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RELATION OF SEX TO PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY OF ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE*

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SUMMARY

Based on the hypothesis that many female managers experience job difficulties as a result of their failure to accept male-determined organizational behavior patterns, this study investigated the question, "Does sex, as an independent variable, contribute to differences in male-female perceptions of the legitimacy of various organizational influences?" Data collected from 108 male managers and 145 female managers with use of the Schein-Ott *Legitimacy of Organizational Influence Questionnaire* were analyzed by means of Fisher's exact probability test and the coefficient of association asymmetric lambda. The findings indicated that factors other than sex play a major role in determining employee response patterns to the legitimacy of various organizational influences. This conclusion serves to throw doubt on numerous studies purporting to provide evidence that differences exist between male and female organizational behavior patterns.

A. INTRODUCTION

To a large extent, the success of all managers, whether male or female, depends upon their ability to recognize and adjust to preferred behavior patterns required for continued organization membership. This process is generally recognized and referred to as "organizational socialization" (16). It is the process by which an individual becomes aware of the goals, the value system, and the norms of an organization. Its importance as an organizational phenomenon cannot be underestimated. As Schein notes,

The process is so ubiquitous and we go through it so often during our total career that it is all too easy to overlook it. Yet it is a process which can make or break a career, and which can make or break organizational systems of manpower planning. The speed and effectiveness of socialization determine employee loyalty, commitment, productivity and turnover. The basic stability and effectiveness of organizations therefore depend upon their ability to socialize new members (15, p. 2).

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To the extent that most organizations are male-dominated with male established goals, value systems, and norms, it may be hypothesized that many female managers experience job difficulties because of their failure to accept male-determined organizational behavior patterns (i. e., to successfully learn new patterns of organizational socialization). On the basis of this hypothesis, the question may be raised: "Does sex, as an independent variable, contribute to differences in male-female perceptions of the legitimacy of various organizational influences—i. e., socialization efforts?" Stated differently, "Do male and female managers have dissimilar perceptions regarding the legitimacy of various organizational influences?"

The research reported here is an effort to provide some insight into the issue of sex based differences in organizational behavior. It *does not* attempt to explain the operation of organizational norms and values.

B. PROCEDURE

Data analyzed in the present study were collected by means of the Schein-Ott *Legitimacy of Organizational Influence Questionnaire* (17, 18). This questionnaire is designed to measure managers' perceptions of the legitimacy of organizational influence attempts upon employees in 55 behavior and attitude areas, ranging from highly job related (e. g., "working hours") to highly personal (e. g., "attitudes toward sexual morality"). Survey respondents are asked to answer "yes," "no," or "uncertain" to each questionnaire statement depending upon whether or not they feel it is legitimate for organizational influence to be exerted in that area.

The data were collected in two stages. The questionnaire was personally administered to 108 male managers employed by four firms located in the Midwestern and extreme Southeastern United States. In a second stage, 425 questionnaires were mailed to the executive officers of the 53 state assemblies (50 states, plus the District of Columbia, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico) of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of America. Of 425 questionnaires sent, 225 were returned. Of this total, 145 respondents met the study's requirements of actually managing an industrial or business activity and having subordinates report directly to them.

For purposes of comparison, the results of both applications were analyzed with use of Fisher's exact test in conjunction with the coefficient asymmetric lambda. Fisher's exact test provides the exact probability that an observed difference between two samples of data is due to chance: e. g., what is the probability that the difference in response to a questionnaire item between males and females is due to chance? Asymmetric lambda provides a measure

of statistical association between an independent variable and a dependent variable. For example, given sex (independent variable), how well can one predict response to a questionnaire item (dependent variable)?

The importance of using lambda (λ) in conjunction with a nonparametric test of significance cannot be overemphasized. Hays (7) concludes as follows:

. . . the significance level alone tells almost nothing about the strength of association. Usually we want to say something about the predictive strength of the relation as well. If there is the remotest interest in actual predictions using the relations studied then λ measures are worthwhile (p. 749).

C. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the 55 items that comprise the Schein-Ott *Legitimacy of Organizational Influence Questionnaire*, as well as the results of the statistical analysis of the data. From a glance at the p values and their statistical significance it could be superficially concluded that the independent variable sex accounted for the differences in response patterns. This would be especially true if concentration were focused on the number of significant p values and their magnitude. However, Table 1 also presents asymmetric lambda which indicates the degree of association between respondent sex and questionnaire response.

Application of both Fisher's exact probability and λ points out that sex had *no* effect on responses for 52 of the 55 questionnaire items. The remaining three questionnaire items that do show a slight sex based influence account for less than 5% of the explainable total male-female response variation: item 5 ("attitudes toward unions") accounts for roughly 2% of the explainable variance; item 13 ("activity in recruiting prospective employees"), roughly 2%; and item 42 ("amount of company work taken home"), less than one-tenth of 1%. Again, the remaining questionnaire items, while largely statistically significant, are *not* explainable on the basis of sex; i. e., no statistical association can be said to exist between the remaining 52 items (dependent variables) and the independent variable sex. Thus, there seems to be little basis to conclude that sex in this situation played a significantly different role in the successful "organizational socialization" of female managers than it did for male managers.

D. DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis serve to shed questions on the conclusions of numerous related research efforts. Regarding item 1 in Table 1 ("importance

TABLE 1
SCHEIN-OTT LEGITIMACY OF ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE QUESTIONNAIRE SHOWING FISHER'S EXACT TEST
AND ASYMMETRIC LAMBDA VALUES

Item	Male ($N = 108$)			Female ($N = 145$)			p^a	λ
	Yes	Uncertain	No	Yes	Uncertain	No		
Is it legitimate for a manager to attempt to influence subordinates in terms of:								
1. Importance of getting along with others	98	7	3	136	8	2	.0500	.0
2. Amount of money given to charity	6	8	94	3	6	137	.0098	.0
3. Leisure time spent with superiors	21	15	72	22	15	109	.0079	.0
4. Wearing beard, mustache, etc.	26	36	46	14	29	103	.0000	.0
5. Attitudes toward unions	45	21	42	26	39	81	.0000	.0229
6. Using profanity at work	88	11	9	136	7	3	.0006	.0
7. Alcohol consumed during working day	103	3	2	132	7	7	.0246	.0
8. Owning own house or not	0	5	103	4	2	140	.0107	.0
9. Kind of car driven	0	2	106	2	2	142	.1194	.0
10. Time talking to spouse while working	89	15	4	140	2	4	.0000	.0
11. Willingness to play politics to get ahead	20	37	51	26	53	67	.0138	.0
12. Place of residence	3	8	97	4	8	134	.0498	.0
13. Activity in recruiting prospective employees	34	36	38	55	39	52	.0060	.0183
14. Competition with peers for promotion	62	25	21	62	33	51	.0002	.0
15. Political affiliation	0	1	107	1	1	144	.2824	.0
16. Type of clothing worn at work	67	26	15	109	28	9	.0010	.0
17. Kind of spouse	4	2	102	5	5	136	.0631	.0
18. Who friends are	8	11	89	11	26	109	.0063	.0
19. Amount of job-related reading at work	79	22	7	120	16	10	.0033	.0
20. Use of credit and meeting debts	14	34	60	17	29	100	.0014	.0
21. Number of children	0	3	105	1	3	142	.1702	.0
22. Where vacations are spent	0	2	106	1	1	144	.1805	.0
23. Kind of house or apartment lived in	2	1	105	3	5	138	.0547	.0
24. Leisure time spent with subordinates	18	21	69	25	28	93	.0174	.0
25. Additional education in job-related areas	84	15	9	129	11	6	.0028	.0
26. Location or nature of next job	62	23	23	73	46	27	.0029	.0

TABLE 1 (continued)

