

Aleksandra Wójcik

Dorota Merecz-Kot

Aleksandra Andysz

WHY DO EMPLOYEES FOLLOW THEIR SUPERIORS' INSTRUCTIONS? IDENTIFICATION OF THE REASONS TO COMPLY WITH SUPERIORS' WILL IN A GROUP OF POLISH EMPLOYEES

DLACZEGO PRACOWNICY SŁUCHAJĄ SWOICH PRZEŁOŻONYCH?
IDENTYFIKACJA POWODÓW PODPORZĄDKOWANIA SIĘ WOLI PRZEŁOŻONEGO
W GRUPIE POLSKICH PRACOWNIKÓW

Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine / Instytut Medycyny Pracy im. prof. J. Nofera, Łódź, Poland
Department of Health and Work Psychology / Zakład Psychologii Zdrowia i Pracy

ABSTRACT

Background: Managers influence the way organization works as well as the functioning of subordinates – in the context of their work life but non-professional functioning as well e.g., attitude towards work-life balance or taking care of health. We focused on the superior-subordinate relation, referring to social power bases theory by Raven. We identified the reasons why subordinates decide to follow their superiors' orders and determined specific styles of compliance with superiors' will. Understanding why employees listen to their superiors may be valuable in the context of supporting healthy organizational climate and atmosphere of co-operation or communicating values – for example, as regards taking care of own health. We discussed the results referring to the issue of influencing employees in the context of their health behavior. **Material and Methods:** The research involved 100 Polish employees, aged 28 years old on average, who filled in the Interpersonal Power Inventory by Raven et al. for subordinates in a Polish adaptation by Zaleski. The questionnaire includes 11 subscales referring to power bases. **Results:** Based on the cluster analysis results, we recognized people who complied because of: all kinds of power bases (typical for 46% of the respondents); the respect for superiors' professionalism (34%); and formal/objective reasons (20%). **Conclusions:** Employees differ in terms of their styles of compliance. Their motives to comply with superiors' instructions constitute compilations of power bases. The superiors' awareness of the reasons why their employees decide to follow orders is necessary for successful management. It may motivate employees to work but also to take care of their own health. Med Pr 2015;66(5):605–614

Key words: compliance, health promotion, power, superiors, subordinates, power bases

STRESZCZENIE

Wstęp: Kierownicy mogą wpływać nie tylko na zachowania pracowników związane z wykonywaną pracą, ale także na pozazawodowe aspekty ich funkcjonowania, np. na podejście do kwestii równowagi życia zawodowego i prywatnego czy zachowań zdrowotnych. W poniższym badaniu autorki skoncentrowały się na relacji przełożony–podwładny, odwołując się do koncepcji podstaw władzy Ravena. Celem było zbadanie, jakim podstawom władzy podporządkowują się polscy pracownicy i ustalenie specyficznych stylów podporządkowywania się woli przełożonego. Wiedza, dlaczego pracownik słucha swojego przełożonego może być cenna w kontekście wspierania zdrowego klimatu organizacyjnego i atmosfery współpracy czy przekazywania pracownikom wartości – np. odnoszących się do dbałości o własne zdrowie. Autorki przeanalizowały wyniki w kontekście wywierania przez przełożonych wpływu na zdrowotne zachowania pracowników. **Materiał i metody:** Badaniem objęto 100 polskich pracowników (średnia wieku: 28 lat), którzy wypełnili polską wersję Inwentarza Wpływu Społecznego (Interpersonal Power Inventory) Ravena i wsp. w wersji dla pracowników. Kwestionariusz zawiera 11 podskal odnoszących się do podstaw władzy. **Wyniki:** Na podstawie analizy skupień wyróżniono osoby podporządkowujące się przełożonemu ze względu na: wszystkie podstawy władzy (typowe dla 46% respondentów); szacunek dla profesjonalizmu przełożonego (34%) oraz formalne/obiektywne przyczyny (20%). **Wnioski:** Pracownicy różnią się w zakresie stylów podporządkowania się woli przełożonych. Przyczyny, dla których się podporządkowują, są kompilacją różnych motywów. Świadomość przełożonych na temat tego, co sprawia, że pracownicy wypełniają ich polecenia, jest warunkiem skutecznego kierowania ludźmi. Może to pomóc w motywowaniu ich nie tylko do pracy, ale także np. do podejmowania zachowań zdrowotnych. Med. Pr. 2015;66(5):605–614

Słowa kluczowe: podporządkowanie się, promocja zdrowia, władza, przełożeni, podwładni, podstawy władzy

Corresponding author / Autorka do korespondencji: Aleksandra Wójcik, Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, Department of Health and Work Psychology, św. Teresy 8, 91-348 Łódź, Poland, e-mail: awojcik@imp.lodz.pl
Received: October 15, 2014, accepted: February 17, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Managers influence the way their organizations work as well as the functioning of their subordinates – not only in the context of their work life but their non-professional functioning as well, e.g., their attitude towards health [1,2]. We believe that employees differ regarding their needs and motives and thus, motivating them to work and to listen to orders should follow satisfying their various expectations. Since it is the priority of the majority of managers to make their subordinates follow their instructions, the identification of the employees' tendencies regarding their reasons for compliance should become their primary aim. Leadership styles influence employees' functioning due to the supportive atmosphere at work that facilitates the realization of an organization's objectives but also of various needs of employees – not only those basic ones regarding financial security.

