant cultural dimension for the present study, but the difference on this dimension between these two countries was not very high—the U.S. and Bangladesh ranked 38th and 32nd, respectively, on this dimension among 50 countries. The difference between the two groups of countries, as indicated before, was the greatest in individualism–collectivism score. Therefore, we expected the results to be different between the individualistic (U.S.) and collectivistic (Bangladesh) countries.

METHOD

Sample

Data for the present study were collected from convenience samples. The participants were full-time employees from two countries—the U.S. (n = 245) and Bangladesh (n = 250). Data were collected from various organizations in Madison, Wisconsin, U.S. and Dhaka, Bangladesh. Demographic variables for the two samples are presented in Table I.

Table I. Demographic Variables for the Two Countries

Relationship		U.S.	Bangladesh
Age	M	39.07	34.04
	SD	9.85	5.46
Full time work experience	M	17.21	9.90
	SD	9.75	5.85
Work experience with present	M	9.40	2.12
supervisor	SD	8.22	1.39
Organizational level			
Top	*n*	6	11
Middle	*n*	110	40
Lower	*n*	83	124
Nonmanagement	*n*	46	75
Education (in years)	M	13.14	14.39
	SD	1.37	1.75

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, n = Sample size

MEASUREMENT

Power Bases

The five French–Raven bases of supervisory power—coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent—were measured with the Rahim Leader Power Inventory (RLPI) (Rahim, 1988). This 29–items instrument uses a 5–point Likert scale to measure the perceptions of subordinates regarding supervisors' bases of power. Each of the five power subscales was created by averaging the responses to its items. A higher score indicates a greater power base of a supervisor.

The RLPI has been shown to have adequate psychometric properties (Hess & Wagner, 1999; Lam, 1997; Rahim & Magner, 1996). Several other measures of power bases are also available with reported psychometric properties and may be used in future studies (Frost & Stahelski, 1988; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Pearce & Robinson, 1987; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Rahim and Magner's study with three domestic (n = 1,474) and two foreign (n = 978) samples provided support for the convergent and discriminant validities for the instrument and the invariance of factor pattern and factor loadings across four organizational levels. This and other studies (Rahim, Kim, & Kim, 1994; Rahim & Psenicka, 1994) support the construct validity of the instrument.

Conflict-Management Strategies

The four styles of handling interpersonal conflict with a supervisor—integrating, obliging, dominating, and avoiding—were measured with 24 of the 28 items of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II (ROCI–II), Form A (Rahim, 1983). The items of the ROCI–II use a 5–point Likert scale to measure the conflict-handling behavior of subordinates and each of the four subscales was created by averaging the responses to its items. A higher score indicates greater use of a style of handling interpersonal conflict with a supervisor. Scores from the ROCI–II were utilized to compute the two conflict-management strategies as follows:

Problem Solving Strategy = Integrating style – Avoiding style
Bargaining Strategy = Dominating style – Obliging style

Since the ROCI–II measures the styles with a 5–point scale, the subscales for problem solving and bargaining strategies range between + 4 and – 4. In the problem solving subscale, whereas a score of + 4 represents a party's attempts to

provide high satisfaction of concerns for both parties, a – 4 score represents a party's attempts to provide little or no satisfaction of concerns received by both parties as a result of the resolution of their conflict. A value of + 4 in the bargaining subscale indicates a party's perception of high satisfaction of concerns received by self and little or no satisfaction of concerns received by the other party. A value of – 4 indicates little or no satisfaction of concerns received by self and high satisfaction of concerns received by the other party.

Rahim and Magner's (1995) study with five different samples (N = 2,076) provided support for the convergent and discriminant validities of the ROCI–II and the invariance of the five-factor model across referent roles (i.e., superiors, subordinates, and peers), organizational levels, and four of the five samples. A number of studies have supported the criterion validity of the instrument (Conrad, 1991; Frederickson, 1997; Gross & Guerrero, 2000; Hammock & Richardson, 1991; Lee, 1990; Levy, 1989; Maruyama, 1998; Montoya-Weiss, Massey, & Song 2001; Song, Xile, & Dyr, 2000; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990). Rahim (2001) reported that the subscales were not associated with social desirability response bias.

