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# Bases of Power and Conflict Intervention Strategy: A Study on Turkish Managers

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**Methodology** – Thirty nine supervisors and their 165 subordinates from several organizations in Turkey filled out a questionnaire reporting power base of supervisor and their intervention strategy utilizing the Critical Incident Technique.

**Findings** – Referent power of superior led to mediation in subordinates' conflicts. However, mediation decreased while restructuring, arbitration, and educative strategies increased with increased anchoring of subordinates' positions. These latter strategies mostly relied on reward power of manager. Subordinate satisfaction was highest with mediation and lowest when supervisors distanced themselves from the conflict.

**Limitations/Implications** – The present study could only test the moderating effect of escalation as an anchoring variable. Future studies may look at the anchoring effect of whether the dispute is handled in public or in private, and whether the parties have a competing versus collaborative or compromising styles.

**Practical implications** – Training of managers in mediation may be essential in cultures where they play a focal role in handling subordinates conflicts. Such training may have to take into account their broader influence strategies and use of power.

**Originality/Value** – An influence perspective is useful in integrating the vast array of managerial intervention strategies in the literature. Furthermore, the anchoring effect provides a theoretical explanation for managers' use of more forceful intervention with less cooperative subordinates.

## **Keywords**

Conflict, Turkey, Mediation, Bases of power, Social judgment theory, Third party intervention

## **Disciplines**

Business Administration, Management, and Operations

## **Comments**

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# **Bases of Power and Conflict Intervention Strategy: A Study on Turkish Managers**

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Managers often play a third party role in subordinates' conflicts. The conflict management literature, although predominantly focused on the styles of the conflicting parties themselves, has also focused on managerial intervention. Initial models of managerial third party behavior borrowed heavily from conflict intervention in the legal setting (Sheppard 1983; Lewicki & Sheppard 1985). Expanded models gradually emerged, taking into account the peculiar situation of managers as third parties (Karambayya & Brett 1989; Kolb 1986; Pinkley, et al. 1995). Managerial intervention strategies discussed in the literature have grown in number and scope through years. However, a model incorporating them into a comprehensive framework has not emerged.

The present study conceptualized managerial intervention as an influence process, and attempted to present the various strategies within this framework. Previous studies have mentioned the role of power in choice of influence strategy (Kipnis & Schmidt 1983), the effect of power on coercive versus non-coercive leverage in mediation (Sisk 2009), and mediation strength as a reflection of social power (Carnevale 2002). Yet, a systematic attempt to model intervention as an influence process, and relate power bases to different intervention strategies within such a model has not been attempted.

The model developed was tested on a sample of Turkish organizations. Similar to other collectivistic cultures, third party roles played by managers is crucial in conflict management in Turkey. Kozan & Ergin (1999) reported that managers were involved in two thirds of the conflict episodes between subordinates who may have difficulty directly confronting each other. Managers intervene because of the importance placed on harmony, which is threatened by unresolved conflicts in a collectivistic culture (Cho & Park 1998). Third parties play the important role of preserving face for the adversaries (Ting-Toomey, et al. 1991). Tjosvold and Sun (2002) have drawn attention to careful use of third parties by adversaries, which they label as "outflanking", for the purpose of maintaining close relationships.

In addition to its relative collectivism, Turkish culture is also characterized by high power distance. Managers are known for a benevolent-autocratic style (Pasa, Kabasakal & Bodur 2001) although management training has led to more empowerment in some segments (Pellegrini & Scandura 2006; Ozaralli 2003). In this regard, power base of manager is an important variable, and the Turkish culture provides an appropriate setting for studying managers' choice of intervention strategy.

While carried out in a single country, the study would have practical and theoretical implications for research into managerial intervention in cultures that are relatively high in collectivism and power distance. From a practical viewpoint, third party advice and training for managers may need to look closely at their power base as a precursor to their intervention styles. Current managerial training draws attention to problems of autocratic intervention, and instead advocates mediation. Without taking into consideration managers' general influence strategies, these efforts may not go deep enough into underlying behavioral tendencies in intervention in high power distance

cultures. From a theoretical standpoint, relating bases of power to managerial intervention strategy would broaden the perspective of future studies. The literature on third party intervention has emphasized the circumstances which affect choice of strategy without much attention to the manager's power base. Viewing intervention as essentially an influence process may open new theoretical venues for comparative study of collectivistic versus individualistic and high versus low power distance cultures.

The next section provides a review of the literature on third party roles played by managers and a model for viewing intervention as an influence process. This is followed by a brief description of the cultural context of the study and its hypotheses. The remaining sections cover methodology, results, and implications of the study.

### **Theoretical Background**

The initial models of third-party intervention by managers were derived from the legal setting (Sheppard 1983). However, managers in third party roles, unlike formal mediators, are cognizant of their long-term relation with the disputants and usually have access to organizational resources. Hence, the context of managerial intervention has led to additional strategies to be identified in the literature (Kolb 1986). Furthermore, consideration had to be given to strategies that are likely to emerge in other cultures (Lederach 1991; Wall & Blum 1991). Although predominantly based on Western literature, the ensuing set of strategies has been extended to other cultures through theoretical development (Elangowan 1995) and empirical test for construct validity (Kozan & Ilter 1994).

Four managerial intervention strategies were identified by Sheppard (1983), namely, *adjudicative*, *inquisitorial*, *mediational*, and *providing impetus*, the first three of which derive from Thibaut and Walker's (1975) model for the legal setting. In the adjudicative strategy, resembling judges in U.S. courts, the third party has control over the final decision, but the disputants have control over the process, i.e., the presentation and interpretation of evidence. A third party using the inquisitorial strategy would have process control as well as decision control. The mediational strategy leaves decision control to the disputants, and while they may also have the final say on process, the mediator also influences process. In providing impetus, which is basically a motivational strategy, the manager uses rewards or threats to move the disputants toward a resolution.

With the exception of the adjudicative, Sheppard's strategies were confirmed through factor analysis by Karambayya & Brett (1989) with data from a simulation exercise. Karambayya and Brett also identified an additional strategy, which they labeled as *procedural marshal*. A manager using this strategy would give information on the dispute handling procedures to be followed, enforce these procedures, and prevent the parties from interrupting each other.

Kolb (1986) identified three third party roles from in-depth interviews with organizational ombudspersons. The *advisor* role involved primarily facilitating communication between the parties. The *investigator* role involved identifying the facts

of the dispute and bringing them to the attention of superiors. The third role, *restructuring*, involved changing organizational structure, including the assignment of duties, reporting relationships, and coordination mechanisms, in order to dissipate a dispute. While the first two of Kolb's roles correspond to various roles in other taxonomies, the restructuring role is unique and incorporates the realities of managerial intervention not found in the legal setting.

