

THE PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANIZATIONAL POWER: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT: Power is a phenomenon appearing in the personal, interpersonal and structural behavior. Within the personal behavior, power is a need that has to be realized to get satisfaction. Accordingly, the power that is inherent in an organization is of dynamic character and may be regarded as a driving force to internalize its values so as to enable the organization to increase its adaptability to changes, and its productivity as well, which in their turn will boost its work satisfaction and efficiency. Based on the above statement, we may conclude that power means the ability or force that causes other people to do (or act) according to the desire of the power holder. In short it may be said that the process of building functional power will contribute (highly) to the organizational effectiveness. This paper tries to elaborate, in general overview, the power process in an organization (behavior, structure and process) that has the potential to interfere with the organization's success as a whole, a uniting factor will be much needed. Stated differently, the power process should be viewed as an effort to internalize those values that could make the organization to have the ability to changes, to be more productive, to upgrade the job satisfaction and efficiency. In short it may be said that the functional power process could well contribute to the effectiveness of the organization.

KEY WORDS: power, organization, management, leadership, and effectiveness and successful in the organization.

INTRODUCTION

An organization is designed as an effort to coordinate the cooperation among a group (or groups) of people as – signed to achieve a common goal through the division of jobs and functions within a well – defined structure of roles and rules. On entering an organization, the individual will be required to observe all of the designed rules. But in practice, each individual has his/her own interests which are not always in line with those of the organization. The intermingling between the organizational and personal interests has led to the (so called) psychological

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transaction between individuals and organization. Both the individual and the organization are bound to make continuous adjustments in compliance with the ever changing environmental demands, externally and internally. Such adaptation efforts are characteristic to the behavioral system of the organization.

Essentially, the organizational behavior is a reflection of the synthesis of the functions and behavior of the individual persons, of the group and of the entire structure. Personal behavior includes the actions of individuals to obtain their needs. Such personal behavior is typically unique because each individual has his/her own personality which is different from any other ones. Interpersonal behavior comprises collective actions based on certain norms of the appointed groups. While structural behavior consists of actions designed to fulfill the organization's interests. The roles and rules are meant as restrictions to the structural behavior.

Power is a phenomenon appearing in the personal, interpersonal and structural behavior. Within the personal behavior, power is a need that has to be realized to get satisfaction. Similarly, within the interpersonal behavior, power has been actualized in many forms and manners. While within the structural behavior, power is (being) given to individuals or a group of individuals. Power, when used as a touch-stone to measure an organization's behavioral discipline, should be neutral in the sense that as an empirical phenomenon, it should be unbiased (or free of prejudice). But in empirical phenomenon, power is oriented towards utility or usefulness, it would lose its unfairly and would go along to where it pleases.

Uncertainty and conflicts constantly accompany the processes of power in its personal, interpersonal and structural conflicts behavioral aspects. These potentials for uncertainty and conflict should be given close attention and be managed for the benefit of effectiveness in the personal, interpersonal and structural ways.

THE PERSPECTIVES OF POWER

Power is a very important element of life. Communication interchange happens every time in every human life, sometimes unilaterally, sometimes bilaterally. In such interchange, the participants are bound to "influence each other", which may make them depend on one another. The capability of a person or a group (of persons) to make another person or another group do something as desired by the first person or group, is called *power*. According to Fred Luthans (1986:447), "*Power is the ability to get an individual or group to do something get the person or group to change in some way*". While according to Gibson, Invanchevich & Donnelly Jr. (2001:480), "*Power is the ability to get other people to do as desired by the first party*".

Based on the above definition, we may conclude that power means the ability or force that causes other people to do (or act) according to the desire of the power holder. There is also the idea of influence implied in that definition, as the essential of power i.e. "one has the power over another one". It has been mentioned above that influence may work reciprocally when two people or groups are in the habit of communicating with each other. In the following discussion, influence will be identical to reciprocal influence.

In real life, power is divided or shared, because of the notion that objectives would be more easily achieved if the power is shared with a certain group or person(s). The so called absolute power held by a single person or a single group (of several persons) is rarely found. The sharing of power with a different person or group that consists of different people with different qualities, will lead to the creation of power structure in life. This power structure is hierarchical and dynamic. Hierarchically, the power extends vertically from the highest levels to the middle and down to the lowest ones, thus depicting the degrees of power (or authority). Horizontally, it portrays the relatively homogeneity in the possession (or assignment) of power. The mobility, both vertically and horizontally in the assignment of power has made the power to be placed in a dynamic situation, meaning that there happens “some exchange of power” which may lead to conflicts. Therefore, weighing the topic of power will frequently occur together with conflicts, politics and leadership.

