

## **The Supervisory Communication-Commitment to Workgroup Model: Example of a Malaysian Organization**

Che Su, Hassan Abu Bakar, & Bahtiar Mohamad  
Universiti Utara Malaysia

This study examines the relationship between supervisory communication and commitment to workgroup model, in a particular Malaysian organization. We employed structural equation modeling (SEM) statistical procedures. We found that positive relationship communication, upward openness, negative relationship communication, and job relevant communication within superior-subordinate relationships have a significant effect on group commitment. These results implied that the relationship between supervisory communication and commitment to workgroup is best connected if members in workgroup are encouraged to communicate their needs to their immediate supervisor. As such, the member's ability to communicate mutually about relationships and work communication with their immediate supervisor implicates both personal fit and group functioning.

The aims of the present investigation are to build and test a model of supervisory communication that integrates social and work related communication between a superior with his or her subordinates in the explanation of the subordinate's commitment to their work group in a Malaysian organization. More specifically, we proposed that supervisory communication, consisting of social and work communication, plays a salient role for commitment to work group. A better understanding of how supervisory communication may influence commitment could provide new insights into the dynamics of communication-commitment relationships. Additionally, much is still not known on how a specific culture may affect the communication-group outcome link. Intercultural understanding between leader and member in certain cultural contexts is salient as manifested in the business globalization (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska, & Gully, 2003; Lee, 2005a). Researchers have documented the importance of dyadic communication in organizations (Dansereau & Markham, 1987), yet amazingly communication concepts are generally lacking in studies associated with organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment (Jablin, 1987; Jablin & Krone, 1994; Scott, et al., 1999). Jablin (1987) claimed that the reason for the scarcity of communication variables in commitment literature is the complexity of the communication-commitment dynamics; for that reason, he offers a preliminary model that specifies communication variables as possible antecedents of commitment. In Jablin's (1987) model, the most salient variable is the supervisory communication and relationship. Andrew and Kacmar (2001) also noted that supervisory communication is one of the most salient aspects of communication for an organizational member because a supervisor plays a monumental role as information provider to his or her subordinates at various levels. Additionally, researchers have found that employee relationships and communication with supervisors are important as antecedents of members in working group commitment (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). However, previous empirical work integrating the supervisory

communication and other organizational outcomes constructs (for example intent to leave see Scott, 1997; Scott, et al., 1999) have focused only on linking individual-level perceptions of broad organizational communication at broad to relevant outcomes (Scott, 1997; Scott, et al., 1999; Scott, Sparrowe, & Liden, 2005).

Research integrating supervisory communication and commitment constructs offers an avenue for understanding dyadic interactions. These interactions shape employees' perceptions of the organization's fulfillment of its commitment and thereby influence employees' engagement in the workplace. Sparrowe and Liden (1997, 2005) suggested that interpersonal communication between supervisor and subordinates constitute an interconnected social system that operates in teams and organizations. Similarly, based on the perspective of organizational systems, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) have called for more research to understand how dyadic communication affects employees' work attitudes and behaviors in larger collectives of workgroups. Our purpose in this study is to address this limitation by examining how supervisory communication influences group members' commitment to their respective workgroup.

The current study draws the concepts from Jablin's (1987) model of communication-turnover by including supervisory communication behavior by Miles, Patrick and King (1996). In addition to this, where most studies on antecedent to group-based commitment have been conducted in North America and Europe, this study considers supervisory communication in a Malaysian society (Lee, 2005a, 2005b; Scott, 1997; Scott, et al., 1999). Much is still not known on the pattern of the supervisory communication-commitment to workgroup link.

## Review of Literature

### *Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory*

In proposing this model, Graen and his colleagues (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen & Cashman, 1975) contested the traditional leadership approaches, which assumed an Average Leadership Style (ALS) in leader behaviour across subordinates. They proposed that researchers always concentrate on the behaviors of leaders and subordinates within a superior-subordinate dyad. Their work suggested that leaders do not have identical relationships across their subordinates in the work group, but develop unique dyadic relationships with each subordinate due to role-making behavior.