A different approach to managerial intervention was taken by Pinkley, et al. (1995). Instead of delineating distinct strategies, this approach defined the underlying dimensions of managerial intervention. Multi-dimensional scaling revealed five dimensions: attention given to stated versus underlying problem by the manager, disputant commitment forced versus encouraged, manager versus disputant decision control, manager approaches conflict versus manager avoids conflict, and dispute handled publicly versus privately. Pinkley, et al. report that their dimensions can be mapped into earlier strategy classifications of Sheppard (1983), Kolb (1986), Karambayya & Brett (1989), and Carnevale (1986), with the exception of Kolb's advisor and restructurer roles.

Although not specifically developed for managerial intervention, Carnevale's (1986) "concern-likelihood model" is relevant to the ongoing discussion. Two dimensions were considered: level of mediator's concern for settlement and likelihood of achieving win-win solution. High and low levels of these two dimensions yielded four mediation strategies: *problem solving* (win-win solution), *compensation* (use of rewards), *pressing* (use of threats and punishments) and *inaction* (letting parties settle the dispute). Problem solving would most likely represent mediation by manager, while compensation and pressing behaviors would be similar to the motivational strategy of Sheppard, which uses both rewards and threats.

Mediation in non-Western cultures has also received attention in the literature. Mediators in Chinese community life and Korean workplaces were found to be more assertive during mediation than their Western counterparts (Wall 1993). Their tactics ranged from gentle persuasion to telling and advising the parties on how to think and act. They argued for concessions and criticized the parties whom they think were at fault. In collectivistic cultures, mediators generally appeal to traditional norms and draw attention to possible loss of face for the disputants. This style was labeled as *educative* and measured by Kozan & Ergin (1999) in a survey of Turkish organizations.

Each of the third-party models reviewed so far has approached intervention from their own perspectives, resulting in several sets of managerial third party strategies. Although various researches have mapped their models to others, a comprehensive model incorporating the vast array of strategies identified has not been attempted. In the present study, we propose that such a model can be built if managerial intervention is viewed as an influence process. Social influence is defined as the process by which an agent makes another do something that would not have been otherwise done (French & Raven 1959). Power is defined as potential social influence attributed to an agent. When

they intervene, managers are attempting to influence the conflicting parties into accepting a settlement. The manager intervenes because of a belief that if left alone the two parties cannot reach a resolution. Viewed this way, managers' power base becomes essential for understanding their intervention strategy.

Figure 1 represents the various intervention strategies found in the literature as part of an influence model. Two dimensions are conceived: Dimension one (the horizontal axis) is the amount of force applied to the disputants by the manager, labeled as "manager exerts influence for solution". Low levels of force may correspond to what Raven, Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1998) have labeled as "soft power" (use of expertise and referent power to influence disputants), while high levels of force would represent "harsh power" (coercion, rewards, and legitimate power for influence). Dimension two (the vertical axis) represents the degree to which the manager involves the disputants in the process. This participative element has been shown to be an integral part of influence process since Levin's (1943) pioneering work on persuasion. Various authors on third party intervention have stressed the importance of disputant involvement for commitment to resolutions reached (Rubin 1983; Lewicki, Wise & Lewin 1992).

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*Insert Figure 1 about here.*  
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Within the space defined by the two axes, distancing represents the lowest level of influence exerted on the parties—they are left alone to handle their own conflicts—and lowest involvement in a third party process. Restructuring is likewise low in involvement, but comparatively higher in level of influence. Although it does not address the conflict, per se, it involves decisions that affect the parties' relations as well as duties. Arbitration is a result of the highest level of influence and low disputant involvement. In the inquisitorial strategy of Shepard (1983), which is analogous to arbitration, the parties' involvement is limited to presenting their cases. Mediation represents low influence attempts by manager on the outcome but high level of disputant involvement. The educative strategy is viewed as involving the parties for a resolution, but displays moderate use of influence. Compared to mediation, it is more heavy-handed, putting pressure on the disputants through social norms emphasizing face-saving and shame. Motivation displays the highest level of influence attempt among strategies involving the disputants, as it directly relies on rewards and threats.

As mentioned earlier, power is the potential to influence. Hence, using the influence model one should be able to predict intervention strategy by means of the manager's power base. Other factors also play a role, as will be discussed later, but we first focus on the link between power base and intervention strategy. Various authors have drawn attention to the relation of power to conflict resolution. Kipnis and Schmidt (1983) observed that the relative power of participants affects the choice of general influence strategies used. According to Sisk (2009), resources employed by international

mediators involve non-coercive leverage, such as financial rewards, as well as coercive means ranging from diplomacy to use of force. Carnevale (2002) has defined mediating strength as a reflection of social power. He distinguished between tactical strength of mediators (skill in managing the mediation process) and their strategic strengths (resources and relationships that the mediator brings to the table). Strategic strengths were interpreted in terms of French and Ravens' (1959; Raven and Kruglanski 1970) bases of social power: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, referent, and information.

Carnevale's (2002) discussion of power bases pertain to mediation, but can be extended to third party intervention in general. Using reward power, a third party may offer other benefits to a disputant in exchange for agreement or concessions. Coercive power may take the form of efforts that may bring about undesirable consequences to the disputants. Legitimate power derives from norms that ascribe the third party the right to prescribe behavior. In expert power, the third party's reputation as a knowledgeable intermediary on the matter is utilized for persuasion. Knowledge of the dispute and its context, and grasp of disputants' values and priorities, may help a third party explain the adversary's restraints to a party, or reformulate the dispute to merge their basic interests. Referent power, by virtue of prestige and charisma, enhance third party's ability to persuade the disputants for a settlement.

Rewards, coercion and legitimacy, labeled as "harsh power" by Raven, Schwarzwald and Koslowsky (1998), do not always lead to effective intervention. Walton (1987) argued that lower power of the third party over the disputants has the advantage of decreasing the disputants' sense of risk in confronting the issues candidly. Pinkley, et al. (1995) found that individuals with higher hierarchical power did not force commitment. They interpret this finding in terms of more delegation found at higher levels of an organization. Other studies have indicated that coercive power may be ineffective in influencing employee outcomes such as performance and satisfaction (Rahim 89; Podsakoff, Todor & Skov 1982). Exercising power to alleviate conflict poses something of a dilemma for managers, since the use of direct power can also "exacerbate" conflict in the group (Peterson & Harvey 2009) or may shift conflict towards the managers themselves.

In line with these arguments, Peterson and Harvey (2009) argued in favor of exercising indirect rather than direct use of power in managing conflicts. They drew attention to negative effects of reward and coercive power because these may breed negative feelings and result in superficial solutions to conflicts. Instead, they advocated methods such as structuring the group, directing an inclusive group process, and managing the external boundaries of the group. Restructuring would rely on legitimate power. Creating inclusive group processes are facilitated by referent power. Boundary management requires expert power, as well as charisma, for filtering negative feedback from the environment in order to manage group performance.