Within an organization, power is formally constituted and stands as legitimate power which is frequently known as *authority*. Fred Luthans (1986:448) said that authority is a source of power or is the right to change others. Meanwhile Barnard (in Luthans, 1986) further added that authority as the character of a communication (order) in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to or a member of the organization as governing the action he contributes.

In an organization, as a collective gathering of people who are cooperating to achieve a common objective, power is restricted and designed for the common good in the pursuit of that common goal. So, authority is actually a mandate from a group of people trusted to the person who holds a certain position. But power need not be legitimate (Luthans, 1986:448). This signifies that, although one’s authority has been restricted, one can still exercise power beyond his authority.

Since power is dynamic in character and occurs in social interactions both formally and informally, it is (as might be) expected that one of its important aspect is influence. Influence is usually conceived of as being broader in scope than power. It involves the ability to alter other people in general way, such as by changing with satisfaction and performance (Luthans, 1986:448). Influence is a “power transaction”, a process in which a person or a group of persons is influencing another person or group to perform something as desired (by the influencing agent). This notion of power transaction has been deliberated in the concept of leadership, because power is the substance of leadership. Theoretical experts such as Crozier (1963) and Pressman & Wildavsky (1973) have said that the leader’s policy and power are very influential in an organization (in Razik, 1995).

From the various concepts of power mentioned above, we see that power may be viewed from different perspectives i.e. (1) Personal; (2) Political; (3) Interpersonal; and (4) Organizational.

A. THE PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

In the personal perspective, power is idiosyncratic i.e. each individual has a need that motivates him/her to act in a particular way. A group of such actions is developed

into an individual personality structure that is unique in character. Power is the basis that moves individuals to do some actions, such as mentioned in McClelland's Theory about needs (in Gibson, In Vancevich & Donnelly Jr., 2001:485-486). One who has a need of power will have the desire to influence other people, using three methods: (1) using stern measures, giving some help or advice, while controlling the subject; (2) using certain actions that arouse emotions in others; and (3) by paying attention to reputation.

We may deduce, then, that the source of power with the personal perspective is some need that is to be realized in the intensified search for power. Results from McClelland's study show that the intensity of the individual's search for power could lead to either negative or positive implications. The negative realization of power may result in weakness, neurosis and other trouble. While the positively applied power may bring about effectiveness, a high degree of both adaptability and motivation (Razik, 1995).

B. THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the political perspective, power becomes the objective of certain individuals or group of people, reflected in formal organizational dynamism. With the political perspective, power generally appears illegitimately and informally (Hoy & Miskel, 2001:230). Fred Luthans, too, has stated that as a political area, organizational behavior is important, especially in relation to the acquisition of power (Luthans, 1986).

The power source for the political perspective may be obtained from coalitions between individuals or between groups of people "*who bargain among themselves to determine the distribution of power*" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001:235), as reflected in the political behavior, characteristically showing: (1) behaviour that is generally outside the legal range; (2) behavior designed to benefit certain individuals or a certain organizational sub unit, frequently, at the general expense of the organization; and (3) behavior deliberately designed to obtain and maintain power (Sweeney & McFarlin, 2002).

C. THE INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

With the interpersonal perspective, power occurs in the context of interaction between people or groups characterized by susceptibility to influence as the unilateral process of influencing from one party on the other and vice versa (Luthans, 1986:457-460; and Hoy & Miskel, 2001:224-225). Sociologically, it is marked by relationships between people in the community, so that this power is of various kinds and forms, of various origins and levels from the highest ones held by the state (leaders), frequently known as sovereignty down to the social stratification arranged in various types of societal layers.

As from the relationship between persons, power may have its origin from: (1) rewards; (2) expertise; (3) tradition; (4) compulsion; and (5) referent. This source of power is being actualized in interpersonal relationships between persons, in which

those having greater importance can influence others according to their desires (Hall, 1982).

D. ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Organization has been defined as the coordination of a number of human activities planned to achieve a common objective by way of the division of jobs and functions, the arrays of authorities and responsibilities, in which some of them are signified by stratification and centralization. Centralization concerns the decision making centers that are influencing the other units. While stratification describes the role levels of persons or the parts in the organization. The power in the organizational perspective deals with the role arrangement of individuals which is developed into a formal structure so as to constitute an authority hierarchy. The simplification of the broader meaning of power within the organization has been stated in the content of "authority". That is why authority has been frequently mentioned as legitimate power (Hoy & Miskel, 2001:217).