High quality LMX dyads exhibit a high degree of exchange in superior-subordinate relationships and are characterized by mutual liking, trust, respect, and reciprocal influence (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Subordinates in these dyads are often given more information by the superior and reported to have greater job latitude. Lower quality LMX relationships are characterized by a more traditional "supervisor" relationship based on hierarchical differentiation and the formal rules of the employment contract (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Scandura & Graen, 1984). In terms of superior behaviors, the distinction between higher and lower quality exchange relationships is similar to that between "leadership" and "supervisor" respectively. Leaders exercise influence without resorting to formal authority, whereas supervisors rely on the formal employment contract for their authority.

Early work on LMX provides support for the model's theoretical propositions that include group variance in superior behavior to group superior-subordinate dyads as high, medium, or low, demonstrating differential treatment which was confirmed by Graen and Cashman (1975). The existence of the LMX model also demonstrated that not only within the group variation leader behavior existed, but the model was also predictive of satisfaction to a greater degree than between group variations.

The Mueller and Lee (2002) study has demonstrated different communication patterns in dyads with high and low levels of exchange. Dyads in high quality LMX relationships enjoy greater openness and frequency in communication, voice, feedback opportunities, attention, participation, and involvement in decision making (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska, & Gully, 2003; Lee & Jablin, 1995). On the other hand, dyads in lower quality LMX relationships communication are characterised by hierarchical differentiation and the formal rules of the employment contract (Dansereau, et al., 1975). Thus, the focus of communication between dyads in high-quality LMX relationships changes from work-related communication to an increased sharing of relationships communication (sharing of opinions and feelings). This implies that in dyad relationships, subordinates' commitment to their workgroup may be associated with the perceptions of supervisory communication within a workgroup.

### *Supervisory Communication*

According to Jablin's (1987) communication-turnover model, eight communication variables may be the antecedents to the commitment variables (also known as the intent to leave). One of these communication antecedences is supervisory communication. The initial concept of supervisory communication is based on the Role Theory where Katz and Kahn (1978) conceptualized and expanded the basic components of communication (source, receiver, channel, and message), specifying the direction of information flow in terms of superior-subordinate relationships. They suggested that communication from supervisor to subordinate contains five types of information: (a) Job instruction, (b) Job rationale, (c) Procedures and practices, (d) Feedback, and (e) Indoctrination of goals. Meanwhile, communication from subordinate to superior mainly contains: (a) Information about themselves, their performance and their problems, (b) Their co-workers' problems, (c) Organizational practices and policies, and (d) What needs to be done and how it can be done (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Based on Katz and Kahn's (1978) notion of supervisory communication, Huseman, Hatfield, Boulton, and Gatewood, (1980) through a series of qualitative and quantitative studies developed seven types of communication that occur in superior-subordinate relationships, namely: (a) Direction; (b) Information; (c) Rationale; (d) Feedback; (e) Positive expression; (f) Negative expression; and (f) Participation. Hatfield and Huseman (1982) later tested these types of superior-subordinate communication and they found that these seven types of superior-subordinate communication have significant impact on subordinates' job satisfaction. Miles, Patrick and King (1996) employed and retested Huseman et al.'s (1980) seven types of superior-subordinate communication and found four separate dimensions of supervisory communication behaviors that can reflect working and social communication in superior-subordinate relationships, namely: (a) Positive relationship communication; (b) Upward openness communication; (c) Negative relationship communication; and (d) Job-

relevant communication. In this study we adopt these four dimensions to reflect supervisory communication.