Propensity to Leave a Job

This was measured with the following two items, "If circumstances permitted I would jump at the chance to accept a job in another organization" (Martin & Hunt, 1980) and "If I was completely free to choose, I would prefer to continue working in this organization" (reverse scored) (Donnelly & Ivancevich, 1975). The researchers provided evidence of the scale's reliability and criterion validity. The items were cast on a 5–point Likert scale and the index of propensity to leave a job was computed by averaging the responses to the items. A higher score indicates greater propensity to leave a job.

ANALYSIS

The descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliabilities as assessed with Cronbach α for the study variables are presented in Table II. To test the six hypotheses in two countries, data analysis proceeded in two stages: confirmatory factor analysis and structural equations model.

Table II. Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha for Variables

Variables	U.S. M	U.S. SD	U.S. α	Bangladesh M	Bangladesh SD	Bangladesh α
Power bases						
Coercive	3.78	0.84	0.78	2.76	0.91	0.77
Reward	3.58	0.78	0.80	3.56	0.78	0.71
Legitimate	4.20	0.48	0.64	3.78	0.64	0.67
Expert	3.62	0.72	0.86	3.79	0.74	0.78
Referent	3.79	0.81	0.86	3.74	0.74	0.73
Problem solving strategy						
Integrating	4.03	0.42	0.84	4.28	0.47	0.76
Avoiding	3.01	0.71	0.82	*3.37	0.70	0.69
Bargaining strategy						
Dominating	2.88	0.61	0.76	2.81	0.71	0.72
Obliging	3.64	0.45	0.73	3.46	0.66	0.72
Propensity to leave a job	0.65	2.39	0.88	0.77	2.82	1.03

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, n = Sample size, α = Cronbach alpha

Measurement Model

Separate confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the RLPI, ROCI–II, and PLJ, one for each country, was performed with the LISREL 8 computer package (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994) noted that it is not uncommon to have unsatisfactory fit when measurement models have more than four or five items per factor. To address this problem, they proposed a method in which subsets of items within factors are summed to create aggregate variables. For computing the CFAs and structural equations model, the observed variables were aggregated into two indicators for each factor in the model (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994; Rahim & Magner, 1995). This resulted in 20 aggregated items.

In the measurement model, each aggregate item was allowed to load on only its associated factor (which was identified *a priori*) and the factors (representing the five power bases, four conflict management styles, and propensity to leave a job) were allowed to correlate. Errors in the items were not allowed to correlate. The covariance matrix for the aggregate items for each instrument was analyzed for performing the analysis. The variance for each of the factors was fixed at 1.0 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), and parameter estimates were made under a maximum

likelihood method which was found to be quite robust to violations of normality (Chou & Bentler, 1995) and the absolute values of the univariate skewness and kurtosis measures for the 20 aggregate items were below the upper limits of 2 and 7, respectively, suggested by Curran, West, and Finch (1996). The measurement model is useful in assessing the potential fit of any causal models that may be applied. If the measurement model is of poor quality, a causal model cannot improve on the fit measures.

The factor loadings in the measurement model were all significant ($p < .001$), indicating good definitions of the underlying factors. For a reasonably good fit, the RMSEA (which should have a value of less than .08) were .074 and .064 for the U.S. and Bangladesh, respectively, while the remaining fit indexes (which should be .90 or higher) ranged between 0.85 – 0.92. Overall, the resulting model was satisfactory for continuing research.

CAUSAL MODEL

The causal model, as shown in Figure-1, was developed directly from the stated hypotheses. The results of the two LISREL analyses are illustrated in Table III. They show that the overall causal model fits the data fairly well. The adequacy of the structural equations model can be measured with the goodness-of-fit indexes which suggest that the structural model does a good job in explaining the relationships among the latent variables. There is always some degradation of these indexes compared to the measurement model since the relationships among the latent variables are more restricted. A few causal links are substituted for a more extensive set of allowed correlations. The only allowed correlations among latent variables in the causal model are within the position power structure.