In the following study, we assumed that employees comply with their superiors' will for various reasons and it is possible to distinguish specific groups including people of similar reasons for compliance. We assume that defining co-occurring power bases being the reasons why subordinates decide to follow their superior's orders could allow for more accurate managerial decisions. We focused on employees' perspective, not on superiors' intentions and declarations. Such approach is supported by the impact that subordinates' opinions have on their reasons to comply in determining the effectiveness of particular power bases [3,4].

We aimed at answering the question of how Polish employees differ if it comes to their reasons to comply with superiors' power bases and which reasons are the most common. We discussed the results referring to the issue of influencing employees as regards their health behavior.

We assume that knowledge of the reasons why subordinates decide to listen to their superiors would be meaningful when considering the methods of influencing the employees, also in the context of communicating health-promoting values. The previous research provides evidence that leadership style and subordinates' compliance relate to the attitudes towards health promotion. In their literature review, Kuoppala et al. [5] stated that the research concerning the relations between leadership and health was scarce, however, the analyzed studies suggest significant (although only weak to moderate) relationships between different leaders' behavior (such as consideration support, transformational leadership) and subordinates' job satisfac-

tion, well-being, performance, sick leaves and disability pensions. Superiors' support appeared to be the most influential leadership behavior as far as the above aspects of employees' functioning were considered.

Another research indicated that transformational leadership and contingent reward supported health promotion among subordinates [6]. Employees led by such superiors reported better health and such result could be observed among employees from all 16 studied countries. Another research revealed that employees who assessed their superiors' style of leadership as poor as regards their attitude towards changes or considering the superior-subordinate relationship reported higher levels of musculoskeletal pain [7]. Wegge et al. [8] identified 3 levels, on which relationships between superiors' style of leading and subordinates' health could be expressed.

1. Environmental level. The superior creates employees' work environment (tools, working hours, co-workers, etc.) and thus, makes the working conditions favorable or not as regards employees' health. Managers may also support their employees in preserving health or even enhance their resources e.g., through support they give to them [8].
2. Individual level (superior-subordinate relationship). When managers notice their employees' problems, e.g., with too much burden at work, they react giving them support, ignoring the problem or even working to employees' disadvantage. Thus, the manager may directly influence employees' health – high work burden leads directly to health impairment or results in employees' stress-again, health-exacerbating [8]. On the other hand, a manager may become a model of health-promoting behavior giving example of his or her own strategies or just attitude to health protection [8]. The research revealed that superior-subordinate exchange [9] understood as a unique relationship that a manager has with each of subordinates, influences employees' health and well-being to a greatest extent, as compared to other acknowledged leadership behavior. The research results revealed that this relationship determined not only the general health but also job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion or work-related strain.
3. Team level. It is a team leader who creates the climate and social identity of a group. Thus, the superior has an impact on the group values or attitudes towards professional and non-professional issues, including the attitude towards care for one's own health [8].

Therefore, we decided to refer our results particularly to the issue of possible relation between power bases com-

pliance and health behavior, which seemed particularly important, given that health-promoting policies are becoming more and more common at workplaces due to the increasing demands of today's work. We agreed with Pfeffer [10] who stated that despite rapid changes in contemporary organizations (due to technology development or globalization) and the specificity of today's workers' functioning, their basic needs, values and behavior remains unchanged. Thus, the classic theories of social influence stay valid and applicable to new work reality. Therefore, in the following paper we decided to assess employees' compliance with the use of social power bases by Raven.

Social power bases

In his concept, Raven [11] defined social power as the possibility of one person to make another change the way he/she acts or thinks. He distinguished 6 bases of such power:

- informational power – a superior instructs the subordinate how he/she needs the task to be performed in a comprehensive way so that a subordinate decides to follow the suggestions,
- reward power and coercion power – in the subordinate's opinion his/her superior is able to reward him/her for compliance or punish for non-compliance,
- legitimate power – a subordinate thinks he/she should follow his superior's instructions because of his/her lower position in the organizational hierarchy,
- expert power – a subordinate appreciates the superior's knowledge and experience and trusts that superior knows the most effective way of performing the task,
- referent power – when a subordinate admires his or her superior and wants to be like him or her.