#### *Commitment to Workgroup*

In organization theory research, attempts to understand the behavior of individual workers in organizations are focused on organizational commitment as a critical psychological factor. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) meta-analysis of organizational commitment revealed two main issues. First, the affective involvement in organizational commitment proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) is the most relevant as a behavioral predictor of an individual in an organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The instrument developed by Allen and Meyer (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984) has been frequently used in organizational commitment research. Of the three components they distinguish, affective organizational commitment, the extent to which people experience a sense of identification and involvement with an organization, appears to be the most relevant to various work aspects (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

The second point that emerged from Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis is that the commitment measures might be better suited to predict behavior than broad measures. The results of various individual studies seem to conclude that particular forms of commitment may be related to specific behavior at work (Randall, Fedor, & Longenecker, 1990). In a theoretical analysis, Reichers (1985) pointed out that although the concept of commitment refers to the acceptance of the goals and values of an organization, it is important to realize that organizations usually encompass many different constituencies that may have conflicting goals and values. Therefore, it seems essential to specify the nature of these values and goals in order to predict organization members' behavior in their respective work group (Ellemers, Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; Ellemers, Gilder, & Heuvel, 1998; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Ellemers, Rijswijk, Bruins, & Gilder, 1998; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Reichers, 1985). Therefore, this study examined the extent to which people feel committed to their workgroup as a dependent variable.

#### *Hypotheses Development*

Communication behaviors in different LMXs are marked by different patterns. The overall leader interaction pattern in high-quality LMX epitomize open and honest communication exchanges (leadership) in which members are provided with greater amounts of trust, confidence, attention, inside information, negotiating latitude, and influence without resource to authority. In contrast, low-quality LMX resembled closed communication systems (supervision) in which a supervisor uses formal authority to force the member to comply within the prescribed role (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Jablin, 1987). Thus, those in low-quality LMX are limited in their opportunities to influence decisions made. Members of a workgroup who experience low-quality LMX complain of the supervisor's resistance, unresponsiveness, and inertia in their attempts to make desired changes (Cashman, Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1976).

Numerous studies have explored supervisory communication within the framework of LMX theory as a variable that influences various organizational outcomes (Yrle, Hartman, &

Galle, 2002, 2003). For example, several studies have demonstrated that superior-subordinate communication has a positive impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, & Lesniak, 1978; Hatfield & Huseman, 1982; Huseman, Hatfield, Boulton, & Gatewood, 1980; Johlke & Duhan, 2000, 2001; Miles, Patrick, & King, 1996; Schwiger & Denisi, 1991; Wilhelm, Herd, & Steiner, 1993), performance appraisals (Nathan, Mohrman, & Milliman, 1991), and influence on relationships between managers and workers (Page & Wiseman, 1993). Consistent with these studies, this study explores supervisory communication as an independent variable that has the possibility to influence the work group members' commitment. For example, an improved quality of supervisory communication (more positive communication relationship, upward openness communication and job relevant communication and less negative relationship communication) is believed to be able to improve the subordinate's commitment to the workgroup.

A great deal of cross-cultural analysis has been based on the seminal work of Hofstede in which he examined over 50 different countries searching for cultural differences and similarities. Based on his research, Hofstede has proposed five major dimensions where cultures differ: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism vs. collectivism; masculinity vs. femininity; and long-term vs. short-term orientation. Many of these cultural traits are clearly relevant to current investigations (Asma, 1992; Asma & Lim, 2001; Hofstede, 1984, 2003). Hofstede's concepts of power distance and masculinity vs. femininity dimensions, for example, are used to identify cultural expectations of superior-subordinate dynamic. Hofstede (2003) suggested that Malaysian organizations' culture indicates high scores for power distance and masculinity-femininity dimensions when compared to Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additionally, Hofstede also illustrated Malaysia as a more collectivist nature society, meaning that there are close ties among individuals and a greater tolerance for a variety of opinions. This result implies that superior and subordinate relationships in Malaysia exhibit greater acceptance of autocratic and paternalistic leadership behaviors. In work connected to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Asma and Lim (2001) and Lim (2001) examined these cultural dimensions in various private and public organizations in Malaysia, finding similar patterns with Hofstede's work where there is a high power distance and collectivist nature in the Malaysian organizations.

