

NEW STUDY SAYS MANAGERS LIKELY TO EXPLOIT WORKERS UNAWARE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS



A recent study titled 'Hierarchy, Coercion, and Exploitation,' through the economics department of the University of Heidelberg claims that managers are more likely to exploit and take advantage of their workers, if the workers don't realize how much their managers are profiting from their work and don't really realize the worth and value of their workplace contributions. For their study, the researchers, three economists, conducted the experiment with 2,500 volunteers to establish conditions under which the junior workers are exploited by those above them in workplace hierarchy. Both, the senior worker and his subordinate, are put on the same project at the same time and the more work the junior accomplishes the less the senior must contribute. The senior worker has also been empowered with authority to penalize their juniors by cutting their pay. "He can use this power to try to ensure that the worker does not work less than he does, but he can also use it to coerce the junior worker into working more than him," the paper says. The study reveals that exploitation happens habitually, irrespective of whether the junior employees comprehends the situation and understands that he is being exploited or works harder in total ignorance to his exploitation. However, the exploitation, according to the paper's analysis, "are more frequent and pronounced," when the subordinate is unaware of his senior's prejudiced methods. From evidence gathered from an incentive-compatible questionnaire, it seems that senior workers feel that is okay to assume that small levels of exploitation as socially permissible when junior workers cannot perceive that they are being taken advantage of. However, if the senior realizes that his subordinate worker understands the value of his own efforts and that they are contributing considerably towards reducing the seniors share of work, then the likelihood of him or her being penalized through docking in salary or coerced in doing even more work, was lot less likely. In these hard economic times, employees face a tough time at their workplace and various constraints, make them turn a blind eye to the abuse and exploitation that they go through. Most of them have faced exploitation and know what it is to be oppressed. Even though US yield and output has been rising progressively over the last thirty years, it is the already rich who reaped the benefits. Wages have not grown in consonance with the growth. The Great Recession has ensured that the gap continues to grow wider and with dismal Labor Department statistics proving, that it is not likely to be bridged soon. When there are more than 12 million jobless Americans, desperate for work, employers don't really need to offer them higher salaries as an incentive to work, they will continue to do what they have been doing for ages, "squeeze the worker to do more for less." Corporate profits continue to soar, even as poverty levels are hitting new lows. Evidence that what is good news for the owners is not necessarily good news for the workers. Employers are no more realizing that their profits are because of the industriousness of their workers, they have become predatory and greedy. The study has proposed a solution, "Greater transparency in these cases could limit the extent of exploitation, not only because workers will be more likely to resist exploitation, but also because managers may be less willing to act in a way that would be socially unacceptable," they write.