More than a decade ago, the concept has been extended [3]. The understanding of reward and coercion power has been broadened – subordinates want their superiors to like them, thus they comply and receive appreciation (personal reward) or they do not comply and are punished with their superior's discontent (personal coercion). Legitimate power transformed into legitimate position power (a subordinate accepts the superior's right to give him orders because of the higher position in the organizational hierarchy) as well as 3 additional categories:

- legitimate reciprocity – when a superior helps a subordinate, the latter feels obligated to reciprocate,
- legitimate equity – a subordinate does something harmful to the superior and believes he or she must help the superior now,

- legitimate dependence – a subordinate considers it socially desired for people to help one another. Moreover, not the actual use but the possibility to use the specific power base perceived by subordinates motivates them to comply [3].

Many researchers have searched for the factor structure of power bases [4,11–17] but the amount or content of such factors were diverse (Table 1). For example, Raven et al. [3] distinguished 7 factors:

- impersonal reward with impersonal coercion,
 - expert and informational power,
 - legitimate equity with legitimate reciprocity,
 - personal reward and personal coercion,
 - referent,
 - legitimate position,
 - legitimate dependence as separate factors.
- Erchul et al. [12] determined 4 factors including:
- legitimate equity, legitimate position and personal coercion;
 - impersonal reward and impersonal coercion;
 - personal reward, referent, legitimate dependence and legitimate reciprocity;
 - informational with expert power.

Two factors (harsh versus soft power bases) emerged in research of Getty and Erchul [13], Koslowsky et al. [4], Wilson et al. [16], or Yukl and Falbe [17]. Moreover, earlier studies suggest that regardless of the measurement method or the group surveyed some power bases occur as the reasons to comply more often than others (e.g., informational and expert power [4,12]) and they tend to occur in combinations [3]. Researchers suggest that a superior does not necessarily have to use particular base of power – the subordinates' belief that the superior may use it may be sufficient for them to comply [3,4].

However, extant research lacks findings as regards unique combinations of reasons to comply with superiors' power bases. To achieve employees' compliance and good results, an effective leader should be sensitive to subordinates' motives. Understanding why people decide to follow their superiors' orders could serve as a simple managerial tool.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

The research survey involved 100 employees who answered to the invitation to an anonymous survey. Each of the participants filled the questionnaire independently and on their own and the time was not limited.

Table 1. Previous studies showing various factorial structures grouping the original 11 power bases distinguished by Raven [11]
Tabela 1. Dotychczasowe badania pokazujące zróżnicowanie czynników grupujących oryginalnych 11 podstaw władzy wyróżnionych w koncepcji Ravena [11]

Research Badanie	Factor Czynnik
Raven et al. / i wsp., 1998 [3]	impersonal reward and impersonal coercion / nagroda bezosobowa i przymus bezosobowy expert and informational power / władza ekspercka i informacji legitimate equity and legitimate reciprocity / władza sprawiedliwości i wzajemności personal reward and personal coercion / nagroda osobowa i przymus osobowy referent power / władza więzi legitimate position / autorytet formalny legitimate dependence / władza uzależnienia
Erchul et al. / i wsp., 2001 [12]	legitimate equity, legitimate position and personal coercion / władza sprawiedliwości, autorytet formalny i przymus osobowy impersonal reward and impersonal coercion / nagroda bezosobowa i przymus bezosobowy personal reward, referent, legitimate dependence and legitimate reciprocity / nagroda osobowa, władza więzi, uzależnienia i wzajemności informational and expert power / władza informacji i ekspercka
Getty and Erchul, 2009; Koslowsky et al. / i wsp., 2001 [13]; Wilson et al. / i wsp., 2008 [15]	soft power bases (expert, referent, legitimate dependence, informational, legitimate position) ^a / miękkie podstawy władzy (władza ekspercka, więzi, uzależnienia, informacji i autorytet formalny) ^a harsh power bases (impersonal reward, impersonal coercion, personal coercion, legitimate equity, legitimate reciprocity, personal reward) / twarde podstawy władzy (nagrada bezosobowa, przymus bezosobowy, przymus osobowy, władza sprawiedliwości, wzajemności i nagroda osobowa)

^a This power base was included in harsh power bases in Koslowsky, Schwarzwald and Ashuri, 2001 / Ta podstawa władzy była składnikiem twardych podstaw władzy w badaniu Koslowsky'ego, Schwarzwalda i Ashuriego, 2001 [4].

The data was collected in winter 2012/2013. The average age of the participants was 28 years old and at least 50% of them were aged up to 25. There were 66 (69%) women and 30 (31%) men, 4 persons did not answer the questions of their sex. The subjects worked from 4 months to 32 years; 7 years on average. The job tenure in the workplace amounted to 3 years. Over 50% of the respondents were employed on the basis of employment contracts, and 38,5% of all respondents worked on the basis of civil-law contracts. Most of the respondents lived and worked in Łódź or its vicinity.

