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A Study on the role of Power Dynamics Impacting Superior-Subordinate Relationships

MANYA CHUGH[1]

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to examine how power dynamics affect the relationship between superior and subordinate. This paper provides a preliminary insight into various aspects through which power dynamics affect the constituted hierarchy and ultimately, impact the over-all performance of the organization. Alternative methods can be used to further the research carried out. Power is pervasive in all formal and informal organizations. It can have numerous wide-ranged implications on the communication and performance of all members of the organization. It builds a system of hierarchy where the usage of power by a superior determines the behavioral patterns within the framework. Though there are positive affects of this convention, misuse of autonomy is still observed. It is of utmost importance for the organization to abridge this by making the dialogue more candid and setting up a workplace environment that leads to employee productivity and holistic development. The paper presents an intricate study about comprehending the role of dynamics of power in influencing the superior-subordinate relationship. Research on power and hierarchy has been vastly done but narrowing its two-fold impact and providing practical solutions to curb the misuse of this power presented in this paper adds to its value.

Keywords: *Power Dynamics, Superior, Subordinate, Hierarchy, Coordination, Work Environment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Organisations are not solely framed of structural characteristics but also social characteristics which are, essentially, the unique human relationships that emerge due to working together for completion of day-to-day activities of business. So as to organise and manage the human resource for generation of productivity, the use of power becomes a requisite. Hence, power becomes the grounds on which individuals in an organisation concur responsibility, allocate work, distribute profits and function smoothly. The relation between power and consequences

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[1] Author is student at NMIMS KPMSOL, India.

is crucial. Since power affects decision-making processes, those with the greatest power ought to be the ones who produce the most favorable and lucrative decision outcomes leading to holistic development.

"Team power dynamics represent the reality that with any team or group of people, there's a finite amount of power available to get things done and make things happen according to one's agenda," clarifies Dr. Greg Barnett, Senior Vice President of Science for The Predictive Index, a forum for talent streamlining.

Nine angles through which power dynamics can be analysed are

- Distribution of Power
- Dependency
- Uncertainty
- Compliance
- Power Indicators
- Determination of Power
- Consequences of Power
- Trappings
- Reputation

Formal power is attained on the basis of the hierarchical position of an individual in the organisation. The variations in different types of hierarchy exist because of nature of the organisation, personality of the superior, span of control established, degree of control superior is to exercise, among other factors.

Therefore, hierarchical organisations fabricate a superior- subordinate relationship that is ubiquitous and fundamental for their adequacy. This relationship is a primary interpersonal link which facilitates division of labour, delegation of work, accountability and responsibility. Work in these progressive associations is separated into discrete fragments to ease the administration of subtasks. Each successive structural differentiation creates a level of authority, with a superior holding responsibility for the original arena and the subordinate being delegated a more delimited region to deal with.

(A) Objectives

The following are the research objectives that this paper attempts to fulfill:

- To highlight the role of power
- To study the role of hierarchy influencing power dynamics

- To highlight the significance of creating conducive workspaces fostering team spirit between superior and subordinates

(B) Review of Literature

(Kumar, Unit:17 Power Dynamics) The research provides an intricate analysis of the dynamics of power in an organisation. It assesses where, how much and with whom various types of power namely reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power and referent power, are exercised and to what extent in an organisational set-up. It diagnoses how power is mainly sourced by distinction in structural aspects like distribution of resources and information, ability to take decisions, knowledge contained and networking. An excerpt about examining power dynamics from several angles like distribution, consequences etc is composed comprehensively. An articulate differentiation with authority established that it is, basically, institutionalised power. In the end, the study stated that the users of power wield it in a variety of ways but ought to in a manner that adds up to the holistic development of the organisation.

(TOST, 2013) This research paper was a shrewd attempt to fathom the ways in which the role and degree of hierarchy within an organisation impacts its team performance. It was argued that the accumulation of power in the hands of top-positioned leaders, assumed to have virtues like increment in cooperation, coordination and motivation, may not be the actual case through various laboratory tests illustrated in the paper. By analysing how disparity in power division affects the communication, effectiveness and decision-making processes, revelations about the negative effects like verbal dominance, deteriorating team dialogue and eventually, performance were put forward. Lastly, numerous practical solutions to handle the elucidated issues are proposed by the researcher like maintaining a more egalitarian environment, inciting authority openness, reminding superiors how instrumental their subordinates are and for the subordinates to question misuse of power.