Another significant cross-cultural study examining cultural differences and their relationship with leadership effectiveness has also been released. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (Ashkanasy, 2002; Kennedy, 2002) elaborates and expands upon Hofstede's findings. This study is even more exhaustive, collecting data from 62 different societies over a seven-year period, and examining differences over similar cultural dimensions, which also include power distance. On power distance, Kennedy (2002) argued that acceptance of it in Malaysia is less extreme than Hofstede's (1984) original work and Asma's and Lim's (2001) and Lim's (2001) when compared to other countries involved in the GLOBE study. Kennedy (2002) further argued that even though Malaysia is composed of a culture with high power distance, the existing communication is balanced with strong human orientation in superior-subordinate relationships. Furthermore, effective leaders in Malaysian organizations are expected to show compassion when using autocratic, rather than a participative style (Kennedy, 2002). Nevertheless, consistent with Hofstede's work, the GLOBE study elicits collectivist nature in Malaysian organizations, and this suggests a preference of Malaysian employees to work as a

group. For example, Malaysian employees are more likely to use work coordination to integrate their work tasks, and use team workflows to deal with uncertain tasks (Pearson & Chong, 1997). There is also a high preference for teamwork goals rather than individual goals (Chan & Pearson, 2002) and they tend to be more idealistic in group performance (Karande, Rao, & Singhapakdi, 2002). Therefore, we advanced the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Positive relationship between positive relationship communication and commitment to workgroup.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Positive relationship between upward openness communication and commitment to workgroup.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Positive relationship between job relevant communication and commitment to workgroup.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Negative relationship between negative relationship communication and commitment to workgroup.

Our discussions above indicate that we view supervisory communication as distinct from relationship quality, but believe that communication between supervisor and subordinate will influence members' perceptions on their commitment to workgroup. Our review also suggested that in a Malaysian organization setting, there are differences between leaders as persons, that followers are viewed as a group, and there is a person-group link. Therefore, we hypothesized that the relationships between supervisory communication do consist of positive relationships communication, upward openness communication, negative relationships communication, job relevant communication, and group commitment.

## Method

### *Respondents*

Respondents in this study are executives reporting to a specific manager in their respective work group in an organization involved in an airport management services throughout Malaysia. There were 201 executives, representing 41 dyads embedded in seven groups representing two departments. Three groups were from the human resources department (training, hiring, salary, and promotion), and four groups were from the finance department (accounting, purchasing, internal audit, and procurement). Approximately 72% (n = 144) are male and 28% (n = 57) are female. This sample distribution reflects the industry norm for service sector in Malaysia (Statistic, 2002). Approximately 15% (n = 19) of respondents have worked in the organization between three to six years, and the rest of the respondents have worked between six to ten years in this organization. Approximately 16% (n = 21) of respondents have worked for their current managers for three to five years, 54% (n = 71) worked for six to eight years, and 30% (n = 39) worked for nine to eleven years under their current manager.

### *Procedure*

In addressing the concerns over common source variance, or common biases effect in supervisory communication and group commitment constructs, we followed procedures proposed by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003). Firstly, we obtained the data for supervisory communication constructs from subordinate perspectives via a questionnaire. The group commitment constructs were obtained from manager, where the managers rated each of his/her group members' commitment to their respective working group. Secondly, we employed time lag in obtaining data for supervisory communication and group commitment. We conducted two sessions of questions and answers of the constructs, where the lag between the sessions is one week. These approaches were applied to minimize the common source variance in cross-level studies (Ansari, Lee, & Afaqi, 2007; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). These approaches were also adopted by Ansari, Lee and Afaqi (2007) to minimize common method biases in a Malaysian organizational setting.

