

A Critical Assessment of the Implementation of Sources of Power: An Indian Context*

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Abstract

Purpose - The core objective of this study is to comprehend the diverse nature of implementation of sources of power in the Indian context.

Research design, data, and methodology - After a meticulous review of the relevant literature on various types of power with a particular kind of managers' involvement, the article reviews the Indian managers' behavioral perception and attitudinal disposition while exercising power in their organization, along with a judicious blend of different kinds of power to drive the organization to the expected level.

Results - As an input to a full-fledged research study, researchers had taken up this precise discussion and observation on how the managers' community in India exercises its power. Generally, Indian managers usually implement legitimate power besides reward and coercive power as per the situation, by extending copious benefits to different stakeholders. Based on the psychological and behavioral disposition, Indian managers exercised power in their respective organizations in a fruitful manner.

Conclusions - This article has carefully covered the entire corporate sector regardless of magnitude, type, or ownership. It is quite beneficial to all the proactive researchers and academia along with the corporate world.

1. Introduction

To set right the things in any organization irrespective of their magnitude, meticulous implementation of all the managerial functions of management plays a pivotal role. Managerial functions like planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling are the watershed for any organizations development. Every managerial function from planning to control has its own essence in managing and administering the major as well as regular activity in the organization. Even though these functions are imperative to achieve an expected level of success, malfunctioning in implementation of these functions has uprooted many organizations in different parts of the world in general and in India specifically. Despite of various reasons, majority of the times control function failed to play a decisive role. The exercise of control function blends with reprehensive application of different powers lies in the hands of managerial cadre applies to show their metal in-tandem with personal ego which severely hampers the hale and heart of the organization. This is quite endemic in developing countries across the world especially India. The process of control is at the gateway to the exchange between the benefits that the individual derives from membership of an organization and the costs of such benefits. In case any organization has in the verge of collapse, the think-tank of the organization first look into their control mechanism and people involved in the exercise of power in those areas. Right now, every business is a social organization which is a structured arrangement of individual human communications. Control process help demarcate idiosyncratic behaviors and keep them conformant to the rational plan of the organization. Organizations require a certain amount of conformity as well as the integration of diverse activities. It is the function of control to bring about conformance to organizational requirements and achievement of the ultimate purpose of the organization (Tannenbaum, 1968). Control is not only a function of the formal organization and a hierarchical structure of authority; it is also a feature of organ-

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izational behavior and a function of interpersonal influence. Common sense suggests that control is preferable to anarchy, and more control is preferable to less. While such assumptions are not necessarily wrong, they are not universally correct either (Drummond, 2000). Therefore, control is a general concept that is applied to both individual behavior and organizational performance which needs application of both organizational and personal sources of power from the managerial cadre to get things done. This article has structured with introduction, literature review started with power and management control power, involvement and compliance; kinds of power with kinds of involvement; and in the third section clearly mentioned about the opinions of Indian managers under the heading of managerial implications and finally, in conclusion briefly stated about the limitations and the present situation of the implementation of different sources of power in India. In this situation, the authors have taken up this study to explore diverse nature of implementation of sources of power by expecting copious benefits for different stakeholders.

2. Power and Management Control

Recent day's work organizations are not only systems of hierarchical structure; they are also systems of complicated social associations, status and power. Power can be at hand in any relationship. In organizations, managers wield power. Power is a pervasive part of the fabric of organizational life. It is a multifaceted and lively concept and complex to define easily. At an extensive level, power can be construed in terms of control or influence over the behavior of other people with or without their permission. Power, a much broader concept than authority, is the ability of individuals or groups to induce or influence the beliefs or actions of other persons or groups (Teal, 1996). Sometimes power is interpreted in terms of the extent of the influence which can actually be exercised over other people, and sometimes it is taken to include influence over objects or things as well as people. In exploring the nature of organizing work, Knights and Willmott (1999) suggest that: 'Power is often associated with coercive and repressive features of social life. It is the means through which a ruling class, political elite or managerial group controls subordinate strata within a society or an organization'. Robbins (1998) suggests that as "power may exist but not be used it implies a potential that need not be actualized to be effective. Power is therefore a capacity or a potential. The most important aspect of power is probably dependency. A person can have power over you only if he or she controls something you desire." Power is an innate feature of work organizations and is often the underlying reality behind the decision-making process. The function of bureaucratic structures and the implementation of policies, rules and procedures in any organization are approved through the fundamental and orderly application of power with a rational approach. Lack of power and influence, and office politics, are among the main