(M KODARLIKAR, A Healthy Workplace Environment: Impact on Employee, 2020) This is a comprehensible study emphasising on the necessity of having a conducive and healthy workplace environment based on a well justified rationale that it would lead to numerous desirable outcomes like growth in terms of productivity and efficiency on individual level, better retention of employees and many more. It has been asserted that creating such an atmosphere is one major among a combination of factors that lead to restoration of balance and acceleration of prosperity within the organisation. Concepts like "ergonomics" which is a science of designing to fit the employee instead of compelling the employee to suit the job and

7S methodology were thrown light on to understand how should subordinates and superiors work towards achieving their common objectives.

(C) Limitations

This study must be qualified in the light of certain limitations related to our key source of data collection and method of researching used which is not primary, practical or empirical but the lesser credible secondary data of research papers, articles, websites, books, etc due to inevitable constraints. Also, power is such a wide-ranging topic that attempting to narrow it down to fit the nature of this paper becomes problematic and might lead to not analysing certain prevalent aspects.

(D) Significance

This study must be looked as an endeavour to recognise the contribution of power as a relevant factor that impacts the relationship of superior- subordinates existing in an organisational set-up. Various explanations can be presented as to why this notion holds immense significance and relevance in the study of management.

Power is an extremely pivotal and consequential facet of any organisation. The vitality of power is especially confirmed while taking into account organisational change and viability. It must be considered at the time of diagnosing progress since the framework is regularly developed in support of the convictions of the ones in power. Its accurate that once its implication in an organisation is accepted it gets simpler to clarify a portion of the enduring hierarchical conduct issues. This applies especially to the 'dilemma of authoritative control', in which necessity of authority must be coordinated to developing requests of the subordinate for a part in decision-making and control. The customary methods for settling this difficulty have been to set up a formal hierarchical authority framework wherein subordinates are urged to acknowledge the leadership as 'legitimate', as a trade-off for some sort of remuneration. The setting up of a position framework may sound phenomenal in theory, however unless a consensus is present from every member of the organisation on role requirements and validity of supervision, the hierarchy framework is probably going to in requirement of more authority and will not offer a solution to the dilemma problem as well. In order to determine its adequacy, an examination of power dynamics of the system will be an excellent indicator.

It is wise to examine the most notable and evident relationship formally established by an organisation, that is, the superior-subordinate relationship as the success gradation of this relationship is directly proportional to the efficiency and productivity of their human resource which will eventually have a direct and colossal influence on growth of the firm. It is important

to seriously peek into matters of hierarchy and power dynamics because in principle, these design features seem propitious by allowing empowerment to coexist with unity of organisational purpose but the expected smooth-functioning is limited in practice. It may be necessary for organizations and groups to take actions to minimize the negative effects of use of autonomy at top hierarchical positions on team performance and development. Some suggest encouragement of voluntarism even within power structures and a statutory degree of this voluntarism can be obtained only if superiors themselves have the self-confidence to question and critique the ongoing overuse or misuse in the system.

II. CONCLUSION

This study rightly monitors the role played by dynamics of power in influencing the primary interpersonal relationship between superiors and his subordinates. A thorough analysis has been done so as to highlight the functioning of power in an organisation and power dynamics from different dimensions. This bias distribution of autonomy leads to the creation of a unique framework of hierarchy within an association. It is understood that the top-positioned superior in a hierarchical setting must tend to use his power in a direction which adds up to organisational development through mutual growth. The superior- subordinate relationship has crucial effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Educating and supporting superiors to provide resonant leadership that is conducive to a healthy work environment, leading to increased organizational commitment and workplace longevity is ideal. On the face of it, the outcomes of exercising autonomy by a few are expected to be better coordination, effective communication, easier accountability, etc but this isn't always the case. It is realised that a system wherein misuse can be properly kept in check needs to be installed as to enjoy the discussed advantages. So as to curb the negative impact of power, extending the idea of a sort of an organisational democracy seems viable where voluntarism and appraisal of all can be legitimised as core tenets of the fabric of an organisation. Lastly, the necessity and inevitability of having a nourishing work environment has been emphasised on where power is exercised in a manner that does not disrupt the team spirit.

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