### *Measure*

The English language version of supervisory communication by Miles, Patrick and King (1996) and group commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991) were used to obtain the data. This follows the preference of other researchers who have used English language questionnaires instead of other languages on Malaysian subjects (Bochner, 1994; Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984; Schumaker & Barraclough, 1989) because Malaysians, especially those involved in the business sector, are fluent in the English language (Lim, 2001). Details of the instrument used in this study are as follows:

#### *Supervisory Communication*

To measure superior-subordinate communication, we used Miles, Patrick and King's (1996) 24 items. These items represent eight types of messages developed by Husemen, Hatfield, Boulton and Gatewood (1980) consisting of four dimensions namely the positive relationships communication ( $\alpha = .84$ ), upward openness communication ( $\alpha = .82$ ), negative relationships communication ( $\alpha = .81$ ), and job relevant communication ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

#### *Group Commitment*

The managers completed the 6 items ( $\alpha = .82$ ), assessing each of his/her subordinates' affective commitment to the group. The group commitment items were selected from Meyer and Allen's (1991) affective commitment scale and modified by Ellmers, Gilder and Heuvel (1998) to assess employees' commitment to their work group. All of these items are measured and operationalized using a 5-point Likert-type with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive relationship communication	4.01	.48	-				
2. Upward openness communication	4.06	.62	.43**	-			
3. Negative relationship communication	4.40	.79	-.38**	-.73**	-		
4. Job relevant communication	4.34	.51	.50**	.46**	-.60**	-	
5. Group commitment	4.01	.76	.44**	.40**	-.61**	.44**	-

\*\*  $p < .05$

### Analysis

The major focus of the current investigation is to test the communication-commitment model based on Jablin's (1987) model. Varieties of analytical techniques were employed. Variables means, standard deviations, coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimates, and Pearson product-moment variable inter-correlations were first computed. Latent composite structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized model. This approach is preferred over a regression because SEM approach allows for the estimation of measurement error (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Both measurements and structural models were tested with AMOS 5.0. Model fit was assessed with fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999).

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations for all variables appear in Table 1. Before conducting our tests of the hypothesis, data were also tested for coding/data entry errors. Tests for normality were conducted for each of the survey items as well as the constructs that were created by computing the individual items. Tests for normality include kurtosis measures, skewness measures, and visual inspection of histograms. The majority of items appeared to be within normality.

We performed confirmatory factor analysis. The measurement model was estimated, to which the scale indicators were loaded onto their respective variables supervisory communication and group commitment. The measurement model generated excellent fit,  $X^2 = 120.74$ ,  $p = .088$ , CFI = .99, NFI = .99, RMSEA = .03 (CI: .00, .04). Based on our confirmatory factor analysis, we include only items which load are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ , see Table 2) to test our hypotheses.

To verify our hypothesis, SEM was employed. Table 3 shows the test of supervisory communication-group commitment model. Figure 1 shows the significant direct effect of: (a) positive relationship communication on group commitment ( $\beta = .80$ ,  $p < .01$ ), upward openness communication on group commitment ( $\beta = .72$ ,  $p < .01$ ), negative relationship communication on group commitment ( $\beta = -.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and job relevant communication ( $\beta = .73$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The model did generate acceptable fit,  $X^2(6, N = 193) = 5.46$ ,  $p > .001$ , GFI = .98, RMSEA = .06, AGFI = .98, CFI .96 and NFI = .94 which was consistent with Hu and Bentler's (1999) guidelines suggesting the direct effects of supervisory communication-group commitment model. Therefore, we did not reject the hypotheses advanced in this study.

Table 2. Standardized Factor Loadings for the Latent Constructs (N = 193)