sources of managerial stress within organization. Management control is the predominant means by which the activities of staff are guided towards the achievement of organizational goals. The exercise of power is that which comes from a position of formal authority within the management structure of the organization and which legitimizes control over subordinate staff (Mullins, 2008). The scientists agree in the necessity of power. Some of them view the power as an inevitable component of all people's relations, which affects everything—from our sex relations to the work we do, the cars we drive, the TV we watch, the dreams we follow (Toffler, 1996). Others agree with this statement, emphasizing that the exercising of power, the submission of some people to other people's will is a social inevitability and nothing could be done without it (Galbraith, 1993). We must not forget that the adopted social norms influence the formation of individual's vies—it has already been proved that there are some cultural issues in the way people perceive power (Hofstede, 2001). In social and economic aspect it will be interesting to present the view of Bierstedt. According to him the power differs from the influence by its subject—influence concerns idea, doctrine or credo and it is localized in the ideological sphere, while power goes with personality, group or association (Bierstedt, 1969). The same author claims that the influence is convincing and the power is compulsive. So we voluntarily submit to influence. While exercising power, one can consider his or her social behavior and the norms they follow in their respective societies. The power as a social trend concerns the distribution of values between different social groups and individuals under explicit or veiled asymmetrical reliance between them.

2.1. Power, Involvement and Compliance

Before going to make a comparative analysis of complex nature of exercise of power by the managers' as well as leaders, it's an imperative to observe the Etzioni's (1975a) classification of organizational relationships based on structures on control and the use of power resources as a means of ensuring compliance among members. The Etzioni typology involves three dimensions: power, involvement and the identification of kinds of power along with involvement. Compliance is the association between the type of power applied by the organization to regulate its members and the types of involvement by members of the organization. Power diverges according to the situation as well as by the members' attitude based on the situation in the organization. Coercive power depends on the use of threats, or physical sanctions or force, for example, controlling the need for food or comfort. Remunerative power engrosses the exploitation of material resources and rewards, for example, through salaries and wages. Normative power depends on the allotment and the exploitation of symbolic rewards, for example, esteem and prestige. Involvement is the degree of obligation by members to the organization which can be possible through – Unpleasant involvement happens where members are involved against their

wishes. There is a sturdy negative orientation towards the organization. Calculative involvement transpires where association with the organization is motivated by extrinsic rewards. There is either a negative orientation or a low positive orientation towards the organization. Moral involvement is based on the individual's belief in, and value placed on, the goals of the organization. There is high positive orientation towards the organization.

Power does not obtain from an individual's level in the organizational structural hierarchy. John French and Bertram Raven (1959) have identified five sources or bases of power. These aspects of power may be present in a multiplicity of human relationships. In an organization irrespective of their magnitude, each may take place at all levels. Reward power is based on one person having the ability to reward another person for carrying out orders or meeting performance requirements. One example is the power of a supervisor to assign work tasks to employees (Yukl and Taber, 1983). This type of power is based on a person's ability to reward a follower for compliance. Reward power is used to back-up the use of legitimate power. If followers value the rewards or potential rewards the person can provide (recognition, a good job assignment, a pay raise, additional resources to complete a job), they may respond to orders, requests, and directions. Coercive power based on the influencer's ability to punish the influences for not meeting requirements, is the negative side of reward power. Punishment may range from a reprimand to loss of a job. Followers may comply out of fear. A manager may block a promotion or harass a subordinate for poor performance. These practices come under coercive power. Legitimate power (formal authority) exists when an employee or influence acknowledges that the influencer is entitled to exert influence-within certain bounds. It is also implied that the influencee has an obligation to accept this power. This power signifies a person's ability to influence because of position. A person at a higher level has legitimate power over people below. In theory, organizational equals have equal, legitimate power. The right of a manager to establish reasonable work schedules is an example of "downward" legitimate power. A plant guard may have the "upward" authority to require even the company president to present an identification card before being allowed onto the premises. Expert power is based on the perception or belief that the influencer has some relevant expertise or special knowledge that the influencee does not. A person has expert power when he or she possesses special expertise that is highly valued. Experts have power even when their rank is low. An individual may possess expertise on technical, administrative, or personal matters. The more difficult it is to replace the expert; the greater is the degree of expert power he or she possesses. Referent power, which may be held by a person or a group, is based on the influencee's desire to identify with or imitate the influencer. For instance, popular, conscientious managers will have referent power if employees are motivated to imitate their work habits. Referent power also functions at the peer level-charismatic colleagues may sway us

to their viewpoints in department meetings.

2.2. Kinds of Power with Kinds of Involvement

Etzioni (1975b) suggests that a particular kind of power usually goes with a particular kind of involvement: Coercive power with alienate involvement-which means whether the subordinate has interest on work or not, against the wish of subordinate, he has to obey the orders from the manager. Here significant chance is there to develop negative orientation towards a person who uses coercive power as well as organization. In this scenario, employees are always try to analyze when compared to the benefits coming from the person who uses remunerative power, the effect of benefits coming from the outside. Based on his analysis, employee moulds his behavior against a person who uses this remunerative power. Normative power with moral involvement-where mostly middle-level managerial cadre tries to achieve some symbolic rewards like esteem and prestige always thinks about his belief in the goals of the organization. This cadre shows strong positive orientation towards the organization. Most of the Indian managers comprehensively rely on organizational sources of power to get the things done and enable managers of organizations through the sources like structure, formal authority, rules and regulations, standing orders, control of the decision-making process, resources and technology, information or knowledge, trade unions and staff organizations, gender and occasionally the informal organization.

