

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 4 | Issue 4

2021

© 2021 *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlmh.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com>)

This Article is brought to you for “free” and “open access” by the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Law Management & Humanities after due review.

In case of **any suggestion or complaint**, please contact Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com.

To submit your Manuscript for Publication at **International Journal of Law Management & Humanities**, kindly email your Manuscript at submission@ijlmh.com.

Concept of Power and Authority

VAISHNAVI SINGH¹

ABSTRACT

Power means ability of an individual to influence others to control their actions. Like the white collar people who are so economically wealthier that they try and control the system with their own charismatic effect. Authority on other we see the legal rights possessed by people in an institution. These rights are the formal rights given to the people who are holding the office. In this paper we will see the working of power and authority is interchangeable in society, or how power is coercive. In this paper we will come across the Max Weber theories. And last will draw a clear conclusion by establishing the differencing line between the power and authority.

I. INTRODUCTION

Power is very central to the politics, however the understanding and conceptualization of power is essentially contested, in this paper I have tried to explain the understanding of power with authority, and its radical understanding, also further the actual relationship between power and authority. Although both the terminologies have independent capacity in their own meaning, but usually we carry both the terms together, so how these two things, power and authority interchangeably are similar and in which context we find them at same connotation is the core basis of this paper.

(A) Hypothesis

Power and authority works and in hand most of time and Power has multi dimensions, it is coercive but it is legitimate when come to State.

(B) Research Questions

1. Whether power can exist without authority?
2. Whether power and authority are interchangeable?
3. Whether power has coercive dimension is society?
4. Whether power and authority corollary to each other?

(C) Background

¹ Author is a student in India.

Power is seen as capacity or ability to do something . It is also understood as ‘hagemony’(by Antonio Gramsci). It is not coercive, but it proliferates in society among the subordinate classes. Power can be better understood with Politics. For centuries, philosophers, politicians, and social scientists have explored and commented on the nature of power. Pittacus (c. 640–568 B.C.E.) opined, “The measure of a man is what he does with power,” and Lord Acton perhaps more famously asserted, “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely” (1887). power is the ability to exercise one’s will over others (Weber 1922).

Ronald Reagan, for example, was often called “the Teflon president,” because he was so loved by much of the public that accusations of ineptitude or malfeasance did not stick to him (Lanoue, 1988).

Indeed, the concept of power can have decidedly negative connotations, and the term itself is difficult to define.

Modern State make explicit the use of power and its exercise through various of institutions. It also describes the use of physical coercion or punishment to maintain law and order or rule of law in democratic states. Abuse and misuse of power and position lead to authoritarian , autocratic and dictatorship form of government.

In general sense power is understood as capacity to do something. It is seen as coercive in nature as power means to do something even against someone’s will.

If state gives punishment to someone like death penalty , according to the procedure established by law, then in such case this is categorized under legitimate act. However , if a laymen would commit a murder , then in that case that is wrongful and will be rigorously punished. In both the case there was use of power but it was divided as legitimate and non -legitimate act. Similarly , Power can not only be viewed as a coercive nature but can also be observed in legitimate way.

II. DIFFERENT SCHOLARS ON POWER

Robert Dahl defines power as domination of one person over another, where one person can be regarded as exercising power of another person to the extent that this person can get that person to do something that this person would not do otherwise.

It explains 2 specific things about power, primary , power is seen as an individual attribute or features that defines how individuals exercise power over other individuals . and secondary , power is seen as domination over others, that is, power is used to make others do what one wants against their own will.

Hannah Ardent talks about power as attributes of collectives that is enabled through communication among people. He viewed power in a slightly positive sense that power make an individual act like a responsible or accountable or moral human being in society. In thus sense power is not always understand as ‘ power over’ but also as ‘power to’ which explains power as positive notion also.

Talcott Parson defines power as political power in 2 dimensions , first the facilitative form of power, and second is the systemic form of power . He pointed out that ‘power is something that circulates in society like money in the economy.’ Moreover, he argued that acquisition of power enhances human capacity or ability to secure political obligations .

Steven Lukes provides a comprehensive and radical understanding of power , He provided 3 dimensional views on power . first, power at the most explicit level, where it prevails to ensure that a more authoritative , powerful interest prevails over other.

Second, power at less obvious level where some ideas or issues are kept out of the agenda of discussions and debates.

Third, the most radical one is , power at grassroot level, Here power work in structural manner because here it works in shaping the perception of people.

III. AUTHORITY

Power and Authority are often interchangeably. However, there is great deal of difference between them. Authority is generally understood as power which has legal basis. In other words , commands or guidelines which have legal sanction are regarded as authority.

(A) Max Weber on Authority

Max Weber pointed three different kinds of authority,

- a. Rational- bureaucratic
- b. Traditional
- c. Charismatic

Weber’s keen insight lay in distinguishing different types of legitimate authority that characterize different types of societies, especially as they evolve from simple to more complex societies. He called these three types traditional authority, rational-legal authority, and charismatic authority.

If traditional authority derives from custom and tradition, rational-legal authority derives from law and is based on a belief in the legitimacy of a society’s laws and rules and in the right of

leaders to act under these rules to make decisions and set policy. This form of authority is a hallmark of modern democracies, where power is given to people elected by voters, and the rules for wielding that power are usually set forth in a constitution, a charter, or another written document. Whereas traditional authority resides in an individual because of inheritance or divine designation, rational-legal authority resides in the office that an individual fills, not in the individual per se. The authority of the president of the United States thus resides in the office of the presidency, not in the individual who happens to be president

Charismatic authority stems from an individual's extraordinary personal qualities and from that individual's hold over followers because of these qualities. Such charismatic individuals may exercise authority over a whole society or only a specific group within a larger society. They can exercise authority for good and for bad, as this brief list of charismatic leaders indicates: Joan of Arc, Adolf Hitler, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Buddha. Each of these individuals had extraordinary personal qualities that led their followers to admire them and to follow their orders or requests for action.