Measurement

We used the Polish experimental version of Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI) [3] for subordinates adapted by Zaleski et al. [18]. The questionnaire includes 66 items distinguishing 11 subscales referring to the following power bases:

1. Informational power (an exemplary statement – translated from the Polish version) – “I could see why the change was necessary.”
2. Legitimate position power – “After all, he is my superior.”

3. Personal reward – “His opinion was important for me because I like (respect) him.”
4. Impersonal reward – “It is up to him whether I will be addressed to the courses raising my qualifications.”
5. Personal coercion – “Being aware of his disapproval of me would be uncomfortable.”
6. Impersonal coercion – “He could hinder my promotion.”
7. Expert power – “I believed that his tips would be the best in this case.”
8. Referent power – “I respected him so I didn't want to disagree with him.”
9. Legitimate reciprocity – “He did something for me in the past so I did it in return.”
10. Legitimate dependence – “He was fully dependent on my work.”
11. Legitimate equity – “Carrying out his instructions I could redeem for my mistakes from the past.”

Respondents were requested to think of a situation when their superiors asked them to do something in a way that was different from usual, and despite their initial unwillingness, they finally agreed to comply.

Respondents determined the reasons for their compliance rating the statements from 1 – “definitely was not the reason why I complied” to 7 – “definitely was the reason why I complied.” Ratings 4, 5, 6 and 7 implied compliance while 1, 2 and 3 – non-compliance. The index of compliance was determined by estimating the means of all answers from each scale – the higher the mean, the stronger the compliance with the power base. The reliability of the scales was satisfactory and reached from 0.75 (personal coercion) to 0.91 (legitimate dependence and legitimate position power). The authors of the original tool addressed it to superiors and subordinates to identify either the usage of power bases or compliance to power bases, which justified using the tool to estimate subordinates’ compliance in the current study [3].

Statistical analyses

Firstly, we verified 3 assumptions necessary to conduct the factor analysis – the correlation matrix index, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index, and the number of respondents as well as the ratio of respondents to an amount of tested items. On the means for 11 subscales

of the Interpersonal Power Inventory, we ran the factor analysis with the principal components method. To reduce the amount of subscales we used Varimax orthogonal rotation with Kaiser normalization to maximize the variance of factor loadings. The criteria of factor acceptance was at least 80% of variance explained and eigenvalues greater than one [19]. By estimating means from all subscales belonging to each factor we created new variables – broader dimensions of compliance with power bases. With the use of these means, we carried out the hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward’s method applying squared euclidean distance as we had no prior knowledge of the number of possible clusters. After we identified it, we performed clustering with the K-means method. The analyses were conducted using Statistica 10. software.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations concerning respondents’ age, overall tenure, tenure at the workplace and power bases are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the studied variables
Tabela 2. Statystyki opisowe dla badanych zmiennych

Variable Zmienna	Respondents Respondenci (N = 100)	
	M	SD
Age [years] / Wiek [w latach]	27.85	7.86
Seniority [years] / Staż pracy [w latach]		
total / ogółem	6.57	6.96
at current workplace / w obecnym miejscu pracy	3.22	4.66
Power bases / Podstawy władzy*		
informational power / władza informacji	5.14	1.22
legitimate position power / autorytet formalny	4.60	1.29
personal reward / nagroda osobowa	4.48	1.13
legitimate dependence / władza uzależnienia	4.37	1.08
expert power / władza ekspercka	4.32	1.43
impersonal reward / nagroda bezosobowa	4.25	1.53
referent power / władza więzi	4.08	1.30
impersonal coercion / przymus bezosobowy	3.93	1.52
personal coercion / przymus osobowy	3.81	1.18
legitimate reciprocity / władza wzajemności	3.44	1.25
legitimate equity / władza sprawiedliwości	2.88	1.29

* The statements concerning power bases were scored using Likert scale from 1 – “definitely was not the reason why I complied,” to 7 – “definitely was the reason why I complied” / Twierdzenia dotyczące władzy były oceniane za pomocą skali Likerta, gdzie 1 – „zdecydowanie nie było przyczyną, dla której się zgodziłem (zgodziłam)”, do 7 – „zdecydowanie było przyczyną”.

M – mean / średnia, SD – standard deviation.