In contrast to these arguments, use of more power has also been advocated. Galinsky, Gruenfeld and Magee (2003) reported that people high in power were more likely to perform actions such as acting out against environmental threats, and managers may be more likely to exercise their power decisively when conflict arises. When supervisors are perceived to have power that they don't use in service of subordinates, subordinates can become withdrawn (Farmer & Aguinis 2005). Culture may also play a role. For example, Rahim, et al. (2000) found that referent power was positively related to effectiveness in the US, while in Bulgaria legitimate power predicted effectiveness. In high power distance cultures managers may be expected to intervene forcefully on persistent conflicts.

In Figure 2 we present a model relating power base to intervention strategy. The model uses an existing grouping of power bases into personal or positional power (Raven, Schwarzwald & Koslowsky 1998; Rodrigues 1995). Personal bases of power, which correspond to soft power and include expert and referent, are expected to lead to third party strategies that use low-to-medium levels of influence and involve the conflicting parties in the final solution. Hence, mediation or educative strategies are more likely to be evoked, the choice being subject to cultural factors. In contrast, positional bases of power, which correspond to harsh power (legitimate, reward, and coercive) are expected to lead to strategies that exert solution pressure on the disputants. The likely strategies used will be arbitration or motivation, depending on disputant involvement.

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*Insert Figure 2 about here.*  
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We expected the relation of manager's power to intervention strategy to be mediated by the degree to which the disputants are *anchored* in their positions. This expectation draws from Social Judgment Theory on influence and persuasion (Sherif & Howland 1961). According to this theory, when people receive a message they judge it by comparing it to currently held beliefs. The stronger currently held beliefs are in an issue the more difficult it is to bring about change in attitudes or behavior. When a manager attempts to influence subordinates towards concessions or reconciliation, the disputants would naturally evaluate the message in terms of how strongly they believe in their position. Sherif and Howland define three zones into which a message can be categorized: latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection, and latitude on non-commitment. For example, strongly held opinions on one's position that fall into the latitude of rejection would be more difficult for the manager to influence.

Sherif and Sherif (1968) also point out that a person's latitudes of acceptance and rejection are heavily influenced by their ego involvement with an issue, which impacts the degree of attitude change possible. We suggest that the point where the conflicting parties fall with regard to latitude of acceptance versus rejection can be represented by

the degree of escalation of the conflict. Escalation is defined as a shift towards more extreme behaviors during conflict. With escalation, psychological changes occur that are difficult to reverse (Pruitt & Rubin 1986). Focus shifts from achieving one's goals to hurting the other party. Escalation is associated with increased rigidity and loss of creativity that leads to a win-lose attitude. When conflicts escalate, the parties become more firmly anchored in their positions, their ego involvement increases, and the intervening manager has more difficulty influencing them towards a resolution.

Figure 3 represents a shorthand model for the empirical tests included in the present study. It shows anchoring by the parties, interpreted here as conflict escalation, as a *mediating* variable between power base and intervention strategy of manager. Also included in the model are outcomes of intervention as a multidimensional construct. In managerial intervention, the literature distinguished between distributive and procedural justice, dealing with the fairness of the settlement in the parties' eyes and the fairness of the procedure for arriving at a settlement (Thomas 1992). Both types of justice may need to be assessed in evaluating third party roles, even though concern with procedural justice and due process has been attributed by some authors to the Anglo-Saxon tradition more than to collectivistic ones (Cohen 1991). A third dimension, interactional justice, was also added to distributive and procedural justice, to cover quality of interpersonal treatment received during enactment of organizational procedures (Bies & Moag 1986).

Procedural justice relates to satisfaction with due process and the ability to raise and defend one's rights and interests. It includes such elements as the neutrality of the third party and the ability of the principal parties to control the process (Sheppard, 1984). Thomas (1992) noted that perceptions of fairness or effectiveness may vary when systemic or long-term consequences are considered. In interactional justice, Nabatchi, Bingham and Good (2007) distinguished between disputant-disputant interpersonal justice and disputant-mediator interpersonal justice. Based on these considerations, the outcome satisfaction component in Figure 3 was operationalized in terms of several dimensions: satisfaction with process, satisfaction with outcome, effect of resolution on unit's functioning, effect on disputants' relationship, and effect on relation of disputants with mediator.

### **The Cultural Context and Hypotheses**

Before we develop hypotheses based on Figures 2 and 3, a brief description of the cultural context of the study is in order. Organizations in Turkey provide a suitable setting for studying the role of power on managers' intervention methods. Turkey is a country in transition from a traditional to a mature industrial society. Western-based institutions have been adopted to speed up this transition. Yet, vestiges of the traditional culture still dominate interpersonal relations. Kagitcibasi (1994) distinguished between the material dimension of the individualism-collectivism construct, which relate to economic and formal social institutions, and its emotional dimension, which involves informal relations. During the process of modernization in Turkey, the emotional

dimension pertaining to relations, which is embedded in early socialization, changed much more slowly than the material dimension (Goregenli 1997; Phalet & Claeys 1993). In business organizations, while globalization has led to pressures to increase productivity in order to compete with industrialized nations, maintaining harmony is still of paramount concern. Managers have to balance opposing concerns when they intervene in subordinates conflicts.

The relatively high collectivism of the Turkish culture is coupled with high femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1984). The combination of high collectivism and femininity suggests a desire for smooth, harmonious relations in the work place. Compared to the more individualistic and masculine cultures, competition and the aggressive pursuit of individual interests and confrontational methods are less common (Dindi, et al. 1989). Business negotiations have to be carried out in a subtle way, with parties establishing personal rapport and pursuing economic interests in a roundabout manner (White 1994). Third party involvement has a long tradition in this culture, as in such other realms as elders playing a peacemaking role in community disputes (Starr 1978) or mothers mediating between authoritarian fathers and children (Kiray 1984). Managers, likewise, are an integral part of conflict resolution in organizations, as the conflicting parties find it hard to openly bargain for their interests (Kozan & Ilter 1994).

When intervening in subordinate's conflicts, managers may feel conflicting pressures to use the soft touch of a mediator on the one hand, or to be firm and autocratic on the other because of the high power distance in the culture. The softer, peace-making approach is part of the traditional conflict management process that is common in this region. For example, the process of *sulh*, found in many Islamic countries, aims at suspending conflict between the adversaries and achieving reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace (Irani 1999). The informal *sulh* process contrasts sharply with the formal approach of the courts that rely on arbitration. Starr (1978) has observed that disputants in a traditional setting prefer the mediation of the elderly (which aims at resolving all issues pertaining to conflict) to the narrow and technical focus of the courts.

