

PMIR-SEMESTER-II [e-Content]

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UNIT-III [PART- B]
[POWER AND POLITICS]

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

DR. SUPRIYA KRISHNAN
[GUEST FACULTY]
Email:- supriyadnr@rediffmail.com

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1. Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- ✓ Define the term power and politics
- ✓ Discuss basis of power
- ✓ State the relevance of power tactics
- ✓ Explain responses to organizational politics
- ✓ Describe ethics of political behaviour

2. Introduction

Power refers to the potential or actual ability to influence others in a desired direction. As an exchange relationship, power occurs in transactions between an agent and a target. The agent is the person using the power, and the target is the recipient of the attempt to use power. Different individuals and groups within and outside the organization can exert power. Individual employees, including top and middle management, technical analysts and specialists, support staff, and other non-managerial workers can influence the actions an organization takes to reach its goals. Formal groups of employees, such as various departments, work teams,

management councils, task forces, or employee unions, as well as informal groups such as those workers with offices near each other or those who see each other socially, can similarly exercise power. Nonemployees may also try to influence the behaviour of an organization and its members. Owners, suppliers' clients, competitors, employee unions, the general public and directors of the organization may exert power that affects the organization. Thus, we may define power as the ability of a person (or group A) to induce another person (or group B) to behave in a way that the former desires.

Because power is ability, individuals can learn to use it effectively. Influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behaviour and feelings of another person. Authority is the right to influence another person. It is important to understand the subtle differences between these terms. For example, a manager may have authority but no power. He or she may have the right, by virtue of his or her position as boss, to tell someone what to do. But he or she may not have the skill or ability to influence other people.

Interpersonal source of power: Interpersonal sources of power involve the relationship between the person who holds power and those who are influenced by him or her. Interpersonal sources of power are further classified as:

1. Reward Power
2. Coercive Power
3. Legitimate Power
4. Referent Power and
5. Expert Power

3. Basis of Power in Organizations

There is much more to managing than simply taking charge. Even if employees settled for being ordered around, attaining a competitive advantage depends on manager's skills at bringing out the best in their employees. This enlightened view of management implies that power comes not only from having a job that gives you the right to issue orders, but from other Basis as well. Managers therefore need to recognize multiple Basis of power. These Basis may be interpersonal or structural.

3.1 Structural Basis of Power

The degree of power wielded by a particular group/individual also depends on the structure of work activities and communications in the organization. Figure 1 below shows a group's/ individual's power base on three variables: ability to reduce uncertainty, lack of substitutes and centrality of activities to achieve organization's objectives.

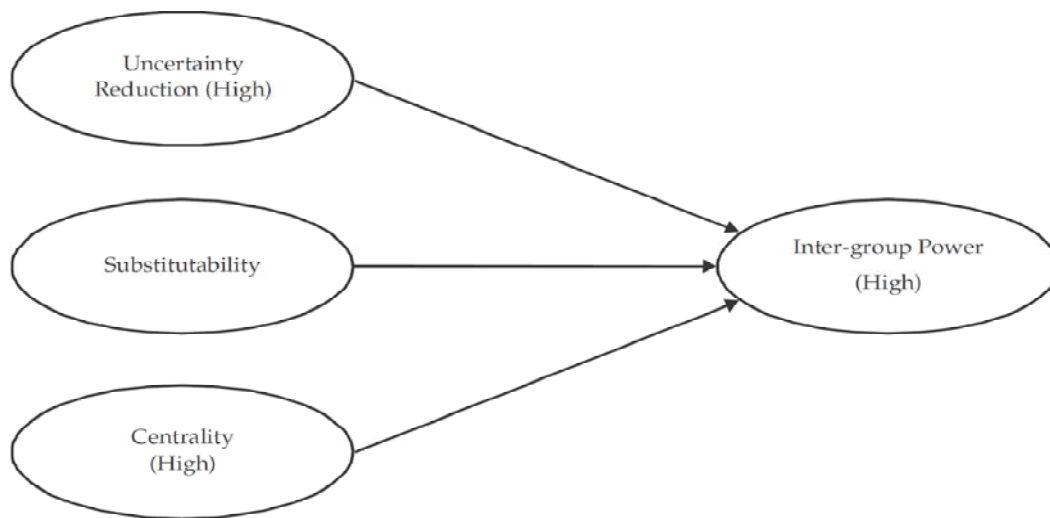


Figure 1: Structural Sources of Power (Source: David J Hickson)