Factor analysis

We verified 3 assumptions of the factor analysis. The correlation matrix index (equaling 0.000 it should be considered as perfect [20]) as well as the analysis of the correlation matrix itself justified the use of this method (the majority of correlations were higher than 0.3 as suggested by Stanisz [19]). Additionally, the K-M-O index equaling 0.684 confirmed that the correlation matrix was suitable to conduct the factor analysis. The higher the K-M-O index, the stronger the argument for conducting the factor analysis, however, researchers consider 0.5 value as a threshold justifying application of the factor analysis [19,21] while values greater than 0.6 should be considered as mediocre [21]. The amount of respondents equaled 100 what made an optimal number for this analysis [19] and it was 1.515 times greater than the amount of items in the questionnaire, which made the data meet another criterion [20].

The factor analysis suggested distinguishing four subordination styles that explained 83% of variance in total (Table 3). We identified them as follows: the trade-off relation (component scales: legitimate equity, legitimate reciprocity, personal coercion and personal

reward); the respect for the superior's professionalism (informational power, expert power and referent power); the economic relation and responsibility (legitimate dependence, impersonal coercion and impersonal reward) and the superior's formal authority (legitimate position power).

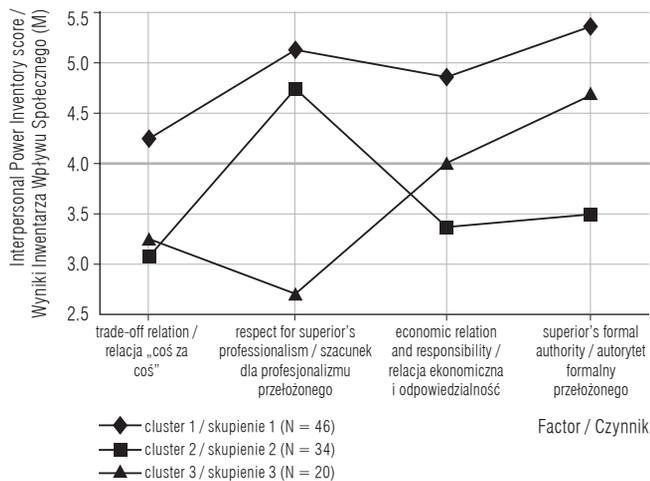
Cluster analysis

We determined a hierarchical tree and the chart showing steps of agglomeration and on such a basis we tested 2-, 3-, 4- or 5-cluster solutions using K-means method. Regardless of the amount of clusters, 2 groups repeated – a group of people complying with all types of social power and a group of people following the instructions because of their respect for superiors' professionalism. Analyzing cluster characteristics and balanced amounts of respondents in each group, we decided that 3-cluster solution fits data best (Figure 1). All clusters differed significantly basing on the variance analysis ($p < 0.001$). According to the scale of answers in IPI, choosing values greater than 4 meant that the respondent followed his/her superior's instructions because of the reason described in the item.

Table 3. Factor analysis for original 11 power bases distinguished in the Raven's theory [11] according to the Polish version of the Interpersonal Power Inventory

Tabela 3. Analiza czynnikowa dla oryginalnych 11 podstaw władzy wyróżnionych w koncepcji Ravena [11] według polskiej wersji Inwentarza Wpływu Społecznego

Factor Czynnik	Loadings Ładunki czynnikowe	Cronbach's α α Cronbacha	Variance explained [cumulative %] Wyjaśniana wariancja [skumulowany %]
Trade-off relation / Relacja „coś za coś”			
legitimate equity / władza sprawiedliwości	0.85	0.87	40.4
legitimate reciprocity / władza wzajemności	0.83		
personal coercion / przymus osobowy	0.74		
personal reward / nagroda osobowa	0.74		
Respect for superior's professionalism / Szacunek dla profesjonalizmu przełożonego			
informational power / władza informacji	0.85	0.87	62.4
expert power / władza ekspercka	0.90		
referent power / władza więzi	0.87		
Economic relation and responsibility / Relacja ekonomiczna i odpowiedzialność			
legitimate dependence / władza uzależnienia	0.57	0.81	73.1
impersonal coercion / przymus bezosobowy	0.91		
impersonal reward / nagroda bezosobowa	0.90		
Superior's formal authority / Autorytet formalny przełożonego			
legitimate position power / autorytet formalny	0.83		83.1



M – mean / średnia.

Fig. 1. Cluster analysis results illustrating the compliance with 4 power strategies in 3 distinguished groups of the respondents

Ryc. 1. Wyniki analizy skupień ilustrujące podporządkowanie 4 strategiom władzy w 3 wyróżnionych grupach respondentów

DISCUSSION

We supported the view that power bases were not independent and they constituted factors [3,12–17]. We also confirmed that people complied with their superiors' will for different reasons that accounted for styles of compliance.