The source of power resulting from the organizational perspective has been originated by the structural regulation of the organization in dividing the decision making policy among the various positions. That structure also creates a line of information and the acquisition of abundant resources that facilitate the leader to gain authority, and when an intervention should happen from the top political autocrat who holds absolute power, then there would have occurred some leak in the system as an indication of some serious inefficiency (Abeng, 2006).

RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE

Reciprocal influence in this context means the mutual relationship between sources of power used with orientation towards the involvement of the power receiver. The basic concept of reciprocal influence has been discussed by Amitai Etzioni and French & Raven in Richard H. Hall (1982), Fred Luthans (1986), and Paula F. Silver (1986). Reciprocal influence consists of several variables: (1) applied source of power; (2) process of power; and (3) influential ability of targets.

First, Sources of Power. The topic of the sources of power is related to the question why a person or a group of persons has the ability to influence others. French & Raven have categorized the sources of power into three groups: (1) reward, coercion and means ends-control; (2) referent and attractiveness; and (3) expertise, legitimacy and credibility (in Luthans, 1986). But Amitai Etzioni has proposed the following three categories: coercion, utilitarianism and normative matter (in Hall, 1982; and Silver, 1986). Those sources have different effects on the person's involvement as the power's target. In the above plan, the power sources are grouped in four categories i.e. individual, interpersonal, organizational and political perspectives.

Second, Process of Power. The process of power concerns the activities of power transaction between person or groups (of persons), mentioned in the compliance

theory of Paula F. Silver (1986) as “*the process of interaction (relationship) that results in a particular psychological condition on people or a group of people who have become the target of power*”. Meanwhile Amitai Etzioni has stated that the use of coercive power sources may cause involvement effects that are of alienating character (in Hall, 1982; and Luthans, 1986). The use of power sources in a utilitarian way may result in involvement effects with calculable quality While normative power sources may give involvement effect with moral quality.

In their concept on power process, French & Raven have stated that the use of power sources of the category reward, coercion and means-ends-control may bring about effects with complying quality, showing observance of rules (and discipline) for fear of punishment (in Hall, 1982; and Luthans, 1986). Power sources categorized referent and attractiveness may produce effect with identifying quality, showing observance based on the attraction for having social relationship with the power user. Lastly, the use of power sources of the category expertise, legitimacy and credibility may lead to involvement effects based on the internalization of values that are similar to those of the power user (Silver, 1986).

Third, Target of Influence. The target of influence is the form of behavior that is visible as the effect of the power process. According to French & Raven, the power's target is that behavior that is visible on account of the psychological condition following the power process, i.e. compliance, identification and internalization (in Hall, 1982). While Amitai Etzioni's concept, on the other hand, has mentioned alienating, calculable and moral. The observed behavior is the result of the power transformation into the power process (in Luthans, 1986; and Silver, 1986). In other words, the behavior observed as the power's target is the effect of the power's target using certain power sources.

MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND POWER

During the industrial revolution age in the 19th century, it had always been the management who made decisions. In America (the United States), cooperative structure within organizational groups started in 1930, while adept people in Japan had developed specific means that had changed the top-down management into a system of problem solving. Methods of moral development with the participation of groups in the educational management started in 1950s (Tuominen, 2000).

Leaders used their authority to increase organizational strength through synergistic evolution within groups; however, providing reinforcement to the organization would require suitability of both organizational structure and managerial style under authoritarian control. This, of course, is difficult to realize. The transfer of both authority and responsibility are needed for the effective management (Steers, 1984).

Originally, management had been better known in the public world and was used in military forces. In 1908, there was in Nigeria, a town leader who ruled with managerial principles as part of his policy. Subsequent times had seen people debating the word “management” against business. But actually management has already

been used in various institutions, such as in the government, in the military, in schools and universities, in hospitals, in museum, in professional associations, in the Scout association, in religious institutions, in the Red Cross, and also in informal organizations all of which are being governed through instructions and rule prescribed with authority in their respective management (Drucker, 1999:176).

Through the authority in management, one would feel assured about the prospect of being cured in hospital. Good management and proper working techniques will increase productivity the workers, services to clients will be better, and in hospitals the chance for recovery will be enhanced, and all these will constitute absolute values of the management.