Indicator	Factor Loading
<b>Positive Relationship Communication (<math>\alpha = .84</math>)</b>	
I think that my superior jokes good-naturedly with me	.21
I think that my superior asks for my suggestions about how each work task could be done	.72*
I think my superior asks me about my interests outside of work	.89*
I think my superior seeks my input on important decisions.	.13
I think my superior strikes up casual conversations with me	.87*
I think my superior asks me for suggestions for improvements in my group	.88*
<b>Upward Openness Communication (<math>\alpha = .82</math>)</b>	
I question my superior's instructions when I don't understand them	.90*
I tell my superior when I think things are being done wrong	.95*
I question my superior's instructions when I think he/she is wrong	.88*
I make suggestion to my superior about how work could be done	.83*
I think my superior asks for my suggestion about how work tasks could be done	.42
I tell my superior about my work problems	.35
<b>Negative Relationship Communication (<math>\alpha = .81</math>)</b>	
I think my superior ridicules or make fun of me	.65*
I think my superior criticizes my work in front of others.	.72*
I think my superior is critical of me as a person	.27
I think my superior asks me to do things rather than tells me	.13
I think my superior tells me how he/she disciplines workers	.33
I think my superior admits to his/her mistakes	.89*
<b>Job Relevant Communication (<math>\alpha = .86</math>)</b>	
I think my superior gives me recognition for good work	.89*
I think my superior lets me know why changes are made in work assignments	.85*
I think my superior keeps me informed about rules and policies	.82*
I think my superior gives clear instructions to me	.28
I think my superior informs me about future plan for me in the group	.38
I think my superior tells me the reasons for work schedules	.31
<b>Group Commitment (<math>\alpha = .85</math>)</b>	
My subordinate prepared to do additional tasks, when this benefits my workgroup.	.90*
My subordinate feels at home among my group member at work.	.88*
My subordinate tries to invest effort into a good atmosphere in my workgroup.	.92*
I let my subordinate be guided by the goals of my workgroup.	.75*
When there is social activity with my workgroup, my subordinate usually helps to organize it.	.35
My subordinate thinks that he/she could easily become as attached to my workgroup.	.60*

\*All factor loadings are significant at  $p < .001$

Table 3. Fit Indexes For Positive Relationship Communication, Upward Openness Communication, Negative Relationship Communication, Job Relevant Communication, and Group Commitment

Model	Df	$\chi^2(p)$	GFI	RMSEA	AGFI	CFI	NFI
Supervisory Communication-Group Commitment	5	5.46 (.078)	.98	.06	.98	.96	.94

Note: GFI = Goodness of fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error for approximation, AGFI Adjusted goodness of fit index, CFI = Comparative fit index, NFI = Normed Fit Index  
 \*p < .05

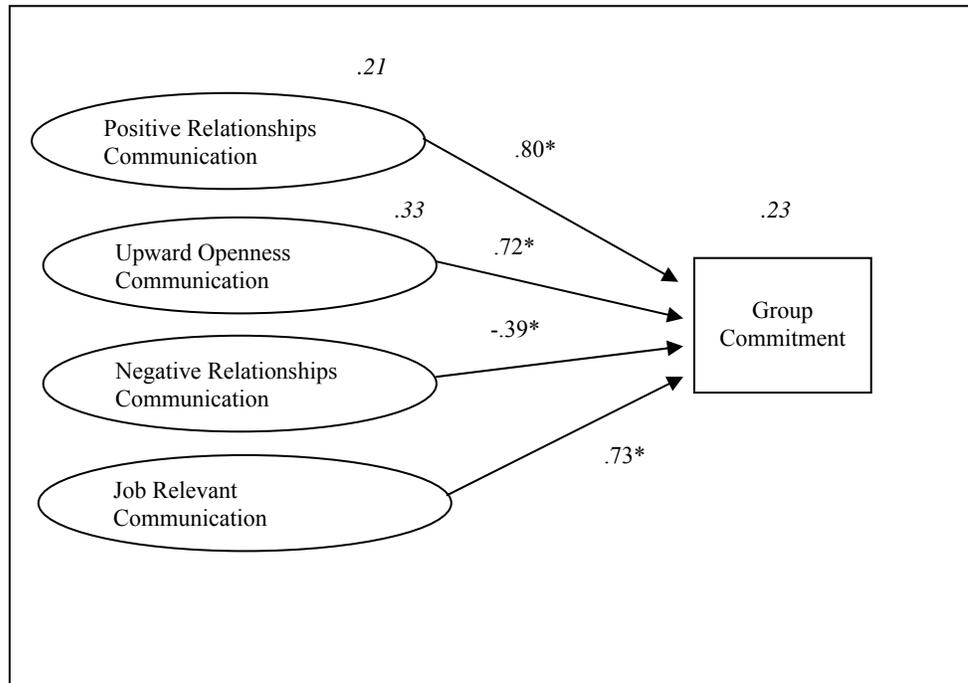


Figure 1. Path Coefficient for supervisory communication-group commitment model  
 Note: Path coefficients are standardized regression coefficients. Values in italics are residuals.  
 \*p < .01

