

Leadership in Organisations in the Context of 2P-3C

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Abstract

An attempt in this paper is made to discuss organizational leadership in the context of power, politics, conflict, culture and climate. Accordingly the aforesaid concepts have been discussed in the Introduction. Power and politics are among the most important concepts in the study of organization behavior. Both power and politics are dynamic concepts and are a function of the interaction between different players in organizations. Although politics is generally regarded as negative and undesirable, but politics may be both sometimes good for the organization. Conflict frequently arises in the workplace. Goal incompatibility between groups or individuals, differentiation, task interdependence, scarce resources, ambiguity, and communication problems can all lead to a situation that promotes conflict. The organizational climate and culture are the powerful tools that have tremendous effect on the morale, performance and job satisfaction of the members in any organization. The climate and culture play a vital role in an organization as these are usually associated with the perceptions, ideas, values, beliefs and most importantly the behavior of its players. The paper also attempts literature review, the study highlighting in brief rationale-objectives-methodology. The paper finally after detailed discussion arrives at conclusions.

Key words: [Power, Politics Conflict, Culture, Climate]

Introduction

Organizational Leaders exercise power to accomplish goals of an organization. Sometimes they appear to be powerful is just as important as being powerful. Power is the difference between the two probabilities: (i) the probability of an event occurring by the given action of the power -holder, (ii) the probability of event occurring without the power-holder's action (Jain, 2005). Power is easy to feel and happy to exercise but difficult to define. It is a force that cannot be seen, but its impact can be felt. This is extremely difficult to identify and measure objectively. Researchers (Dahl, 1957) exhibit an aversion to deal with matters of power because it defies precise definition and quantification. Much difficulty is due to the multi-dimensional nature of power. It represents the capacity, ability or potential to influence the behavior of other people to achieve a certain goal. It is based on the two tier concept of influencing others and being influenced. It can be potential or enacted. Neither it is completely formal nor informal. It is rather a judicious mixture of the two (Fayaz et al., 2008).

A concept closely related to power in organizational setting is politics, or political behavior. Organizational politics are activities carried out by organizational leaders to acquire, enhance and use power and other resources to obtain their preferred outcomes in a situation where there is uncertainty or disagreement (Moorhead and Griffin, 1992). Political behavior conversely is the general means by which political leaders attempt to use power. The goal of such behavior is to get one's own

way about things. The following points are worth noting in this connection: Power characterizes political action. The action takes place when an actor recognizes that achievement of his goals is influenced by the behavior of others. Politicking involves the impact of adversaries by the influential maneuvers of a member of the organization. Organizational Politics also involve the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the formal organization. Any behavior by organizational members that is self-serving may be termed 'political'. Organizational politics exist wherever people work together. Behavior referred to as politics takes place in varying degrees in all organizations. Not all behavior can be categorized as 'political'. Politics thus should be intentional act of influencing members through the acquired power to enhance collective-interest and advancement.

Organizational conflict, or workplace conflict, is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between members working together (Yoder 2013). Conflict takes many forms in organizations. There is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected. There are disputes over how resources should be utilized, how the work should be done and how long and hard people should work. There are jurisdictional disagreements among individuals, departments, and between unions and management. There are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions, and struggles for

power and favor. There is also conflict within individuals – between competing needs and demands – to which individuals respond in different ways. Conflict affecting organizations can occur in individuals, between individuals, and between groups. Conflicts within work groups are often caused by struggles over control, status, and scarce resources. Conflicts between groups in organizations have similar origins. Organizational leaders can resolve such conflicts through a rational process of problem solving, coupled with a willingness to explore issues and alternatives and to listen to each other. Culture is an anthropological term that is applicable to organizations too. It represents a pattern of beliefs and behaviors that have been learned from other members of the society. It is, in its broadest sense, the cultivated behavior i.e., the totality of man's learned experience which is socially transmitted. It is most frequently described as custom and includes both actions, man-made objects called artifacts and also ideas (Fayaz et al, 2008). Organizational leaders play a significant role in the area of motivation and the level of economic rewards. They also influence the level of commitment to work on the part of organizational members. Members with altogether different backgrounds or different levels in the organization have a tendency to describe the organizational culture in most similar terms. Actually, organizational culture is a descriptive term. For organizational leaders the study of culture is very important because it conveys some important assumptions and norms governing values, attitudes and goals of organizational members. It also tells members how to perform, and in what fashion. It also allows members to know what is important and what is not. It, thus allows members what are acceptable behaviors and what are not. Organizational culture can exist on several levels which may vary in terms of (i) visibility and (ii) resistance to change.