The tendency to use a firmer approach, on the other hand, draws from the high power distance and the rather autocratic element found in Turkish culture. Turkish organizations are distinguished by traditional authority relations and influence patterns, which lead to centralized decision-making, highly personalized, strong leadership, and limited delegation (Ronen 1986; Pasa, Kabasakal & Bodur 2001; Pellegrini & Scandura 2006). In addition to productivity concerns that may call for intrusive intervention, managers also feel a need to appear in control in order to maintain peace and protect their authority.

Although managers rely predominantly on more authoritarian leadership styles, a segment of the managerial population is open to empowerment of employees. In their study of leader-member exchange relations in Turkey, Pellegrini and Scandura (2006)

found that managers in high quality exchange relations delegated authority despite the dominant paternalistic pattern. Ozaralli (2003) found that employees who had a college education and who perceived their managers as transformational leaders reported higher levels of empowerment. In a study of the Turkish banking industry's response to global competition, Mellahi and Eyuboglu (2001) found that TQM implementation, although being forced down by top management, led to empowerment of middle and lower managers. Empowerment would naturally be associated with expert and information power bases. Studying boutique hotels in Turkey, Erkutlu and Chafra (2006) found that job stress experienced by subordinates were positively related to position power but negatively related to referent and expert power of superior.

The following hypotheses are based on the general framework given in Figure 2 and the cultural context in which these managers operate.

*Hypothesis 1:* Mediation in subordinates' conflicts will increase as manager's referent and expert powers increase.

*Hypothesis 2:* Educative strategy in subordinates' conflicts will increase as manager's referent and legitimate power increases.

Both expert and referent power was expected to enhance manager's persuasion skills. Studying an Indian sample of lower- and mid-level executives, Gupta and Sharma (2008) found that subordinates compliance with "soft" bases of power (referent and expert) had higher effect than "hard" bases of power (coercive, reward, and legitimate) on commitment to supervisor and influence of superior on subordinate. Expert power was further expected to enhance a manager's ability to identify common goals and offer win-win solutions that are critical for effective mediation. The expectation for educative strategy derives from the use of prestigious third parties in collectivistic cultures. A third party with referent power was expected to be more effective with the educative strategy which advises the disputants to act in socially accepted, proper ways. However, legitimate power may also have an effect as it enhances a manager's referent power (Rahim, Antonioni & Psenicka 2001), which is particularly the case in high-power distance cultures where position confers more prestige than in the West.

As indicated in Figure 2, positional power (legitimate, reward, and coercive) would be associated with arbitration and motivational strategies, which utilize stronger influence attempts and more pressure for resolution by the manager. In the motivational strategy the disputants have outcome control, while in arbitration the final decision is made by the superior. Since a manager operates in a different context than judges do in courts, arbitration needs to be backed by means to enforce the manager's decision. Therefore, the legitimate right of the manager to enforce a decision may still need to be backed by perceived coercive and reward power. Motivation, on the other hand, relies more directly on rewards for cooperation or threat of unfavorable consequences in case of an impasse.

*Hypothesis 3:* Arbitration in subordinates' conflicts will increase as manager's legitimate, reward, and coercive powers increase.

*Hypothesis 4:* Motivational strategy in subordinates' conflicts will increase as manager's reward and coercive powers increase.

Of the remaining two strategies, reorganization uses minimum disputant involvement and moderate use of power by the third party. Legitimate power may generally be sufficient for restructuring. However, reorganizing work may require knowledge of organizational dynamics, and expert power may also be needed. Resistance on the part of the adversaries to structural changes may also invite use of reward power in order to overcome opposition. In the case of distancing, the manager may view the conflict as trivial or may expect the parties to essentially manage their own conflicts. In either case, use of power may not necessary; we expected managers to exercise power with the more active intervention strategies rather than distancing.

*Hypothesis 5:* Restructuring in subordinates conflicts will increase as manager's legitimate, expert, and reward powers increase.

*Hypothesis 6:* Distancing from subordinates' conflicts will not be related to any of the power bases.

Escalation plays a moderating role between power base and intervention strategy. Managers may need to use higher levels of influence as the adversaries' positions are anchored. Carnevale (1990) reviewed a number of studies which show that intense conflicts led to the use of substantive or pressure tactics by mediators. We expected escalation to alter the relation of power base to intervention strategy.

*Hypothesis 7:* Escalated conflicts will increase the positive effect of position, reward, and coercive power on arbitration and motivational strategy, and diminish the positive effect of referent and expert power on mediation.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Respondents were drawn from a convenience sample of 39 work units in several organizations to which access could be obtained. The majority of these organizations were located in Ankara, the capital, and the remaining in Istanbul, the largest city. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire, which was distributed and collected by the second and third authors and filled out in the workplace during work hours. Questionnaires were distributed to all employees in the work group, including their managers. Out of a total of the 251 questionnaires, 204 were returned with complete responses for all the variables included in the study.

The sample included firms in electronics, optics, textiles, mining, oil-refining, food processing, marketing, and banking, as well as government ministries, universities, and hospitals. Forty four percent of the sample was government agencies or state-owned firms while 56 percent was private companies, roughly representing the share of each sector in the economy. The unit managers, mostly first level supervisors, constituted 19

percent of the final sample. Forty six percent of the sample was female (women constitute 36% of the workforce in Turkey). The average respondent age was 34, ranging from 22 to 69. Respondents with a college education accounted for 76% of the sample. The average size of the parent organizations was 396 full-time employees, with a positively skewed distribution because of some very large organizations. Firms with 50 or fewer employees constituted 31% of the sample; 51 to 250 employees, 34%; and 251 and more employees, 35%.

### *Measures*

Manager's intervention strategy was measured using the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan 1954). CIT is suitable for studying complex interpersonal phenomena and has been adopted in previous studies of conflict behavior (Lissak & Sheppard 1983; Tjosvold & Sun 2002). The respondents were asked to recall and write down a conflict episode to which they were a party and in which the immediate superior was involved. They were told that any type of role played by the superior would be acceptable, including minimum involvement. They were then asked to answer a series of questions on this particular conflict and the strategy used by the intervening superior.

The questions measuring managerial intervention were derived from the various strategies described in the literature reviewed above. They included items that had been translated into Turkish for a previous study (Kozan & Ilter 1994) for the *inquisitorial*, *motivational*, *mediational*, and *procedural marshal* role items of Karambayya & Brett (1992) and the *restructuring* strategy described by Kolb (1986). Kozan and Ilter (1994) reported the following reliability coefficients (Alphas) for these scales: mediation .83, restructuring .76, distancing .72, arbitration .64. For the *educational* strategy a scale developed in a later study by Kozan and Ergin (1999) was used, which had a reliability of .82. The contents of the 30 items comprising the scales are shown in Table 1. The items were preceded by "My superior ..." for the employees version, and "I ..." for the managers' version of the questionnaire. The response scale was same as in Karambayya & Brett (1992)--strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and completely disagree.