Item	Male (N = 108)			Female (N = 145)			p ^a	λ
	Yes	Uncertain	No	Yes	Uncertain	No		
27. Working hours	94	5	9	136	3	7	.0148	.0
28. Leisure time spent with peers	8	16	84	19	10	117	.0016	.0
29. Church attended	2	3	103	0	5	141	.0496	.0
30. Club or organizational memberships	8	10	90	15	30	101	.0006	.0
31. Where children attend school	3	3	102	2	2	142	.0642	.0
32. Attitudes toward money	15	23	70	33	36	77	.0018	.0
33. Attitudes toward smoking	10	11	87	24	25	97	.0010	.0
34. Temperament exhibited on job	98	8	2	136	7	3	.0500	.0
35. Attitudes toward sexual morality	14	29	65	35	36	75	.0013	.0
36. How critical of the company in public	82	18	8	133	9	4	.0001	.0
37. Manner of supervising subordinates	88	10	10	113	26	7	.0022	.0
38. Form of address used talking to colleagues	64	23	21	120	17	9	.0000	.0
39. Degree of formality of clothing	47	37	24	97	27	22	.0000	.0
40. Whether uses company product or not	19	18	71	43	39	64	.0000	.0
41. Amount of life insurance held	2	6	100	3	7	136	.0748	.0
42. Amount of company work taken home	36	37	35	103	18	25	.0000	.0087
43. Attitudes toward saving money	12	12	84	10	30	106	.0021	.0
44. Tidiness of office or work area	102	5	1	128	11	7	.0086	.0
45. How work day divided among various duties	93	9	6	119	11	16	.0109	.0
46. Faithfulness to spouse	8	18	82	13	12	121	.0035	.0
47. Quantity of alcohol consumed at home	2	23	83	19	29	98	.0009	.0
48. Leisure time spent at company social events	16	17	75	28	27	91	.0090	.0
49. Amount of entertaining	1	4	103	1	10	135	.0631	.0
50. Charge account kept for personal shopping	0	1	107	0	2	144	.4236	.0
51. Close friends in a rival company	5	21	82	17	28	101	.0032	.0
52. Number of drinks at lunch time	90	11	7	121	18	7	.0261	.0
53. Participation in public activities	9	19	80	21	27	98	.0065	.0
54. Whether spouse works or not	2	3	103	2	6	138	.0854	.0
55. Participation on a company athletic team	24	16	68	31	29	86	.0098	.0

^a Fischer's exact probability.

of getting along with others"), some evidence exists purporting that women show a greater concern than men for the "socioemotional" aspects of employment (4). The present study, however, did not uncover any sex based differences in this area.

Empirical research findings that relate to item 34 ("temperament exhibited on job"—i. e., excitable or phlegmatic or aggressive or passive, etc.), item 11 ("willingness to play politics to get ahead"), and item 14 ("competition with peers for promotion") are also of interest. If playing politics" can be related to aggressiveness, there is evidence that supports the view that males are more "aggressive" than females (11). On the other hand, the possible male *versus* female uniqueness of "competitiveness," as inferred in item 14, is wide-open for debate. Crowley, Levitin, and Quinn (4) report findings that indicate the belief that "women are less interested than men in promotions is a half-truth." Miner (13), in a survey comparing male and female managers and educational administrators, found no consistent differences in the desire of men and women to manage. Vinacke (20), Bond and Vinacke (2), and Uesgi and Vinacke (19), however, have concluded that women adopt an anticompetitive strategy as related to sex role. Lirtzman and Wahba (9) have challenged this view, contending that many coalitional behavior patterns are a result of situational factors and due largely to traditional cultural role definitions. Again, the present study revealed no differences in any of the above items as they related to sex.

Lastly, at least five studies have been conducted that relate to item 37 ("manner of supervising subordinates"). The present study indicated that no explainable variance existed in this area associated with sex. Day and Stogdill (5) found that male and female supervisors occupying similar positions and performing similar functions demonstrate similar leadership behavior and are equally effective, at least as evaluated by their subordinates. Work by Lyle and Ross (10) supports this finding. The work of Denmarke and Diggory (6), Sadler (14), Helmich (8), and Chapman and Luthans (3), however, present somewhat contrasting views. Megargee (12) and Bartol (1) investigated male-female leader need for dominance as related to performance and satisfaction. Their work, however, is more complementary than reinforcing in nature. Perhaps the most accurate conclusion based on the above findings might be that the style of a good leader depends upon the requirements of the situation. If so, perhaps the most important characteristic of a good leader is the ability to adapt his/her leadership style to the situation in which he/she is operating.

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