Although intangible, organizational climate is a real phenomenon, while a precise definition of climate may be lacking, this does not make impossible its existence. In the literature of organizational behavior several different definitions have been advanced and almost all have a greater degree of commonality. Organizational climate is, thus, the manifestation of the attitudes of organizational members towards the organization itself to attract and keep people who fit its climate, so that its patterns are perpetuated at least to some extent (Rao and Narayana, 1998). Organizational climate should be viewed from total system standpoint. There are as many climates as there are people in organizations. There may exist different climates within different departments in

the organization, and sub-climates will be integrated in the similar fashion of integrating attitudes of employees, so as to form the organizational climate. In organizations, there may be differences in climates in different work units, as it is commonly observed. It is because one type of climate may be suitable to one particular unit and the same may be unsuitable for another unit.

Literature Review

Salancik and Piffifer (2003) are of the opinion that power is the ability to get things done the way one wants them to be done. Whereas Griffin and Moorhead (1986) say that power is the potential ability of the person or group to influence another person or group. Robbins (2003) opines that power refers to a capacity that organizational leader has to influence the behavior of organizational members, so that organizational members do something he or she would not otherwise do. Power in the opinion of **Weber (1977)** is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance. **Pfeffer (2003)** explains that organizational politics as activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance and use to power and other resources to obtain their preferred outcomes in a situation where there is uncertainty and disagreement. **Stoner et al. (2009)** discuss that conflict involves a disagreement about the allocation of scarce resources or a clash of goals, statuses, values, perceptions, or personalities. It is interesting to note that Becker (1982) opines that organizational culture is a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other organization. Forehand and **Culmer (1964)** opine that the cultural characteristics of an organization are relatively enduring over time and relatively static in their propensity to change. The concept of organizational climate has a long history in the organizational literature. From early writers Litwin & Stringer (1968) to more recent research Ashkenasy, Wilderom & Peterson, (2000) Schneider, 1990). Tagiur (1968) is of the opinion that organizational climate is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment that is experienced by its organizational members, influences their behavior, and can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics of the organization. Forehand and Culmer (1964) view organizational climate a set of characteristics that describe an organization and that (a) distinguish one organization from other, (b) are relatively enduring over a period of time, and (c) influence the behavior of people in the organization.

Objectives

A live society needs dynamic organizations. This is possible only when these organizations are governed by effective leaders. It is in this backdrop this paper has been attempted. Further, the paper pursues the following objectives: (i) to have conceptual understanding of power, politics, conflict, culture and climate (ii) to discuss impact of the above on effective leadership to govern an organization (iii) to arrive at conclusions to guide in future course of action. The paper primarily is based on available literature. Varied books, professional journals and web sites have been browsed. Expert opinion of subject matter specialists have been obtained during the course of preparation of this paper

Discussions

Existence and use of power is indigenous to every organization. So it is very important from organization point of view. The importance of power in an organization can be judged from that there are so many jobs in an organization and each job has its different value to the organization. Some jobs are more important for organizational survival and growth than others. The importance of job itself brings power to those job holders regardless of the individual and their leadership qualities. Such job holders influence the decisions. The importance of power lies in the fact that leaders in organizations itself allocates the power to the persons. It does so in two ways by creating hierarchical levels, i.e., structural power, and by dividing work among members resulting into specialization, i.e., functional power. The organization gives the authority to its members having structural power in order to enable them to play their roles assigned to them in that hierarchical chain. The higher the hierarchical level the greater the amount of authority. It means structural power is institutionalize power. But simply holding the power does not make the position-holder powerful unless he makes use of it. If he does not question the erosion of his power, it will weaken. Functional power is derived from the fancier's, one performs, i.e., the jobs that one does. Division of labor and specialization provide the dependence upon one another. That dependence creates power. The important job an individual does; the greater is his power. The power is increased by the skill, experience, access to higher persons and information. Thus, the power position in an organization is very important. The organization must consider the power centers before taking any decision.