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*Insert Table 1 about here.*

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A principle components analysis of the 30-item questionnaire using a minimum *eigen* value of 1.0 revealed seven components (KMO=.81, Bartlett's Chi-square=2293.2,  $p<.001$ ). Composite scores were calculated from items with loadings of .5 or more (shown in Table 1) for each of the first five components (components six and seven had one or two items with high loadings, and are omitted from the table). The five intervention strategies that emerged were labeled as *mediation*, *arbitration*, *restructuring*, *educative*, and *distancing*. These correspond to the strategies identified in the literature. Mediation included items representing mediation and procedural marshal scales of

Karambayya and Brett (1992). Their motivational strategy did not emerge as a coherent component; its items were scattered across other components.

Power base of manager was measured by means of Hinkin and Schreisheim's (1989) 20-item questionnaire. Average reliability (alpha) of the reward, coercion, legitimate, expert, and referent power scales reported by Hinkin and Schreisheim on three samples were .78, .84, .86, .86, and .87, respectively. Employees rated their superior's power base while managers rated their own power base. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics and internal consistency (alpha) coefficients of the composite scales for power base, intervention strategy, conflict escalation, and satisfaction with results. Appendix shows the items measuring conflict escalation and subscales of outcome satisfaction. The correlations among the independent variables are shown in Table 3.

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*Insert Table 2 and Table 3 about here.*  
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### *Analysis*

The relation of the independent variables to intervention strategy used by the manager was tested by hierarchical regression analysis. A separate regression analysis was conducted for each of the five intervention strategies (i.e., arbitration, mediation, restructuring, educative, and distancing). At the first stage of regression, the five power bases and conflict escalation were entered as main effects into analysis. Whether respondent was a subordinate or a superior was also entered at this stage as a dummy variable. At the second stage, interaction terms for conflict escalation with the five power bases were entered. Relation of intervention strategies to satisfaction with results were analyzed by correlations.

### **Results**

Table 4 shows the regression results. The stages of hierarchical regression are indicated as Model 1 and Model 2. Collinearity diagnostics were satisfactory for Model 1 (with smallest tolerance above .52) However, in Model 2, tolerances for the interaction variables were below .1, and the interaction results need to be interpreted with caution.

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*Insert Table 4 about here.*  
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The significant finding for the dummy variable of position of respondent indicated that managers' and subordinates' perceptions differed on how much mediation and distancing was used; superiors reported using mediation more ( $\beta = -.21, p < .01$ ) and distancing less ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ) than did their subordinates. This difference may be partially due to the two groups reporting different conflicts under the critical incident technique used. It is possible that managers chose conflicts they mediated while subordinates chose conflicts with little mediation. A follow-up analysis was therefore conducted after matching pairs of manager and their subordinates who reported the same

conflict (with identical narratives). A difference in perceptions emerged again, but was less prominent in the much smaller subsample ( $t=1.9$ ,  $d.f.=30$ ,  $p=.07$ ).

Regression for mediation yielded significant results for Model 1 only. Mediation was used more often when manager had referent power ( $\beta=.18$ ,  $p<.01$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. In line with this finding, mediation was used less often when managers relied on coercive power ( $\beta=-.17$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The interaction effects were not significant.

For the educative strategy both models were significant. The educative strategy was related to reward and coercive power, as well as conflict escalation. As conflicts escalated, managers resorted more to the educative strategy ( $\beta=.16$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Managers with reward power used the educative strategy more ( $\beta=.19$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while managers with coercive power used the educative strategy less ( $\beta=-.31$ ,  $p<.01$ ) as in mediation. However, when coupled with escalation coercive power led to more use of education. In general, Hypothesis 2, which predicted educative strategy to be related to referent and legitimate powers, was not supported.

For arbitration both models showed significant effects, although for Model 1 overall significance was at the .10 level. Arbitration increased with escalated conflicts ( $\beta=.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ). It also increased with manager's reward power ( $\beta=.1$ ,  $p<.10$ ), partially supporting Hypothesis 3. Interaction effects indicated that arbitration increased when conflict had escalated and manager had expert power ( $\beta = 1.35$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Restructuring yielded significant results for both models. Restructuring increased as conflicts escalated ( $\beta=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Restructuring was also higher when manager resorted to reward power ( $\beta=.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ), partially supporting Hypothesis 5. In Model 2, restructuring increased when conflict had escalated and manager had expert power ( $\beta=1.21$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In contrast, it decreased when conflict had escalated and manager had reward power ( $\beta=-.73$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Distancing had a significant equation for Model 1 only. Managers distanced themselves from subordinates conflicts more when conflicts escalated ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ). However, it was not related to any of the power bases, supporting Hypothesis 6. Hypothesis 5 could not be tested because motivational strategy did not emerge as a component in principal component analysis.

Hypothesis 7, which predicted escalation to mediate relation of power base to intervention strategy, was not supported. Escalation increased use of stronger power bases, but it did not mediate the relation of referent power to mediation or coercive power to arbitration as predicted. Its effect, unexpectedly, was in increasing the use of expert power in educative, restructuring and arbitration.

Relation of intervention strategies to outcome satisfaction variables was analyzed by correlations (Table 5). Only subordinates' data was used ( $n=165$ ) because the supervisors responded to a different set of questions. Mediation correlated positively with all five outcome satisfaction scales. Educative strategy also positively correlated with process satisfaction, relations with mediator, and resolution effectiveness, although



to a lesser degree than mediation. Arbitration and restructuring were not significantly correlated with any of the satisfaction scales. On the other hand, distancing had significant negative correlations with all five satisfaction scales.

## **Discussion**

### *Theoretical Implications*

The influence-based framework introduced may help with theory development in future studies. The perspective incorporated the vast array of intervention strategies found in the literature into a single model. It provided guidance for relating intervention strategies to power bases in terms of degree of influence being sought by manager. It also laid the theoretical framework for how subordinates' anchoring of positions, as operationalized by escalation, affects managers' strategies. Various authors have pointed out that intervention that came after the conflict had escalated elicits more control-oriented strategies (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim 1994; Pinkley, et al. 1995). By incorporating Social Judgment Theory, the present model provided a theoretical explanation, i.e. anchoring of positions, for this tendency. As will be discussed under suggestions for future research, the general influence model may enable researchers to operationalize anchoring in different ways.

In this and other cultures in the region, third parties are usually expected to use a soft touch. Irani (1999) described a *sulh* process which tries to achieve reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace between disputants. Third parties are usually chosen from prestigious persons with referent power. This pattern emerged in the present study with conflicts that had not escalated. However, the anchoring of adversaries' positions under escalation poses a threat to harmony which is paramount in collectivistic cultures. When conflicts threaten harmony, use of harsh power is justified. The present findings confirm this; managers resorted to arbitration, restructuring, or education with escalated conflicts. All three strategies were associated with reward power rather than soft power bases. The high power distance of the culture (Hofstede 1983) also reinforces this tendency. Managers in Turkey work under conflicting pressures to use the traditional soft touch of peacekeepers and the need to remain in authority. However, when conflicts escalate, managers' autocratic tendencies quickly tip the balance towards more forceful intervention.