3.1.1. *Uncertainty Reduction*: Organizations must operate in the face of uncertainty about their key reBasis: Human capital, raw materials, supplies and equipment, money and technology. Those who are able to reduce uncertainty have power in the organisation. Basic ways of reducing uncertainty are:

(a) Resource Control: Groups or individuals gain resource control when they acquire hard-to-get reBasis and maintain access to them. In these cases, groups that have resource control can reduce uncertainty for other groups by providing access to the necessary reBasis.

(b) Information Control: The organization members who can provide needed information have power because they can reduce uncertainty for others. Changes in technology and organizational structures are intensifying the importance of information power. Hence a person's power may be more closely related to his or her ability and willingness to share information with those who can apply it toward maintaining a competitive advantage.

(c) Decision-making Control: The groups and individuals who make decisions about the use of reBasis also have relatively great power. Logically, the decision makers can reduce uncertainty by making and communicating decisions affecting others in the organization. Those who gain the power from decision-making control are the ones who make decisions about basic policies and practices such as, what the organization will produce and who its target market will be.

3.1.2. Substitutability: The power of an individual or group is inversely related to the person's or group's substitutability. People are powerful because they cannot easily be replaced. In other words, organizations cannot find a substitute for their skills or knowledge. Being a hard-to-replace employee is not always advantageous. If a manager views an employee as indispensable for a particular job, that employee may miss opportunities for promotion or career development. And if the employee becomes associated with a particular job or way of doing things, changes in the organisation can render him or her highly dispensable.

3.1.3. Centrality: Central groups are those that have many connections with other groups and a large effect on work flow. Thus, groups and individuals in a central position are generally more powerful than those at the periphery. These people have command of key information and other reBasis, and others in the organization are likely to be aware of what they control and how they affect the organization.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. refers to the potential or actual ability to influence others in a desired direction.
2. As an exchange relationship, power occurs in transactions between an and a.....
3. The is the person using the power, and the target is the recipient of the attempt to use power.
4. involve the relationship between the person who holds power and those who are influenced by him or her.
5. are those that have many connections with other groups and a large effect on work flow.

4. Power Tactics

Influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behaviour or feelings of another person. The other person could be the boss (upward influence), an employee (downward influence), or a coworker (lateral influence). To understand how employees strengthen their power in organizations, we can look at certain political behaviour. The ways people obtain and use power to meet personal and other objectives in an organization basically involve some form of assessing and using existing resources or obtaining additional resources. There are eight basic types of influence tactics. They are listed and described in Table1 below:

Table 1: Influence Tactics used in Organizations

Tactics	Description	Examples
Pressure	The person uses demands, threats, or intimidation to convince you to comply with a request or to support a proposal.	If you don't do this, you're fired. You have until 5:00 to change your mind, or I'm going without you.
Upward appeals	The person seeks to persuade you that the request is approved by higher management, or appeals to higher management for assistance in gaining your compliance with the request.	I'm reporting you to my boss. My boss supports this idea.
Exchange	The person makes an explicit or implicit promise that you will receive rewards or tangible benefits if you comply with a request or support a proposal, or reminds you of a prior favour to be reciprocated.	You owe me a favour. I'll take you to lunch if you'll support me on this.
Coalition	The person seeks the aid of others to persuade you to do something or uses the support of others as an argument for you to agree also.	All the other supervisors agree with me. I'll ask you in front of the whole committee.
Ingratiation	The person seeks to get you in a good mood or to think favourably of him or her before asking you to do something.	Only you can do this job right. I can always count on you, so I have another request.
Rational persuasion	The person uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade you that a proposal or request is viable and likely to result in the attainment of task objectives.	This new procedure will save us \$150,000 in overhead. It makes sense to hire John; he has the most experience.
Inspirational appeals	The person makes an emotional request or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to your values and ideals, or by increasing your confidence that you can do it.	Being environmentally conscious is the right thing. Getting that account will be tough, but I know you can do it.
Consultation	The person seeks your participation in making a decision or planning how to implement a proposed policy, strategy, or change.	This new attendance plan is controversial. How can we make it more acceptable? What do you think we can do to make our workers less fearful of the new robots on the production line?