Power refers to the possession of authority and influ-

ence over others. Power is a tool that, depending on how it's used, can lead to either positive or negative outcomes in an organization. In 1959, American sociologists John French and Bertram Raven published an article, "The Bases of Power," that's regarded as the basis for classifying power in organizations. They identified five sources of power as exhibited in Figure 1.

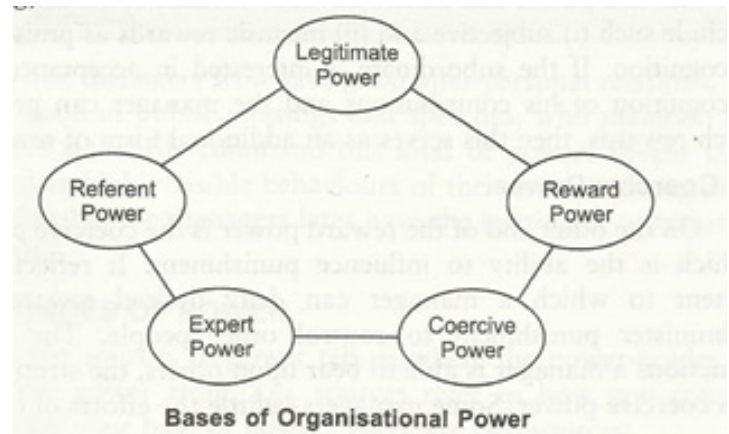


Figure 1

The dynamics of power can be studied from several angles exhibited in Figure 2

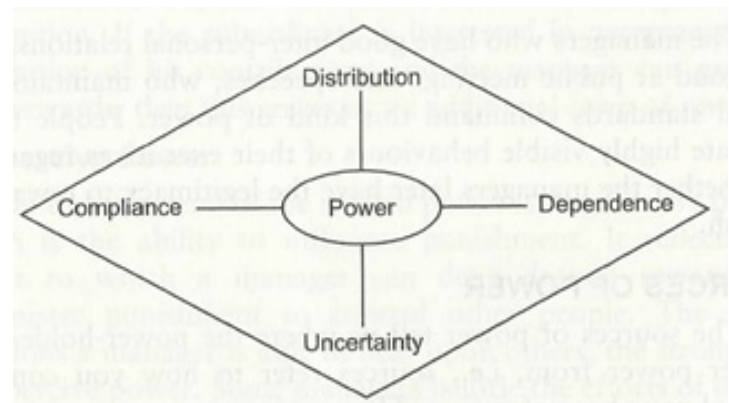


Figure 2

The political behavior of individuals in the organization is influence by variety of factors. These factors can be broadly categorized into individual and organizational factors as exhibited in Figure 3

Individual Factors: There are individual factors where individuals play politics to satisfy their personal needs. These personal or individuals needs are like to gain power for control and to influence decision-making process of the organization. The aim of such individuals is to increase the area of their influence. They try to sustain power as it helps to obtain personal needs and fulfill desires. In organizations, individuals play politics as they have great desire and high need of gaining power. Such types of individuals are basically internals and

self monitored people. There are many individuals who play organizational politics because of their expectation of quick success in life.

Organizational Factors: There are some of the organizational factors that influence the individuals to play politics in the organization. When there are limited resources in the organization then every organizational leader wants to have optimal resource utilization. It results in making individuals getting engaged themselves in politics to get the maximum advantage of the distribution of resources. The interpretation of limited resources like position, power, promotion etc in the organization makes individuals engage in the politics. The individual who craves for such resources feels that they may be deprived of such resources in the process of distribution of resources and so they play politics in the organization. There are some individuals who take advantage of the situation where there is uncertainty and ambiguity in decision-making because of unclear rules and policies. The individuals tend to play politics in the organization when performance evaluation and its outcome are subjective, qualitative and unclear. The individuals play politics when they are enforced with high performance pressure. The politics playing in the organization becomes measure to pressurize authority to withdraw control and lower the performance target. Democratic and participative decision-making culture of the organization is also liable to organizational politics as every individual wants to enhance his/ her importance and thereafter give opinion on crucial and important matters. The lower level persons get affected when they experience persons at higher level playing politics.