Power can also be viewed in terms of the different levels at which it is constituted. Fincham (1992) looks at organizational power in terms of three types or levels of analysis: At the **processual level** power originates in the process of daily interaction. The level of analysis is that of lateral relations between management interest groups and the basis of explanation is strategic. Processual power focuses on the 'micro-politics' of organizational life. It stresses power as negotiation and bargaining, and the 'enactment' of rules and how resources are employed in the power game. At the **institutional level** managerial power is seen as resting on external social and economic structures that create beliefs about the inevitability of managerial authority. Power is explained as being 'mandated' to the organization. When managers seek to exercise power they can draw on a set of institutionally produced rules such as cultural beliefs about the right to manage. The **organizational level** stresses the organization's own power system and the hierarchy as a means of reproducing power. Dominant beliefs, values and knowledge shape organizational priorities and solutions or reflect the interests of particular groups or functions. Those in authority select others to sustain the existing power structure. Organizational hierarchies transmit power between the institutional interests and the rules and resources governing action.

Majority of the present day's managers in different parts of the globe in general and in India in particular, are showing more faith on the sources of organizational power to get the things done in the organizations like money, prestige, legitimacy,

rewards and sanctions, and expertise that create a dependency on the part of other people; the ability to permit the rationalization of organizational activity, for example through standard operating procedures, or to reduce uncertainty or unpredictability; being irreplaceable: having exclusive training, knowledge or expertise that cannot readily be acquired by others, or through the use of lack of adequate documentation or specialized language and symbols; affecting decision processes: the ability to affect some part of the decision process for example by the basic values and objectives used in making the decision, or by controlling alternative choices; by consensus: the extent, to which individuals share a common perspective, set of values or definition of the situation, or consensus concerning knowledge and technology. Even though, managers' are using organizational power in different types of organizations, it's always best to develop personal power which derives from the individual and in the eye of the beholders who believe that person has the ability to manage the situation in the organization by using his technical, conceptual and diagnostic skills. So it is always advisable to enhance their managerial skills by developing personal skills and get the support from the organizational powers. If it is a case, a manager can effectively control the employees'community by using the best blend of personal powers along with organizational powers. For an individual to acquire an organizational powers is more easy because whenever he joined in an organization there is a chance to get formal powers; and at the same time he has to invest lot of his time to get a mastery in his area of expertise by using his primary and secondary sources of collection of knowledge. In the present business landscape, managers' won't have proper time to get this kind of mastery by allocating his leisure time.

3. Managerial Implications

India is a judicious blend of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and finally people. Likewise, execution of power and its varieties towards maintaining control on subordinates, peers and superiors. Exercise of power plays pivotal role in the organization to integrate the employees, foster the relationships in each and every level of organizational structure as well as in every functional domain. Excessive use of power by the managerial cadre ignites frustration, fatigue, recalcitrance and transgression among employees. It is quite imperative on the part of managers'of all cadres to utilize various kinds of power according to the situation in an optimum manner by expecting lucrative benefits. But normally, in India, majority of the managers are sufferingwith professional ego and jealousy and always trying to exercise legitimate power by mixing with coercive power which leads to attenuate the relationships with their all classes of employees. But most of the young breed of Indian managers who mostly completed their management education from the west confidently realized and introduced right blend of legitimate power with reward and coercive power with a positive

attitude. This has given a scintillating success for their organizations as a benchmark to the young managerial community in the country. In India, most of the managers rely on systems rather than people but managers who rely mostly on people has observed a thumping success for their organizations who closely develops systems with heavy concentration on knacks of their employees. Finally, the authors closely observed that a clear demarcation on the managerial community working both in public and private sectors with their professional attitudinal displays which exercises their legitimate power with mostly reward power. In the case of exercise of coercive power, managers in both the sectors think thousand times to implement in avoiding industrial unrest and the attacks coming from both employee organizations as well as from judiciary systems.

4. Conclusion

Finally, implementation of different sources of power has shown its considerable influence on the behavior of employees both positively and negatively with respect to the situations arising in the organization. Normally, human nature is to make mistakes but no one does intentionally. By keeping this fact in mind, managers have to utilize power with due care and diligence in consideration with the sentiments and emotions of the employees where managers think about humanitarian grounds. But in the case of professional commitment, managers before exercise of their powers, they have to analyze and understand the situation, and consequences arise from them advocates to the plan they have in their minds. This thought provoking pragmatic pilot study focused on different middle level managerial cadre working in both public and private sectors of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. There is an ample scope for further in-depth study in this area because of plethora of reasons which severely hamperthe efficacy of the corporate sector in different parts of the country and managers with different cultural, social, personal and behavioral traits dispose diverse tactics in wielding their positional power. Last but not the least, managers in the developing part of the globe should ponder over in exercising the diverse nature of powers based on the situation, resource commitment, and consequences from those by keeping in mind humanitarianism.

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