Despite the authority conferred on managers, typical of a high power-distance culture, their legitimate power was not sufficient in dealing with escalated conflicts. They frequently needed to resort to reward power to make arbitration, reorganizing, and educative strategies work. In the educative strategy, use of rewards probably bolstered the typical appeal to traditional norms and aided face saving concerns of both the adversaries and the manager. Reorganization, which involved removing the conflict situation by reducing interdependence, also needed some sweetening by rewards. Even in arbitration, rewards were in play. Unlike arbitration in a legal setting, managers do not have legal enforcement powers and may need additional incentives to enforce arbitrated

decisions. In sum, reward power played the most significant role in intervention, even though in a collectivistic culture referent power was expected to be the mainstay of traditional third party involvement.

The strong dissatisfaction with distancing of managers from conflicts is a further indication of cultural influences. Research has shown that two-thirds of conflicts in Turkey had a third party involved (Kozan & Ergin 1999). Turkish culture is not distinguished with a compromise tradition that is found in West. Third parties play the crucial role of saving face, by presenting the adversaries' demands in a more acceptable manner. Subordinates, therefore, expect their managers to get involved in resolving conflicts. As will be discussed in practical implications, this tendency makes mediation, the strategy respondents found to be most satisfying, critical in this culture.

A finding of concern in this regard is the perceptual differences found between managers and their subordinates regarding mediation. While managers reported using more mediation, subordinates perceived less frequent use of mediation by their superiors. Similar discrepancies have been reported in conflict style studies in the West (Putnam & Wilson 1982; Gross & Guerrero 2000). Gross and Guerrero, for example, found that certain conflict styles were seen as more effective if used by the respondent. The driving force behind the discrepancy found in the present study may be managers' lack of knowledge and skills in mediation. Even when mandated by law, Ilter and Dikbas (2009) found that mediators assigned to conflict cases in Turkish construction industry lacked mediation knowledge. Managers with a benevolent autocratic style may find the soft touch needed in mediation not easy to emulate.

#### *Limitations*

A major limitation of the present study was difficulty in matching superior's and subordinate's reports on the same conflict. When conflict episodes were matched through an investigation of the narratives provided, the sample was significantly reduced in size. Without matching, the discrepancy observed on perceptions of the style used by superior and subordinate could not be firmly established. Matching may also have helped to test for recall issues associated with critical incident technique used.

Another limitation of the study was not looking at sequential use of influence methods. Raven (2008) pointed out that use of some power bases may require preparation or stage setting. For example, use of coercive power may be more acceptable and effective after other power bases have been tried and eliminated as viable options. Taking into account power bases in combinations would have provided better insight into their effect on intervention strategy.

Because of the convenience sample used, results should be interpreted with caution and tested with additional samples. The sample was drawn from the two largest metropolitan areas, and had slightly higher level of education and more female representation than national averages. The impact of traditional culture on the results reported might have been more pronounced with a more representative sample.

### *Future Research*

The construct of anchoring of disputants positions in the influence model may provide a basis for including other moderating factors in future research. Adapted from Social Judgment Theory of Sherif and Howland (1961), anchoring was operationalized in this study in terms of conflict escalation. Another variable that may have an anchoring effect is whether conflict is handled privately or publicly (Pinkley, et al. 1991). Raven (2008) drew attention to whether influence attempt is observed by others or not. Relation of power base to intervention strategy may be influenced when disputants see conformity with manager's power, especially when it is based on coercion or rewards, as harmful to their image or reputation. Hence, their positions may get more entrenched, minimizing the effectiveness of softer power. This moderator effect may be particularly true for collectivistic cultures which place high emphasis on face saving.

Another moderator variable that may have an anchoring effect is the conflict management styles of the disputants. Manager's intervention strategy changes if subordinates are likely to resolve the conflict on their own (Elangowan 1995). Rahim (1989) reported that conflict management styles moderate the relationship between supervisory power bases and subordinates' job satisfaction. Kozan and Ilter (1993) found that managers' intervention strategies were related to the subordinates' conflict styles. Adversaries insisting on a competing style would represent stronger anchoring of their positions, and is likely to diminish the relation between soft power and use of mediation.

Future studies may also need to look at combinations of power bases rather than each singularly. In a similar vein, intervention strategies may also be measured in sequences. A sequence where mediation is followed by arbitration is common in the literature (Ross & Conlon 2000) but additional sequences are possible, such as educative-arbitration or mediation-reorganizing. Given the vast number of possible combinations, qualitative research may initially be more appropriate for such analysis. Findings may pave the way for a reduced number of hypothesized relations among particular sequences of both power base and intervention strategies that can be statistically tested later. Also of interest will be if gradual escalation leads to switching from softer to harsher power bases during the same conflict episode.

More research seems warranted on the educative strategy in cultures where it is common. Unlike mediation, educative strategy was associated with reward power, and when conflicts escalated, even with coercion. Educative strategy was originally introduced to the literature as a form of mediation found in collectivistic cultures like China and Korea (Wall 1993). However, its intrusive nature and its association with hard power bases would cast educative strategy into a different category than mediation. Despite harder power bases being used, satisfaction with the results of educative strategy was second only to mediation. Future studies may further investigate whether educative strategy is associated with collectivistic tendencies or high power distance in a culture.

### *Practical Implications*

The role a manager's power base plays in their intervention strategies has implications for training programs. Various authors have advocated a lighter touch in managerial intervention, hence more mediation than arbitration (Rubin 1983; Lewicki, Weiss & Lewin 1992; Nugent 2002). According to Rubin (1983), the amount of control a third party exercises in an effort to forge an agreement is inversely related to how deep-seated and long lasting the agreement is. Employees in the present sample apparently agree with these arguments; in their opinion mediation was positively associated with all dimensions of satisfaction.

However, mediation disappeared in escalated conflicts. If mediation is going to play a significant role, its timing may therefore be crucial. In other words, managers should be advised to mediate early in conflicts that show a tendency to escalate. Training of managers in mediation may be of essence, too. Unlike mediators assigned by courts, mediation training is not common among managers. This is particularly the case in the culture studied, where the educative strategy may come more natural to the managers. Studies that evaluate the effectiveness of mediation after training has been conducted may provide evidence for its potential in collectivistic cultures.