Management with authority in it should have some strength in performing its duties. Authority is legitimate power. Strength (or might) without authority is no more than “might without right”. Legitimized management should be viewed as professional management carrying professional responsibilities as well. Such management satisfies professional standards and managerial competence requirements. Authority through management carries a public function, which will lead it to enter the political world as described in the social and public laws theories, and well because management as a discipline must in its activities have relationships with different people and different social values. Such differences concern those in the specialties related to the respective tasks and responsibilities (Pareek, 1984). Additionally, there are differences in behavior and thinking patterns which may develop certain specialization in the management that would benefit the relation between differences and integrity.

Management shall reveal the structure of its authority’s responsibilities and accountabilities. In the 1950s and 1960s, capitalistic corporations began to enlighten (give more knowledge or information about) professional management which had strength and absolute authority in its self supervised corporation. A system like this suffered many friction and was bound to collapse, eventually (Drucker, 1999). The legitimacy of management and the sharing of authority are both obligations that must be done.

Management set up speculatively will lead to uncertainties and will hamper the execution of the determined standards, or may even neglect any standardization of the management’s behavior because authority is being performed on absolute-basis, or worse still, its execution may become completely arbitrary, neglecting any professional qualities (Schein, 1983; and Abeng, 2006). Response to responsibility would affect production and service in any fields that demand certain conditions of the management’s competence, not only in the direction of behavioral actions but also of its social effects, and this clearly concerns its public function.

Ever since the 19th century, the entities “leadership” and “authority” had been the intense interest of researchers who wanted to give concerned people some enlightenment about leadership and management both of which signify and include authority or power. Of course leader and management are different. But leadership meaning the group of leaders in an organization and management are expected and therefore should be able to change the social environment by helping people in

solving their social problems, in improving their welfare, their access to educational opportunities, their health service and other social aspects which need improvement. Success in these aspects will lead to the betterment of the human resources quality (Lunenberg & Drusteir, 2004).

There are certain theories meant to help those who aspire to become leaders, giving advice in the form of: (1) Providing enlightened opinions, attitudes, ideas etc. suitable for candidate leaders, and identifying short comings and compensating them with certain skills; (2) Studies of behavioral action of leaders showing specific samples of activities which identify patterns of habits and conduct; and (3) The influence of authority or power in connection with the use of the authority's strength or might to produce certain effect on other people who are connected with the authority (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Behavioral actions of a leader and their effects to include: (1) Observation shows various behavioral actions of a leader will result in various take effect other people; (2) Relationship between leader and subordinates or followers will have effect on the followers; and (3) Culture oriented relationship between leader and followers will develop into the organization's culture (Sweeney & McFarlin, 2002).

Anyhow, the relationship between a leader and his/her followers will always effect the latter. This is because such a relationship will be continual and lasting. As for the authoritarian leader, his/her influence on subordinates will be: fear or terror within the organization (Soekanto, 1990). Communication occurs top-down, violence tends to be used (in punishing wrong-behaving subordinates), and decision making and supervision are both centralized.

Abbott & Caracheo believed that there were only two power bases, i.e. authority and prestige (in Hall, 1982). Power will be based on authority originated from the leader's established position within the social institutional hierarchy (which is) delegated by an institution. Validated power comes from subordinates or followers based on the institutional environment's authority; authority is the same as power. Meanwhile Yukl argued that power signifies the capacity to influence one or more persons. Influence, in this context, means something that produces effect(s) on the person's attitude, perception and behavior. Influence may occur downwards, upwards and sideways from three sources: position, personal and political (in Rogers & Schoemaker, 1971).

ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL POWER

The power position originates from the organization's hierarchical structure. In this case, the followers or subordinates will obey the legitimate leader. The followers will be aware of the scope of power, the supervision (or control) on the existing resources, penalty and praise, the physical environment and the organizational subsystem.

A charismatic leader has charisma, i.e. the power to inspire devotion and enthusiasm. The group of leaders working as his assistants or deputies depends heavily on him identifying the followers' interests and values that would motivate them to make commitments with the followers.

Reference power is being formed and developed slowly through activities conducted by means of work arrangements done in the attitudes formation with (special) reference to the organization. Expert power depends on the followers awareness of the strength and expertise of their leader in reality, that it is difficult to find his equal and difficult, too, to imitate or to copy his skills. Such a leader constantly uses logics and confidence, and applies his skills in a unique way (Razik, 1995:146).