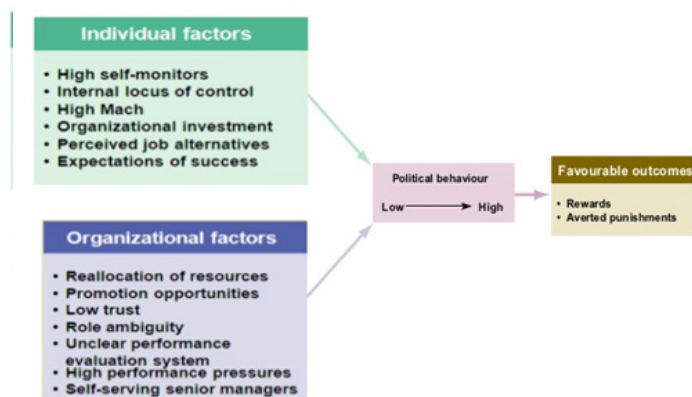


Figure3

Conflicts emerge at the workplace due to individual and inter-individual factors. Individual related causes entail attitudes, beliefs, personality orientation. Inter-individual conflicts arise when a leader breaches norms of the

organization. A variety of factors exhibited in Figure 4 influence organization conflict.

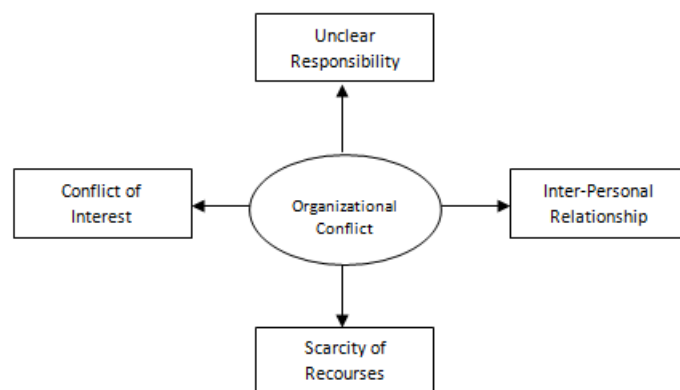


Figure 4

There are a number of types of organization conflicts as exhibited in Figure 5

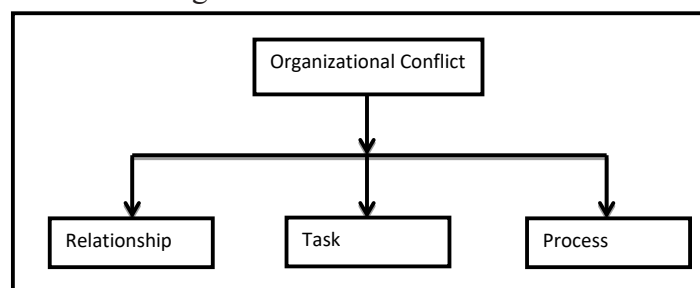


Figure 5

The causes of organizational conflict are exhibited in

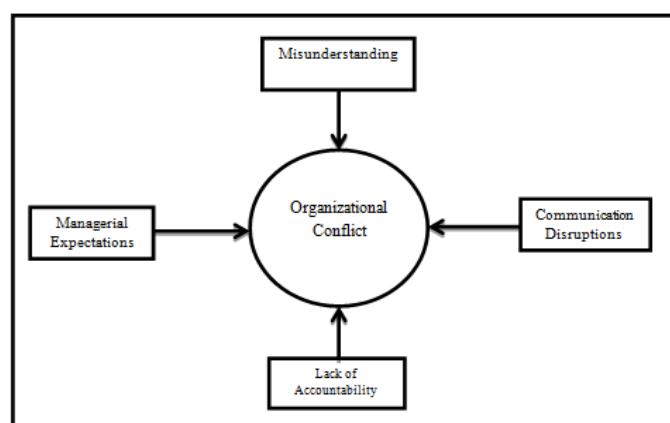


Figure 6

he causes of organizational conflict are to be known; to resolve them as early as possible, because it hinders the efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of the employees and the organization as well, which ultimately hampers its success.