The present findings suggest that training for mediation should, in general, take into account managers' broader influence methods. To be effective, power base and influence methods have to suit mediation. Attention may have to be drawn, for example, to coercive power as being incompatible with mediation. Further attention needs to be focused on the use expert power. Expert power, when coupled with escalation, led to increased arbitration. Managers may need to be alerted on how their expert power can lead to autocratic intervention when circumstances provide a handy excuse for it. Expert power used for mediation would give more satisfying results.

Human resource departments may play a key role for providing mediation training in these organizations. Managers who are not trained in mediation may be advised to delegate intervention to other third parties. Ombudsman practice has been initiated in organizations in Turkey, and more use of this role may be encouraged. Human resource departments may also employ trained mediators who offer third party services to line managers.

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## Appendix

### Scales for Conflict Escalation and Satisfaction with Intervention

*[Response categories: strongly agree; agree; undecided; disagree; completely disagree]*

#### *Conflict Escalation*

- The adversaries had started to show threatening behavior towards each other
- Conflict topic had expanded to include a wider array of issues
- The sides were more concerned in hurting each other than defending their positions
- The adversaries' relationship had started to deteriorate in its totality

#### *Process Satisfaction*

- Third party showed empathy when listening to my views
- Third party provided enough time for defending my position
- I had plenty of opportunity to defend my interests

#### *Outcome Satisfaction*

- I achieved what I wanted to a great extent
- I feel the outcome has been unfair for me (reversed)
- The other side obtained a better result (reversed)

#### *Effect on Relations with Adversary*

- The way conflict was handled preserved our long-term relation with the other party
- It will be difficult for me to work with the other party now (reversed)
- Our long term relations with other party have been damaged (reversed)

#### *Effect on Relations with Mediator*

- My respect for the mediator has increased
- I expect our relation with mediator to be better than before

#### *Effect on Functioning of Unit*

- Conflict was handled in a way to maintain effectiveness of our work unit
- The way the conflict was handled will set a good example to others in our work unit