### Discussion

A number of theoretical implications may be derived from the results. One of the more important implications follows the effects of supervisory communication on group commitment. Results of this study indicate that supervisory communication practices have a direct effect on group commitment. Positive relationship communication, upward openness

communication, negative relationship communication, and job relevant communication have a direct link with group commitment. These results suggest that the quality of communication and information that the subordinates reported receiving from their supervisor is the mechanism underlying the group outcomes link as suggested by Sias (2005). Therefore, based on these studies, subordinate communication experiences with their supervisor have a significant impact on the subordinate's commitment to their work group.

Based on this study, it clearly shows that all communication taking place between dyads does affect one or more larger systems in organizations. Our findings support the proposition by communication scholars that the dyadic communication within a group does affect the overall group behavior (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska, & Gully, 2003; Kramer, 2004; Lee, 2005a). Our finding shows that it seems relevant for managers to encourage his/her subordinates' commitment to the workgroup, as commitment to workgroup is related to higher level of supervisory communication.

These results indicate that although quality of relationships is important in affecting subordinates' commitment to their work group as suggested in LMX literature, communication with their supervisor is salient with respect to subordinate commitment to their work group. Also important in determining levels of commitment to group are the quality of communication and information that the subordinates received from their immediate supervisor.

Our findings have implications for practices. Results of this study clearly demonstrated that supervisory communication is an important process in influencing individual commitment in work group. Given the interdependent nature of relationships and communication within the dyad, this process is best connected if individual workers in work group are encouraged to communicate their needs to supervisors. As such, the worker's ability to communicate about relationships (positive relationships communication) and work (upward openness and job relevant communication) implicate both personal fit and work group functioning. In communicating such desires, the supervisor needs to manage relationships and job-related communication with their immediate subordinate in the work group, especially for the benefit of the whole work group. The responsibility lies on the supervisor to facilitate openness in communication, emphasize the importance of individual dyad relationships quality and work group goals, and discourage the types of communication (negative relationships communication) that leads to lower commitment to the work group especially in a collective organization such as in Malaysia.

#### Limitations and Future Directions

Perhaps the main weakness of the study is the focus of commitment. Current investigations limit themselves to group commitment. Thus, we do not know if supervisory communication practices will influence other types of commitment such as organizational commitment or commitment to their respective superior. It would be desirable for future studies to combine commitment to organization and supervisor. Secondly, the current investigation is limited to only Malaysian respondents. As mentioned earlier, the current description on Malaysian respondents justifies the supervisory communication practices-group commitment relationships. Therefore, a comparison study between high and low context culture on the current model should be considered.

Finally, the results extend our understanding of communication within superior-subordinate relationship by identifying specific supervisory communication patterns and a group outcome. Researchers have already documented the direct effects of supervisory communication on an organizational outcome (Mueller & Lee, 2002), yet in order to continue providing knowledge useful for managers, researchers must continue their efforts to identify specific communication behaviors within superior-subordinate relationships that mediate or influence the work outcome. Of course, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design. Recent research views relationship development and communication activities within a dyadic relationship as an interdependent complex process that is grounded within a group (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000); thus, a key limitation on this report is the cross-sectional nature of the data. Clearly, longitudinal research that tracks relationships development and communication activities within and between dyad is needed. Likewise, the use of self-report methods and the homogenous sample (e.g., Malaysian and government-linked corporations) warrants caution. The dyad represented in this report may under-represent the actual dyad population at large. In addition, while statements of causality based on the results of statistical techniques are useful for making inferences, such as multiple regressions and SEM, they must be treated with caution given the correlational nature of the data.

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