The measurement method used – the Polish version of Interpersonal Power Inventory – allowed us to identify the subordinates' perceptions of power bases used by superiors. That questionnaire has already been employed as a tool to measure compliance attributed to a particular power base [4,22,23]. Considering the willingness to comply with particular power bases, we revealed that informational power, legitimate position power, personal reward, legitimate dependence and expert power were indicated as the most common reasons to follow the superiors' orders, which corresponds to other results within that field [3,4,22].

Based on the factor analysis, we identified subordination based on:

- the trade-off relation – legitimate equity, legitimate reciprocity, personal coercion and personal reward;
- economic relation and responsibility – legitimate dependence, impersonal coercion and impersonal reward;
- respect for the superior's professionalism – informational power, expert power and referent power;
- superior's formal authority – legitimate position power.

Such factor structure is similar to the one obtained by Erchul et al. (4-factor structure [12], and in contrast to others, e.g., 7 factors distinguished by Raven et al. [3] or 2 distinguished in [4,13,16,17]). Although 2-factor solution emerges more frequently, the factorial structure of the original 11 power bases is still to be established.

Based on the results of the cluster analysis, we divided our respondents into 3 groups characterized by different styles of compliance with a superior's will. The first 2 identified strategies – complying with all types of power and complying because of the superiors' professionalism – were the most prevalent among younger employees since these groups included 80% of all participants.

The largest group, including 46% of participants, referred to employees complying with all distinguished bases of power. Such a global compliance may be understood as a “playing safe” strategy resulting from either ambition and prudence – being the easiest explanation – or, remembering the young age of participants (at least half of them were below 25 years old) – beginner's humility and uncertainty. Considering the position in an organization hierarchy, such employees may not feel comfortable enough to contest their superiors' orders. Young employees who comply with all types of power bases seem easy to lead because they will probably be acquiescent to any superior. However, both perspectives – supervisors' and employees' – should become the subject of longitudinal studies in order to determine the consequences of making use of their susceptibility to influence.

The second group included 34% of participants who complied because they respected their superior's professionalism. Probably this attitude is characterized by the admiration and appreciation of superiors' knowledge, experience, clear communication of orders as well as subordinate's identification with his or her superior. The reasons of trade-off, economic relation or superior's formal authority did not subordinate representatives of this group. Because of the study participants being rather young and with shorter job tenure, such reasons for compliance may be the effect of their looking for a mentor. Leading them requires being an expert and distinguishing with knowledge and experience.

The third group included 20% of the respondents who complied with superiors' instructions because of the superior's formal authority, economic relation and responsibility. Such people were probably motivated because of more formal and objective reasons – their perception of the superior having position advantage over them made them work as their superior wished.

To a lesser scale, financial aspects could motivate them, but nonetheless, it was nothing emotional or personal in their attitude. Neither respect for the superior's professionalism nor the trade-off relation motivated them. Complying with a superior's formal authority in this group proves that there are some people who still comply just because of the fact that their boss is a Boss and that gives him or her the right to give orders. On the one hand, it may seem easy to lead them successfully – the higher position in the hierarchy is sufficient for that, but on the other hand, they may lack their drive for work or achievement as well as motivation to do anything more than it is requested (or ordered) from them. Perhaps they are also motivated by fear of formal authority.

Identifying the reasons to comply is of great value considering the possible impact of leadership styles on employees. The extant literature suggests that managers' leadership skills and behavior influence their subordinates' well-being or health through their impact on creating working conditions and the possibility to provide their subordinates with health-promoting resources [5,6,9]. However, many organizations seem to neglect the contribution of the managers to employees' stress, and stress-related illnesses [1]. Therefore, managers are recommended to raise the awareness of the influence their leadership style exerts on employees' health [24].

The results of interviews with Swedish managers from municipalities [25] support the view that the ability and flexibility of managers as regards adjusting strategies and styles of exerting influence may translate into creating health-promoting environment at workplace. Those researchers identified 3 categories of organizational health-promoting initiatives, namely organizing health-promoting activities, health-promoting workplace and working conditions or supportive leadership. The last category suggests that a manager taking care of employees' health "exercises leadership in a way that is supportive and motivating to the individual employees" [25]. Therefore, we conclude that the ability of superiors to adjust their style of influence to the motives and expectations of individual employees supports the formation of health-promoting workplaces.

Generally, we believe it is not a particular power base that encourages employees to take care of their health. The way a manager leads his or her team influences the organizational climate and by a positive attitude of mutual support and respect, he or she can create favorable conditions for employees to attempt to satisfy their needs, other than just providing a living. Although we

did not directly ask our respondents about their needs concerning work, we hypothesize that the motives or reasons to comply with superiors' will may reflect them to some extent. For instance, people willing to follow their superior's orders because they expect financial reward or appreciation express their needs. Such conclusion may seem more difficult to describe for example for legitimate position power, yet, a person willing to comply with such power may need strong, authoritarian leadership to decrease the uncertainty or share the responsibility. When the superior uses incentives appropriate to employees' needs, they consider him or her as supportive and caring. Such fit between employee and employer may be rewarding for both sides. However, these are just hypotheses that need further empirical verification.