Every organization has its unique style of working which often contributes to its culture. The beliefs, ideologies, principles and values of an organization form its culture. The culture of the workplace controls the

way members behave amongst themselves as well as with people outside the organization. A healthy culture encourages the members to stay motivated and loyal towards the organization. Members try their level best to perform better than their fellow workers and earn recognition and appreciation of the superiors. It is the culture of the workplace which actually motivates the members to perform. Every organization must have set guidelines for the members to work accordingly so that every individual is clear about his roles and responsibilities in the organization and know how to accomplish the tasks ahead of the deadlines. No two organizations can have the same work culture. It is the culture of an organization which makes it distinct from others. The work culture gives an identity to the organization. In other words, an organization is known by its culture. The members must be treated equally and no one should feel neglected or left out at the workplace. It is essential for the members to adjust well in the organization culture for them to deliver their level best. The culture gives the members a sense of unity at the workplace.

Certain organizations follow a culture where all the members irrespective of their status/ designations have to step into the office on time. Such a culture encourages one to be punctual which eventually benefits in the long run. It is the culture of the organization which makes the individuals a successful professional.

The workforce is clear with roles and responsibilities and strives hard to accomplish the tasks within the desired time frame as per the set guidelines. Implementation of policies is never a problem in organizations where people follow a set culture. The new incumbents also try their level best to understand the work culture and make the organization a better place to work. No one treats work as a burden and moulds himself according to the culture. In a culture where organization is very particular about the reporting system, the members however busy they are would send their reports by end of the day. No one has to force anyone to work. The culture develops a habit in the individuals which makes them successful at the workplace. The various types of organization culture are shown in Figure 7

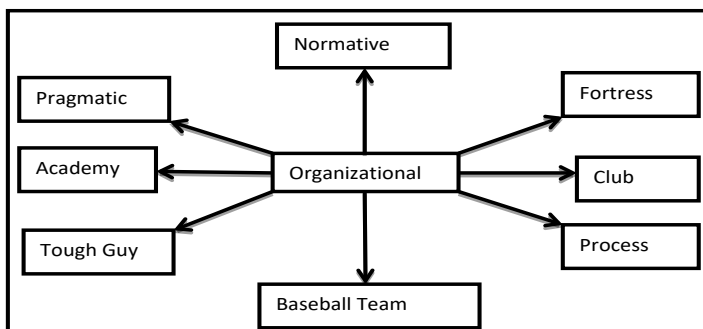


Figure 7

Organizational climate reflects the work environment and relationships and has been regularly shown to have an impact on work-related outcomes and aspects of organization performance (e.g. Patterson, Warr & West, 2004). Despite ongoing debates as to the theoretical status and measurement of organizational climate (James & Jones, 1974; Schneider, 2000) and how climate differs from the concept of organizational culture (Denison, 1996; Payne, 2000), there is a general consensus regarding the definition and underlying assumptions of organizational climate.

Organizational climate is the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected (Ostroff et al. 2003, Schneider & Reichers 1983).

Conclusion

The paper arrives at this conclusion to get the things done. There may be resistance from organizational members. Organizational leaders must have the capacity to influence organizational members. The writ of organizational leaders in an organization must prevail for execution. Organizational leaders perform in a state of uncertainty in the external environment and disagreement among the organizational members. The organizational leader in such a situation has to exhibit his wit and to be able to achieve an outcome by putting in collective efforts by the organizational members. Much of the organizational conflict is experienced because of communication of wants, needs, and values pursued by organizational members. Thus organizational leaders have to be fully abreast with all these sensitive subjects. The six characteristics as identified by John Campbell (i) individual (ii) autonomy (iii) structure (iv) reward (v) consideration and (vi) conflict. The organizational leader has to perform in this very framework in order to achieve organizational goals. The task to be performed by the organizational leader to make a change in the behavior of organizational members as organizations are distinctive and evolving over the period.

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