

## Abstract

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### AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PROJECT MANAGER TO PROJECT SPONSOR SILENCE BASED UPON FEAR

It has been estimated that project managers spend 70% to 90% of their time communicating with project stakeholders. Yet if a project manager fails to upwardly communicate relevant information to the project sponsor, the project sponsor may be unaware of a project's problems and thus not provide the high-level support needed to help ensure project success. One reason that project managers may withhold information is due to fear of negative repercussions from project sponsors who are perceived to demonstrate certain behaviors.

This study examined the relationships between selected project sponsor factors and the project manager's propensity to withhold information from a project sponsor based upon fear. Specifically, a cross-sectional national survey of 316 project managers from twelve different industries in the United States was conducted in order to gain insight into the relationship between a project manager's trust in his/her project sponsor, project sponsor's openness, and project sponsor's use of coercive power and the project manager's propensity to withhold information from the project sponsor based upon fear.

Using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling, results indicated that a project manager's propensity to withhold information from a project sponsor based

upon fear was not significantly related to project manager trust in the project sponsor or to project sponsor openness. However, project sponsor use of coercive power tactics was significantly related to project manager fear-based information withholding.

A key conclusion of this study is that project manager fear-based information withholding is more closely associated with overtly coercive observable power-based project sponsor actions. It is recommended that future studies focus on the relationships between other forms of harsh power and project manager-to-project sponsor fear-based information withholding.