Some researchers distinguished a leadership style directed at health behavior. For example, Franke et al. [2] offered a new construct of Health-oriented Leadership (HoL). The authors distinguished StaffCare referring to external resources promoting health such as working conditions or support from superiors and SelfCare being employee's abilities to cope with job demands and thus, protect his or her health. The authors of the construct point that leadership behavior supporting StaffCare and SelfCare should represent all 3 distinguished dimensions: value of health expressed and accentuated by managers, health-promoting behavior showing their interest and engagement in the issue of employees' health and awareness referring to sensitivity to employees' states including their stress or well-being [2]. Such awareness may also involve recognizing and responding to employees' motives and expectations because good leadership results in economical outcomes but it also influences the quality of employees' lives such as satisfaction, work-life balance or health.

Referring to the results of our research, we suggest that managers understanding the employee's unique set of reasons to follow the superiors' orders may therefore determine the employees' health. Such an aware leader will be sensitive to his followers' needs, here expressed through their beliefs regarding things they consider motivating and rewarding. Such a view corresponds with the one stated by Baard and Baard [1] suggesting that through addressing the needs of employees, managers may support their motivation and health. Understanding the employees' reasons for compliance and the underlying needs using the styles of compliance distinguished in the above research may be effectively motivating and health-promoting as well.

Styles of compliance to particular power bases considered by employees as motivating, identified in our research, may serve as a useful tip for managers attempting to address their subordinates' needs and hereby, support their care for health.

Our study has its limitations. As in most self-assessment studies, on the one hand, asking people of their own reasons to comply may make them indicate the reasons accepted by third parties [11], such as expert or reference power instead of coercion or reward [17]. On the other hand, asking about general reasons for compliance may induce them to activate their beliefs about other peoples' motives [26] attributing them with reasons that would not apply to themselves. In the above research, the subjects' answers were anonymous and the participants indicated neither expert nor reference power as the most motivating, which made us believe that our results were credible.

The group in the above research consisted mainly of young employees with short job tenure and considering future research perspective – the results may be interpreted only in the context of the group surveyed. Repeating the research in different groups would answer the question about the universality of the distinguished styles.

Moreover, we do not know the characteristics of the organizations, in which our respondents performed their work. Future studies on the issue should consider the specificity of particular occupations, branches, organizational structures or company size.

We also concluded that, unluckily, the questionnaire lacked neutral answer. Score 4 meant: "it was rather possible that it was the reason," thus, there were more scores indicating compliance (scores: 4–7) than non-compliance (scores: 1–3). It made it difficult to define the qualitative and quantitative differences between them. We are aware of the questionnaire being the experimental version, therefore, we do believe the above will be taken into consideration in preparing the final form.

CONCLUSIONS

In the above study we have confirmed that people follow their superiors' instructions for various reasons that may be grouped into specific styles of compliance with superiors' will including several power bases. We recognized people who complied because of: all kinds of power bases (typical for 46% of the respondents); the respect for superior's professionalism (34%); and formal/objective

reasons (20%). Understanding the reasons to comply together with identifying the preferences of employees (as regards their motives) support more individual approach to the employees. It may help managers to lead the employees in a non-coercive way that could satisfy both sides. Such a non-coercive leadership does not produce psychological tension between parties, which is conducive to maintaining employees' well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to my MA thesis promoter, prof. Bohdan Dudek, for his generous guidance and kindness. This work was only possible due to his expertise and supervisory support.

REFERENCES

1. Baard PP, Baard SK. Managerial behaviors and subordinates' health: An opportunity for reducing employee healthcare costs. *Proc Northeast Business Econ Assoc.* 2009;24–8.
2. Franke F, Felfe J, Pundt A. The impact of health-oriented leadership on follower health: Development and test of a new instrument measuring health-promoting leadership. *Zeitschrift Personalforsch.* 2014;28(1/2):139–61.
3. Raven BH, Schwarzwald J, Koslowsky M. Conceptualizing and measuring a power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. *J Appl Soc Psychol.* 1998;28(4):307–32, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1998.tb01708.x>.
4. Koslowsky M, Schwarzwald J, Ashuri S. On the relationship between subordinates' compliance to power sources and organisational attitudes. *Appl Psychol Int Rev.* 2001;50(3):455–76, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00067>.
5. Kuoppala J, Lamminpaa A, Liira J, Vainio H. Leadership, job well-being, and health effects – A systematic review and a meta-analysis. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2008;50(8):904–15, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0b013e31817e918d>.
6. Zwingmann I, Wegge J, Wolf S, Rudolf M, Schmidt M, Richter P. Is transformational leadership healthy for employees? A multilevel analysis in 16 nations. *Zeitschrift Personalforsch.* 2014;28(1/2):24–51.
7. Fjell Y, Osterberg M, Alexanderson K, Karlqvist L, Bildt C. Appraised leadership styles, psychosocial work factors, and musculoskeletal pain among public employees. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health.* 2007;81(1):19–30, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00420-007-0189-9>.