Table III. Causal Model Fit Statistics

Index	U.S.	Bangladesh
χ^2 ($df = 90$)	217.90	176.04
RMSEA	0.075	0.064
NFI	0.91	0.85
NNFI	0.93	0.88
GFI	0.90	0.92
AGFI	0.85	0.87

Note: RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, NFI = Normed Fit Index, NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index, GFI = Goodness-of Fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index

Analyses of each hypothesis can be made with an examination of the structural coefficients within the causal model. Table IV provides the paths and the respective parameter estimates and *t*-ratios. The paths from coercive, reward, and legitimate power bases to expert and referent power bases are based on *Hypothesis I*. The three power variables were also allowed to freely correlate since they are measuring the common construct of position power. *Hypothesis II* accounts for the path from expert to referent power. *Hypothesis III* relates to the paths from referent power to problem solving strategy. *Hypothesis IV* predicted the path from referent power to bargaining strategy. *Hypothesis V* was tested with the path from problem solving strategy to propensity to leave a job, and *Hypothesis VI* was tested with the path from bargaining strategy to propensity to leave a job.

Table IV. Structural Relationships in Two Countries

Relationship	U.S.	Bangladesh
1. Coercive → Expert	-.16*	.05
2. Coercive → Referent	**-.05**	**-.09**
3. Reward → Expert	**.23****	**.20***
4. Reward →Referent	.10	.14*
5. Legitimate → Expert	**.20****	**.15***
6. Legitimate → Referent	.09*	.06
7. Expert → Referent	**.52****	**.63****
8. Referent → PS	**.54****	**.48****
9. Referent → BA	**-.29***	**-.81****
10. PS → PLJ	-.24*	-.03
11. BA → PLJ	.15*	-.04

Note: PS = Problem solving strategy; BA = Bargaining strategy; PLJ = Propensity to leave a job. Bold figures indicate similar results in the two countries.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. (two-tailed)

Given the acceptance of the overall model, it is possible to test each hypothesis (as shown in Figure-1) by examining the coefficients in the model as shown in Table IV.

Hypothesis I predicted the paths from coercive, reward, and legitimate powers to expert and referent powers is partially supported. The path coefficient from coercive power to expert power is negative and significant in the U.S., but not in Bangladesh; the path coefficients from coercive power to referent power were

negative and non-significant in both the countries. The path coefficients from reward to expert power were positive and significant in both the countries, but path coefficient from reward to referent powers was positive and significant in Bangladesh, but not in the U.S. The path coefficients from legitimate to expert power were positive and significant in both the countries, but the path coefficient from legitimate to referent power was positive and significant in the U.S., but not in Bangladesh.

Hypothesis II predicted the path from expert power to referent power. This is supported since the path coefficient is positive and significant in both the countries.

Hypothesis III predicted the path from referent power to the problem solving strategy. This hypothesis is fully supported since the path coefficient is positive and significant in both the countries.

Hypothesis IV predicted the path from referent power to bargaining strategy. This is fully supported since the path coefficient is negative and significant in each country.

Hypothesis V predicted the path from the problem solving strategy to propensity to leave a job. This is partially supported since the path coefficient is positive and significant in the U.S., but not in Bangladesh.

Hypothesis VI, which predicted that the bargaining strategy is negatively associated with propensity to leave a job, is partially supported because the path coefficient is negative and significant in the U.S., but not in Bangladesh.

Overall, the data provided support for the model. The results provided partial support for *Hypothesis I, V*, and *VI*, but they provided full support for *Hypothesis II - IV*.

DISCUSSION

No previous study simultaneously examined in a causal modeling context the relationships of subordinates' perception of the bases of supervisory power to each other and to their own conflict management strategies with supervisors, which in turn, were associated with propensity to leave a job. The relationships of coercive to referent, reward to expert, legitimate to expert, expert to referent, and referent to problem solving and bargaining scales were similar in the two countries. Problem solving and bargaining strategies were significantly associated with propensity to leave a job in the U.S, but not in Bangladesh.

This lack of relationship between conflict management strategies and propensity to leave a job in a collectivistic country like Bangladesh probably indicates that employees in these countries do not have adequate opportunities to

move from one job to another. Results other than these did not differ systematically that could be attributed to the individualism–collectivism dimension of national culture.