In impression management, individuals use influence tactics to control others' impressions of them. Which influence tactics are more effective? It depends on the target of the influence attempt and the objective. Individuals use different tactics for different purposes, and they use different tactics for different people. Besides the above mentioned political strategies and tactics, some other tactics are defined below. They are:

1. Sponsorship
2. Whistle blowing
3. Control of resources
4. Attacks on others

Table 2 gives the information in tabular form.

Table 2: Some other Political Strategies and Tactics

Strategy or Tactic	Description	Example
Sponsorship	Commitment to an idea or project by a manager who uses his or her political power to support it.	Through rational persuasion or appeals, you convince a higher level manager that your idea is a good one.
Whistle blowing	Inform an outsider such as a news reporter or government agency about an organization's unethical or illegal behaviour.	Charges of sexual harassment or other misdeeds that hurts the organization's reputation.
Control of resources	Seeking and exercising control over information, funding and other resources.	Managers with relatively greater power may keep people waiting.
Attack on others	Minimizing the successes of others and drawing attention to their failures	For example, scapegoats, people blamed for negative outcomes.

5. Response to Organizational Politics

When people get together in groups, power will be exerted. People want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn awards, and to advance their careers. Power is tightly linked to the concept of politics: Activities aimed at acquiring power and using it to advance interests, which may be personal or organizational. D. Farrell and J.C. Petersen define political behaviour in organizations as *“those activities that are not required as part of one’s formal role in the organization, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization”*. Table 3 below summarizes basic ways people use political behaviour.

Table 3: Ways People Use Political Behaviour in Organizations

	What They Can Influence	Advantages	Drawbacks
Face- To-Face Methods			
Exercise of power based on position.	Behaviour within zone that the other perceives as legitimate in light of the obligation.	Quick – requires no outlay of tangible resources.	If the request is outside the acceptable zone, it will fail; if it is too far outside, others might see it as illegitimate.
Exercise of power based on perceived expertise.	Attitudes and behaviour within the zone of perceived expertise.	Quick – requires no outlay of tangible resources.	If the request is outside the acceptable zone, it will fail; if it is too far outside, others might see it as illegitimate.
Exercise of power based on identification with a manager.	Attitudes and behaviour that are not in conflict with the ideals that underlie the identification.	Quick – requires no expenditure of limited resources.	Restricted to influence attempts that are not in conflict with the ideals that underlie the identification.
Exercise of power based on perceived dependence.	Wide range of behaviour that can be easily monitored.	Quick – can often succeed when other methods fail.	Repeated influence attempts encourage the other to gain power over the influencer.
Coercive exercise of power based on perceived dependence.	Wide range of behaviour that can be easily monitored.	Quick – can often succeed when other methods fail.	Invites retaliation – very risky.
Use persuasion.	Very wide range of attitudes and behaviour.	Can produce internalized motivation that does not require monitoring; requires no power or outlay of scarce material resources.	Can be very time-consuming – requires other person to listen.
Combine these methods.	Depends on the exact combination.	Can be more potent and less risky than using a single method.	More costly than using a single method.
Indirect Methods			
Manipulate the other's environment by using any or all of the face-to-face methods.	Wide range of behaviour and attitudes.	Can succeed when face-to-face methods fail.	Can be time-consuming; is complex to implement; is very risky, especially if used frequently.
Change the forces that continuously act on the individual; formal organizational arrangements, informal social arrangements, technology, resources available, statement of organizational goals.	Wide range of behaviour and attitudes on a continuous basis.	Has continuous influence, not just a one-shot effect; can have a very powerful impact.	Often requires a considerable power outlay to achieve.