8. Wegge J, Shemla M, Haslam SA. Leader behavior as a determinant of health at work: Specification and evidence of five key pathways. *Zeitschrift Personalforsch.* 2014;28(1/2):6–23.
9. Gregersen S, Vincent-Höper S, Nienhaus A. Health-relevant leadership behaviour: A comparison of leadership constructs. *Zeitschrift Personalforsch.* 2014;28(1/2): 117–38.
10. Pfeffer J. You're still the same: Why theories of power hold over time and across contexts. *Acad Manage Perspect.* 2013;27(4):269–80, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amp.2013.0040>.
11. Raven BH. The bases of power and the power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. *Analyses Soc Issues Public Policy.* 2008;8(1):1–22, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2008.00159.x>.
12. Erchul WP, Raven BH, Ray AG. School psychologists' perceptions of social power bases in teacher consultation. *J Educ Psychol Consultation.* 2001;12(1):1–23, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532768xjepcl1201_01.
13. Getty KC, Erchul WP. The influence of gender on the likelihood of using soft social power strategies in school consultation. *Psychol Schools.* 2009;46(5):447–58, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pits.20389>.
14. Pierro A, Cicero L, Raven BH. Motivated compliance with bases of social power. *J Appl Soc Psychol.* 2008;38(7):1921–44, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00374.x>.
15. Rahim MA, Antonioni D, Psenicka C. A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates' styles of handling conflict, and job performance. *Int J Confl Manag.* 2001;12(3):191–211, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/eb022855>.
16. Wilson KE, Erchul WP, Raven BH. The likelihood of use of social power strategies by school psychologists when consulting with teachers. *J Educ Psychol Consultation.* 2008;18(2):101–23, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10474410701864321>.
17. Yukl G, Falbe CM. Importance of different power sources in downward and lateral relations. *J Appl Psychol.* 1991;76(3):416, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.3.416>.
18. Zaleski Z, Janson M, Swietlicka D. Influence strategies used by military and civil supervisors: Empirical research. *Pol Psychol Bull.* 1997;28:325–32.
19. Stanisław A. [Accessible statistics course with the use of STATISTICA PL using examples from medicine. 3. Multivariate analyses]. Kraków: StatSoft Polska; 2007. Polish.
20. Bedyńska S, Brzezicka A. [Statistical guide: Practical guide for data analysis in social sciences with examples from psychology]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkoły Wyższej Psychologii Społecznej 'Academica'; 2007. Polish.
21. Kaiser HF. An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika.* 1974;39(1):31–6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02291575>.
22. Gupta B, Sharma NK. Compliance with bases of power and subordinates' perception of superiors: Moderating effect of quality of interaction. *Singapore Manage Rev.* 2008;30(1):1–24.
23. Schwarzwald J, Kosłowski M, Ochana-Levin T. Usage of and compliance with power tactics in routine versus nonroutine work settings. *J Business Psychol.* 2004;18(3):385–402, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/B:JOBU.0000016713.86935.1b>.
24. Winkler E, Busch C, Clasen J, Vowinkel J. Leadership behavior as a health-promoting resource for workers in low-skilled jobs and the moderating role of power distance orientation. *Zeitschrift Personalforsch.* 2014;28(1/2):96–116.
25. Eriksson A, Axelsson R, Axelsson SB. Health promoting leadership – Different views of the concept. *Work.* 2011;40(1):75–84.
26. Kelley HH, Michela JL. Attribution theory and research. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 1980;31(1):457–501, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.31.020180.002325>.

The use of the article “Why do employees follow their superiors' instructions? Identification of the reasons to comply with superiors' will in a group of Polish employees” is available in Open Access model and permitted under license conditions of Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 (also known as CC-BY-NC), available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/pl/deed.en> or another language version of this license or any later version of this license published by Creative Commons / Zezwala się na korzystanie z artykułu „Dlaczego pracownicy słuchają swoich przełożonych? Identyfikacja powodów podporządkowania się woli przełożonego w grupie polskich pracowników” w modelu open access na warunkach licencji Creative Commons Uznanie autorstwa – Użycie niekomercyjne 3.0 (znanej również jako CC-BY-NC), dostępnej pod adresem <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/pl/> lub innej wersji językowej tej licencji lub którejkolwiek późniejszej wersji tej licencji, opublikowanej przez organizację Creative Commons.