The present study contributed to our understanding of the linkage between position and personal power bases and between expert and referent power bases. It also contributed to our understanding of subordinates' conflict-management strategies that mediate the relationship between supervisory power bases and subordinates' propensity to leave a job. The study shows that referent power is more effective than other power bases in influencing criterion variables. "Managers with referent power make meaning for others and give them a sense of purpose. They are able to generate trust, openness and respect by using these same qualities in their interactions with others" (Knapp, 1990). Without these leadership qualities associated with referent power, other power bases may not be very effective in changing the behaviors of subordinates.

IMPLICATION FOR MANAGEMENT

The implication of this study is that managers can encourage subordinates to enhance their problem solving strategy and reduce their bargaining strategy and propensity to leave a job by using more of their performance-contingent reward power and legitimate, expert, and referent powers. In general, managers should be discouraged from using coercive power except under special circumstances. Guidelines for the use of performance-contingent coercive power by supervisors should be clearly spelled out by an organization.

The perception of subordinates of their supervisors' use of reward, legitimate, expert, and referent power bases may have compound positive impact on the subordinates' problem solving conflict-management strategy and propensity to leave a job. Therefore, the challenge of a contemporary organization is to enhance these power bases of their managers. Managers may be trained to use their position and personal power bases effectively so that their subordinates are encouraged to use more problem solving and less bargaining strategies of handling conflict with supervisors which should reduce propensity to leave their jobs.

Position Power. Managers may be encouraged to provide various kinds of performance-contingent rewards to their subordinates. This can be done by granting managers the power they need to reward subordinates for their contributions to the organization. The application of this power will be effective if it is consistent with reinforcement theory. In order to use this power effectively, the

supervisors will require appropriate training. Supervisors can increase their legitimate power if they follow policies and procedures consistently and provide instructions, guidance, and advice unambiguously.

Personal Power. The challenge of the contemporary organizations is to enhance managers' personal power base. Unfortunately, there is no easy way of achieving good results in this respect. In order to obtain desired results, there have to be changes at the individual and organizational levels. Improving managers' expert power would involve basic education and specific job-related training. Managers should also be encouraged to enhance their skills through continuous self-learning. They may also need appropriate job experience to build on this power base. Supervisors who are deficient on referent power base may be provided human relations training so that they learn to be empathetic to the subordinates' needs and feelings, treat them fairly and ethically, and present their interests to higher level managers when there is a need to do so.

Organizations should provide appropriate reinforcements for learning and improving their referent and expert power bases. Education and training may be of limited value when it comes to improving referent power base. Organizations may have to adapt the policy of recruiting man?agers with vision and charisma who are likely to bring an adequate referent power base.

The challenge of the contemporary organization is also to encourage the use of the problem solving strategy of handling conflict with supervisors. Employees should also be trained not to engage in win–lose or bargaining strategy of managing conflict. This can be done by strengthening the integrating conflict-management style and discouraging the use of an avoiding style. To attain this goal, training in conflict management of employees and supervisors and appropriate changes in organization design and culture would be needed (Rahim, 2001).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research is needed to enhance our understanding of the interrelationships of power, conflict-management strategies, and propensity to leave a job. An important area of future research concerns carefully designing and evaluating the effects of intervention on supervisory power bases on attitudes and job performance of employees. Field experiments are particularly useful in evaluating the effects of enhancing the personal power base of supervisors on individual and organizational outcomes. There is also need for scenario-based studies and laboratory studies that control some of the extraneous variables to better understand the effects of leader

power reported in the present study. Attempts should be made to obtain measures of exogenous and endogenous variables at different periods of time.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this field study should be noted. The self-reports of power bases, conflict strategies, and propensity to leave a job that were taken from each respondent present the problem of common method variance, i.e., the lack of independence between criterion and predictor variables. It should be noted, that a study by Spector (1987) concluded that properly developed instruments are resistant to the method variance problem. In the present study, we have used three published instruments that are well known for their reliability and validity, which may have reduced the problem of method variance. All three instruments were used in a number of cross-cultural studies. Ting-Toomey et al. (1990) concluded from her study in five cultures that a theoretically-sound and well-tested measure like the conflict management strategies, developed in the U.S. (and used in the present study), could be used in cross-cultural studies.

Data were collected from a convenience sample that might limit generalizability of our results. It should be noted that the relationships found in this study are correlational and not causal.

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