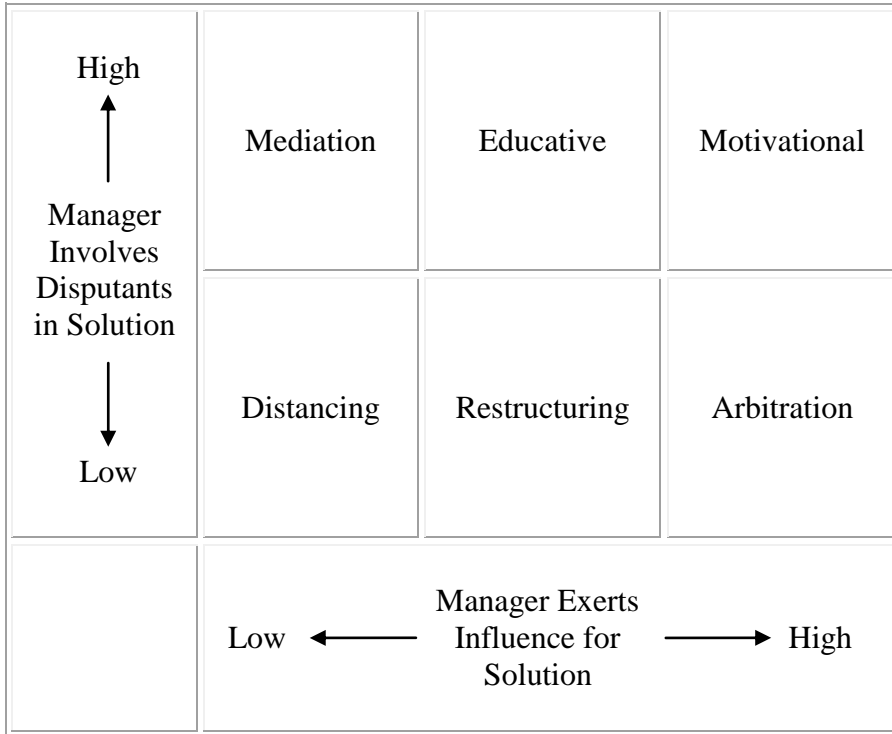


Figure 1 – An Influence Framework for Managerial Third Party Strategies

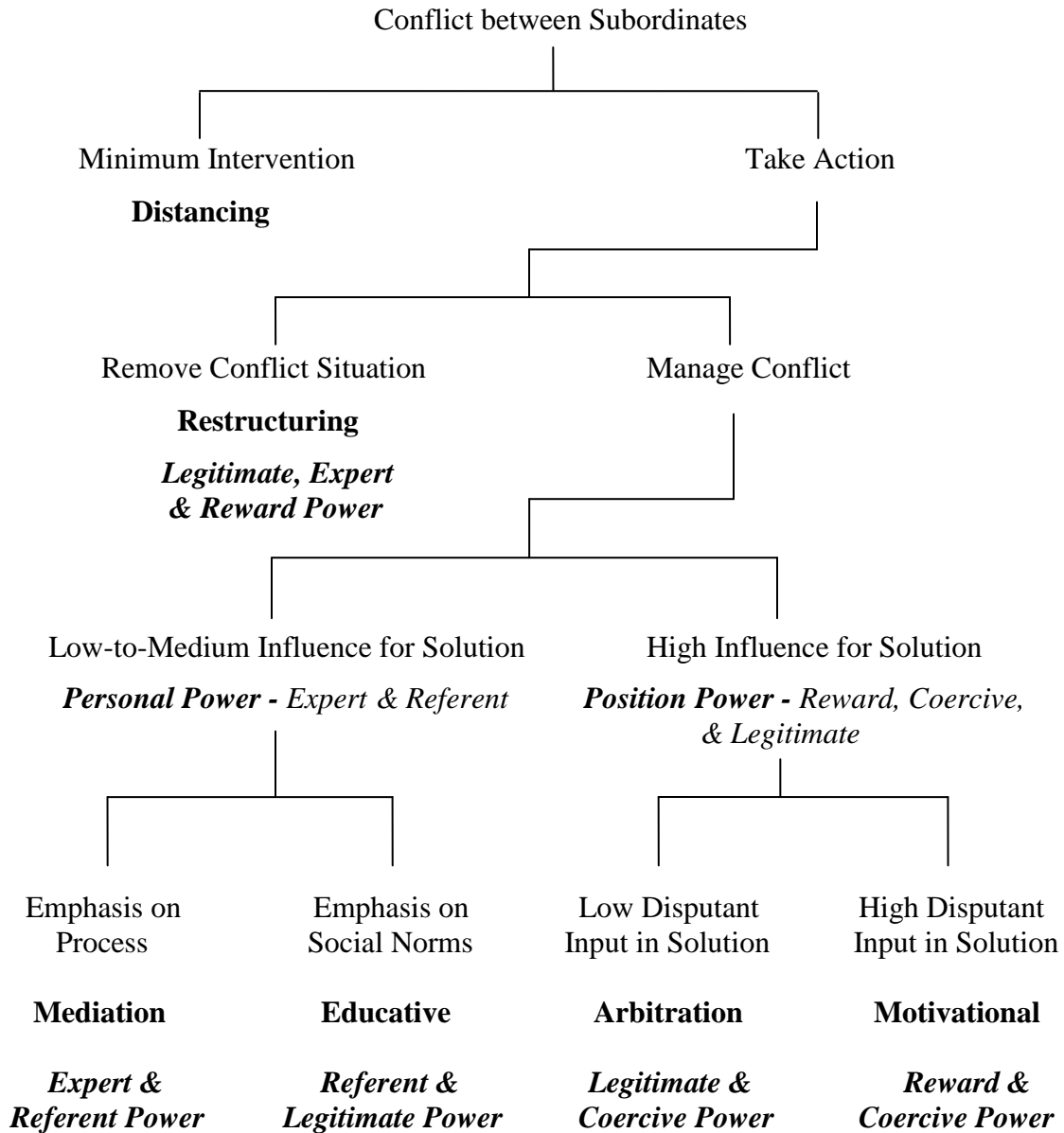


Figure 2 – Relation of Managerial Intervention Strategy to Manager’s Power Base

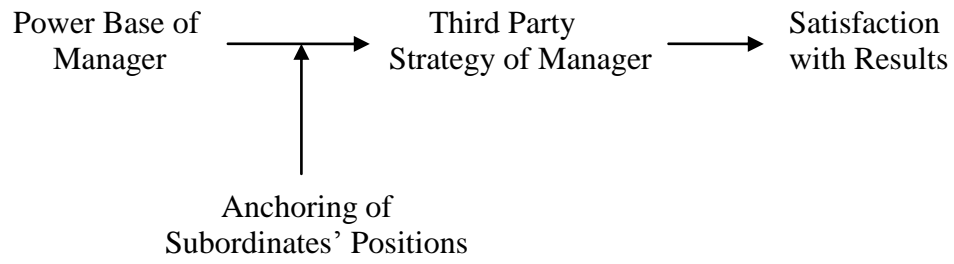


Figure 3 – Study Plan for Power Base of Manager and Intervention Strategy

Table 1 – Principal Components Analysis Loadings for Intervention Strategy

Items	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
5. ...allowed disputants to ask questions and rebuttals	82				
6. ...incorporated disputants ideas	80				
10. ...asked disputants question	73				
14. ...listened to disputants' views	79				
21. ...asked disputants to bring proposals	75				
23. ...tried to keep the parties together	68				
1. ...imposed my ideas for a resolution		80			
4. ...made the final decision		74			
15. ...used my authority to reach a resolution		77			
30. ...made final decision after briefly listening to parties		78			
13. ...explained a party why the other side was right			69		
16. ...tried to educated a party on how to act			56		
20. ...asked a party for tolerance and forgiveness			64		
26. ...advised a party on how to cooperate			59		
28. ...asked a party to accept mistake and apologize			67		
19. ...delegated work to those who can cooperate				73	
7. ...changed responsibilities and authority to remove conflict				72	
12. ...changed division of labor to join people who get along				85	
3. ...changed assignments to reduce contact between disputants				74	
24. ...gave the job to those who can work together				54	
2. ...ignored the dispute					52
9. ...left parties to resolve their own conflict					64
17. ...distanced myself from the conflict					72
25. ...avoided to get involved in any manner					77
31. ...left parties on their own					72
Principal components extraction with minimum <i>Eigen</i> value of 1.0 and <i>Varimax</i> rotation					
Component 1=Mediation					
“ 2=Arbitration					
“ 3=Educative					
“ 4=Restructuring					
“ 5=Distancing					

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability (Alpha)
Mediation	3.40	.91	.88
Arbitration	3.34	.99	.83
Restructuring	3.37	.68	.85
Distancing	2.40	.92	.77
Educative	2.81	.84	.73
Reward power	3.48	1.02	.83
Coercive power	3.07	1.09	.83
Legitimate power	3.97	.75	.84
Expert power	3.97	.80	.88
Referent power	3.83	.83	.84
Conflict escalation	2.50	.98	.84
Process satisfaction	3.72	.99	.91
Outcome satisfaction	3.34	.92	.66
Relations with adversary	3.39	.91	.65
Relations with mediator	2.92	.99	.73
Resolution effectiveness	3.23	1.11	.86



Table 3 - Correlations of Independent Variables

	Reward	Coercive	Legitimate	Expert	Referent	Escalation
Reward	-	.07	.34	.47	.54	-.03
Coercive		-	.18	-.09	.09	.13
Legitimate			-	.50	.63	.06
Expert				-	.59	.02
Referent					-	.02

Table 4 – Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for Power Base and Intervention Strategy  
(Beta Coefficients)

Variable	Mediation		Educative		Arbitration		Restructuring		Distancing	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Superior or subordinate	-.21**	-.22	.10	.09	-.01	-.02	-.03	-.04	.19**	.19
Conflict escalation	-.05	-.69	.16*	-.88	.14*	-.65	.32**	-.52	.21**	.95
Reward power	.10	.29	.19*	.55	.15 <sup>†</sup>	.21	.17*	.59	-.04	-.22
Coercive power	-.17**	-.35	-.31**	-.92	-.08	-.28	-.03	-.05	.08	.43
Legitimate power	.13	.36	.17 <sup>†</sup>	.16	.08	.36	.10	-.14	-.02	.05
Expert power	-.07	-.77	-.14	-.79	.07	-.77	.00	-.58	-.14	.02
Referent power	.18**	.23	-.04	.27	-.07	.17	-.08	.09	.06	.08
Reward x escalation		-.31		-.59 <sup>†</sup>		-.09		-.73*		.32
Coercive x escalation		.29		1.03**		.35		.05		-.61
Legitimate x escalation		-.52		.04		-.66		.58		-.18
Expert x escalation		1.44		1.35**		1.72**		1.21*		-.40
Referent x escalation		-.14		-.51		-.36		-.21		-.08
R-square change	.16**	.04	.13**	.07**	.06 <sup>†</sup>	.05*	.13**	.05*	.13**	.02
Adjusted R-square	.13	.15	.10	.14	.03	.06	.10	.13	.10	.10

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05, <sup>†</sup> p<.10

Table 5 – Correlations of Intervention Strategies to Satisfaction with Results (N=165)

	Mediation	Educative	Restructuring	Arbitration	Distancing
Process satisfaction	.50**	.18*	.07	-.08	-.29**
Outcome satisfaction	.31**	.11	-.02	-.13	-.26**
Relations with adversary	.37**	-.04	-.14	-.13	-.38**
Relations with manager	.41**	.20*	-.05	-.01	-.35**
Effect on unit's functioning	.45**	.25**	.05	.14	-.43**

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05