Richard & Greenland have said that the interests and values of one in (public) authority will affect the choice of leadership's style of an organization's leader, which will show (be visible) in his/her manner of management or in what style of management he/she will choose to implement, and his/her management as fundamental character will be reflecting the style he/she has chosen. The leader's behavior will always involve influential words to others. This style will be affected by the needed personal system: (1) The desire to help others; (2) Close friendship; (3) Self-respect; (4) Job prestige and self-actualization; (5) Personal growth; and (6) Independent thought (in Sweeney & McFarlin, 2002).

One study of leadership and power is quoting the opinion of Cameron & O'Reilly who argued that "*power is very clearly showing and very important to the holder of strategy*" (in Luthans, 1986). Meanwhile Bizrbaum said that the successful leader will be more likely to think realistically rather than idealistically. He/she has a good understanding of the cultural aspects of the institution, as well as the symbolical aspect in his/her position of power holder. A leader should be able to effectively exercise influence on others (his/her followers?) instead of only applying his/her authority. Influence in the institution depends on various reciprocal processes of social changes (in Sweeney & McFarlin, 2002).

Rost defined a leader as the influential relationship between leader and followers, which produces real change and which inspires activities that serve various purposes (in Soekanto, 1990). While Zalesnik explained the difference between managers

Traits and Skills Associated with Successful Leaders

Traits	Skills
Adaptable to situations	Intelligent
Alert to social environment	Conceptually skilled
Ambitions and achievement	Creative
Oriented	Diplomatic and tactful
Assertive	Fluent in speaking
Cooperative	Knowledgeable about group task
Decisive	Organized
Dependable	Persuasive
Dominant (desire to influence other)	Social skilled
Energetic (high activity level)	-
Persistent	-
Self confidence	-
Tolerant of stress	-
Willing to assume	-
Responsibility	-

Source is adapted from Lunenberg & Drusteir (2004:143)

and leaders. "Managers", he said, are more oriented towards rationality and control. They adopt impersonal attitudes to goals. They perform coordination and balance/equilibrium originated from various interests, thus compromising (weakening) the development of problem solving. They attempt to take the smallest possible risks so as to strengthen the existence of their institutions (in Abeng, 2006).

Leaders, on the other hand, just look at what lies behind those rationalities, to find the point from where they can control the perspective to picture the vision of the organization: what is it like, how will it be and what will it become in the future. They are seeking for suitable approaches and provide options for dealing with problems (Abeng, 2006). To become a successful leader as the holder of power, one should be in the possession of the suitable qualities and competence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

An organization consists of a combination of the dimensions of behavior, structure and process. The dimension of behavior comprises the aspects of individual behavior and relationship behavior between behavioral ways of acting not designed by the organization. The dimension of structure includes aspects of jobs design and organizational design. And the dimension of process comprises aspects of communication (management of information), decision-making, and the dissemination and development of careers. The combination of those three dimensions will result in power process (Pareek, 1984).

Power process may happen functionally or not functionally within those three organizational dimensions. The gauge for measuring whether the power process is functional or not functional is the contribution to success of the organization which should include adaptability, productivity, job satisfaction and efficiency (Silver, 1986:24-25).

Within all of the four perspectives individual, interpersonal, political and organizational, the power process may contribute to the organization's success, or the reverse may be true. In the individual perspective, the functional power process may be indicated by the effective realization of the search for power (by satisfying the need of power), by the high motivation and creativity. Nothing functional search for power, on the other hand, shows weakness in behavior, neurosis and serious problems. Interpersonally the power process may also cause an individual to become highly dependant on those who hold power, quite contrary to the desirable condition of growing into maturity and self actualization. Politically viewed the power process may produce political behavior with negative quality. Lastly within the organizational structure, the power process becomes not functional when its structure (the designs of organization and jobs) lacks the ability to adapt itself to the changes occurring in the external environment. The current leadership crisis has been caused by the fact that there are many men and women having power in their hands but lacking the relevant responsibilities. The leaders who hold power should also have the power of understanding about the phenomena occurring in the world (Agustian, 2001; and Abeng, 2006).

Since the power process in an organization (behavior, structure and process) has the potential to interfere with the organization's success as a whole, a uniting factor will be much needed. This uniting factor is about equal to the values owned by the power holders. Stated differently, the power process should be viewed as an effort to internalize those values that could make the organization to have the ability to changes, to be more productive, to upgrade the job satisfaction and efficiency. In short it may be said that the functional power process could well contribute to the effectiveness of the organization. Power is a dedication, a (divine) mandate, hard work, great confidence, mutual appreciation and support, while constantly mindful of the welfare of mankind (Razik, 1995; and Agustian, 2001).

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