Many organizational conditions encourage political activity. Among them are:

1. Unclear Goals
2. Autocratic decision making
3. Ambiguous lines of authority
4. Scarce resources, and
5. Uncertainty

Individuals who use power in organisations are organisational politicians. Political behaviour is actions not officially sanctioned by an organization that are taken to influence others in order to meet one's personal goals. Table 4 below shows the personal characteristics of effective organizational politicians.

Table 4: Personal Characteristics of Effective Political Actors

Personal Characteristic	Behavioural example
Articulate	▪ Must be able to clearly communicate ideas.
Sensitive	▪ Must be sensitive to other individuals, situations, and opportunities.
Socially adept	▪ Must understand the social norms of the organization and behave so as to be perceived by influential others as "fitting in well".
Competent	▪ Must have the necessary skills and qualifications.
Popular	▪ Must be interested in what happens outside of him or her.
Extraverted	▪ Must have confidence in his or her abilities.
Self-confident	▪ Must be self-assertive and forceful.
Aggressive	▪ Must be eager to attain success.
Ambitious	▪ Must be willing to use any tactic to get his or her way.
Devious	
"organization man or woman"	▪ Must emphasize the well-being of the organization.
Highly intelligent	
Logical	▪ Must be able to use his or her knowledge to solve problems. ▪ Must be capable of reasoning.

Political behaviour may be legitimate or illegitimate.

Legitimate Political Behaviour refers to normal everyday politics

1. Complaining to your supervisor.
2. Bypassing the chain of command.
3. Forming coalitions.
4. Obstructing organisational policies.
5. Excessive adherence to rules, and
6. Developing contacts outside the organization through one's professional activities.

Illegitimate Political Behaviours are those activities that violate the implied rules of the game.

Illegitimate activities include:

1. Sabotage.
2. Whistle-blowing.
3. Symbolic protests.
4. Group of employees simultaneously applying for casual leave.

The extreme illegitimate forms of political behaviour pose a very real risk of loss to organizations.

Self Assessment

State whether the following statements are true or false:

6. When people get together in groups, power will be non exerted.
7. People never want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn awards, and to advance their careers.
8. Power is lightly linked to the concept of politics.
9. Illegitimate Political Behaviours are those activities that violate the implied rules of the game

6. Politics and Ethics of Political Behaviour

Politics is a fact of life in organisations. People play politics for the following reasons:

1. Organisations are made up of individuals and groups with different values, goals and interests.
2. Resources in organisations are limited. This forces members to compete for the organisation's limited resources.
3. Most decisions have to be made in a climate of ambiguity. People within organizations will use whatever influence they can to tweak the facts to support their goals and interests.

Politics cannot – and should not – be eliminated from organisations. Managers can, however, take a proactive stance and manage the political behaviour that inevitably occurs.

1. Uncertainty is a condition that tends to increase political behaviour, while transparency and open communication reduces this uncertainty.
2. Regarding performance, clarify expectations. This can be accomplished through the use of clear, quantifiable goals and through the establishment of a clear connection between goal accomplishment and rewards.
3. Often, people engage in political behaviour when they feel excluded from decision-making processes in the organisation. Therefore, the key is participative management.
4. Managing scarce resources is important. Clarify the resource allocation process. This discourages dysfunctional political behaviour.
5. Encourage co-operation among work groups. This can instill a unity of purpose in work teams by rewarding cooperative behaviour.

6.1 Maccoby's Four Political Types

In his book "The Gamesman", Michael Maccoby describes four types of organisational politicians. They are:

1. **Craftsman:** Craftsmen, driven by achievement, are the least political. They are often technical specialists who like details and precision. The person is usually quiet, sincere, modest and practical.
2. **Jungle Fighter:** Jungle fighters, although very different in behaviour, are apt to be active politicians. Unafraid to step on others to get ahead, this fighter believes employees should be used to get ahead in the company. They desire success at any cost. There are two types of jungle fighters:
 - (a) *Foxes:* The foxes make their nests in the organisation and manoeuvre from this safe base.
 - (b) *Lions:* Conquer others' territories and build empires.
3. **Company man or women:** As politicians go, these are conservative people. They possess a strong desire for affiliation and may not exhibit a lot of political behaviour. In fact, this individual's identity rests with the powerful, protective company. The

concern of such people is for humans; however, they are more involved with security than success and may miss opportunities that arise.