The reason for this is simple: once charismatic leaders die, their authority dies as well. Although a charismatic leader's example may continue to inspire people long after the leader dies, it is difficult for another leader to come along and command people's devotion as intensely.

(B) Relation of Power and Authority

Indeed, the concept of power can have decidedly negative connotations, and the term itself is difficult to define. Endeavors to gain power and influence do not necessarily lead to violence, exploitation, or abuse. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, for example, commanded powerful movements that effected positive change without military force. Both men organized nonviolent protests to combat corruption and injustice and succeeded in inspiring major reform. They relied on a variety of nonviolent protest strategies such as rallies, sit-ins, marches, petitions, and boycotts.

They found they had power because they were able to exercise their will over their own leaders. Thus, government power does not necessarily equate to absolute power.

Regardless of who benefits, a central point is this: some individuals and groups have more power than others. Because power is so essential to an understanding of politics, we begin our discussion of politics with a discussion of power.

We make sure we strictly obey the speed limit and all other driving rules. If, alas, the police car's lights are flashing, we stop the car, as otherwise we may be in for even bigger trouble.

When the officer approaches our car, we ordinarily try to be as polite as possible and pray we do not get a ticket. When you were 16 and your parents told you to be home by midnight or else, your arrival home by this curfew again illustrated the use of power, in this case parental power. If a child in middle school gives her lunch to a bully who threatens her, that again is an example of the use of power, or, in this case, the misuse of power.

(C) Conceptual Understanding

It is considered that power and authority are contradictory in nature. Power often identifies with constraint, force, dependence or subordination that explains relationship of domination and subjection. Whereas, authority is about seeking consent and it is based on righteousness of actions. However, some political thinkers believed that both power and authority are nearly impossible to separate. Because it is seen that in any kind of state or institutions, both power and authority exist and they support each other.

A. Carter in her work *Authority and Democracy* pointed out that 'authority rarely exists in its pure form. She also said 'even a constitutional government acting in a liberal manner would still lack 'pure authority' since such government relies ultimately upon coercion.

C. J. Friedrich argued that authority involves reasoning. He said 'this is not the reasoning of mathematics and logic but reasoning which relates actions to opinion and beliefs to value, however defined.' It can thus argued to be in contrast to analysis of power.

Some theorists have argued that authority is philosophical concept and power is sociological concept that is based on observation of power relationships and the way it operates in society. Social Scientist basically focuses on empirical studies of political decision making and the way state functions. It emphasized on the roles of power elites that dominate over people through their policies or decisions on varied socio-economic issues in society. Authority is dependent on reasoning, rules and rightfulness. It cannot be based simply on coercion or command and obedience relationship like that exists in power relationship. So, in contrast to power, authority describes rightfulness and legitimacy and at same time, it talks about the loss of liberty or freedom because under an authoritative state the free choices of individuals are reduced or limited to a great extent.

There are rules or laws that authorizes or give authority to certain individuals to make decisions regarding socio-economic or moral issues. For instances, officials of the legal system i.e. – judge, lawyers, police military, officials, ministers etc. These individuals have legitimate authority and they exercise power on the basis of the rules of the state.

Thus, rightfulness is considered as the basis of authority unlike power, which can be exercised

or operated in society by force or coercion . However, it is very difficult to ascertain the difference between power and authority and there are critics who believed that there is no agreement on concept of power and therefore is regarded as an ‘ essentially contested concept.’

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Power is a puzzling notion. It seems so useful as a way to talk about politics in ordinary discourse, but when used to analyze politics systematically it quickly becomes entangled in a snarl of concepts, its precise nature and meaning growing less clear in the underbrush of related terms. This article seeks to clear away some of this tangle. Using the framework of resource-exchange analysis, the author explores the concept of power, following Weber's formulations, and seeks to clarify its relation to authority and legitimacy. His approach illuminates not only the notion of power but also many problems of political analysis and discourse.

V. LITERATURE REVIEWS

(A) The purpose and power of authority , by Dr. Myles Munroe

The author dispels widely accepted but counterfeit and destructive concepts of authority, explains the nature of genuine authority and submission, reveals how one can discover and exercise one's personal authority, and provides principles for establishing legitimate authority in the world.

(B) The power of Authority, by Michelle Prince

In today's crowded marketplace, the very best way to stand out from the competition is to establish yourself as the go-to expert and premier leading authority in your field. And the fastest, most credible way of becoming an authority is by authoring your own book.

(C) Max Weber on Power and Social Stratification

1. An Interpretation and Critique

First published in 1997, this book revolves around a textual analysis of the Weberian thesis that 'classes', 'status groups' and 'parties' are phenomena of the distribution of power within a 'community'. An internal reconstruction of Weber's own ideas on what is called social stratification in contemporary sociological discourse is undertaken. The reason for this reconstruction inheres in the fact that Weber's thought (especially in the field of social stratification) has been modified and misappropriated to such an extent that Weber himself is usually lost in the commentaries.

VI. REFERENCES

1. Barry Norman P.(1989). *An introduction to Modern Political Theory*. United Kingdom : Palgrave, Macmillan.
2. Bhargava Rajeev and Ashok Acharya .(2008).*Political Theory: An Introduction* . Delhi : Pearson Longman.
3. Hoffman John.(2008). *A Glossary of Political Theory* , Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
4. Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1921).
5. Wrong, D. H. (1996). *Power: Its forms, bases, and uses*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