4. **Gamesman:** The gamesmen are apt politicians. They view business as a game and take calculated risks. The Gamesman tends to be charismatic, thrives on challenge and competition and motivates employees with enthusiasm.

The major contribution of Maccoby's work is that it shows that individuals differ in their behaviour as political actors.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

10. Politics is a of life in organizations.

- (a) Act (b) Fact (c) Tact (d) Action

11. Politics be eliminated from organizations.

- (a) Can (b) Cannot (c) Should not (d) Cannot and should not

12. In his book "The Gamesman", Michael Maccoby describes types of organizational politicians.

- (a) Two (b) Three (c) Four (d) Five

13. The major contribution of Maccoby's work is that it shows that individuals differ in their behaviour as actors.

- (a) Political (b) Realistics (c) Holistic (d) None

CASE STUDY**Bringing Kids into the Family Business**

Bringing offspring into the family business can be a source of pride for parents who are business owners; it can also be a sore spot, a source of destructive politics for everyone involved. Employees may automatically question a young family member's talent or commitment to the business. Senior managers may worry about the security of their jobs as the person rises in rank at the company. "They may feel their own chances for advancement are now limited, or they may be worried about being caught in the middle of family conflicts, such as, getting one set of directions from the older generation and another set from the younger one," explains Jeff Wolfson, an attorney who specializes in family business at the Boston law firm of Goulston and Storrs.

Should parents who own businesses avoid hiring their children, or hide their children's identity once they are hired? Of course not. But Wolfson says they can prevent or end destructive politics in a number of ways.

First, they can hire offspring at an entry level in the company, as did Miles Ezell, Jr., and his brother Bill, who own Purity Dairies Inc., based in Nashville, Tennessee. Three sons, a daughter, and a son-in-law who joined the company now hold management positions, but they started "small". "Because they came here directly out of college and hadn't worked elsewhere first, they spent at least three years working in different areas, getting a feel for them," says Miles. "They worked in some of the worst jobs, like cleanup detail in the milk plant or in the garage, and they spent six months running milk routes." The Ezell offspring never displaced another worker, and it became clear early on that favouritism was not going to be a problem.

Wolfson agrees that children of founders or owners must learn the business from the bottom up, even if they are assured of succession. "The second generation needs to show some patience," he advises.

Mentoring can also help avoid destructive politics, as long as the mentor is not a family member. A trusted or long-term manager can help acquaint the young person with the company in an unobtrusive manner, sometimes even acting as a go-between with the young person and other workers.

Referent power with the young family member can work both ways. The young family member can work both ways. The young person may worry that his or her associations with other employees are based solely on connections with the founding family. But in other cases, it benefits everyone. Gray Langsam, president of Plaut & Stern Inc., a wholesale meat company and meat packing plant in New York City, recalls positive relationships with other employees, even though they knew his father was a company partner. They watched him work his way up from the bottom and grew to trust him. "I would listen to their suggestions and pass them along to my father," he says. "All that helped me ease my way and break down any resentment the workers had at having the boss's kid in their midst".

Hiring the kids doesn't have to be a disaster. It just takes good political strategies that benefit everyone in the organization.

Questions

1. In addition to the suggestions mentioned above, what other political strategies might business owners and their children practice to ensure a successful relationship with other workers?
2. What political strategies might non-family employees use to help the relationship along?
3. How might the succession of one generation after another in a family business actually help an organisation maintain a competitive advantage?

7. Summary

1. The toughest of all areas within corporate life is dealing with power and politics.
2. Some companies are better or worse than others in the amount of political activity taking place.
3. Power refers to the potential or actual ability to influence others in a desired direction.
4. It involves the relationship between the person who holds power and those who are influenced by him or her.
5. Usually, the larger the company, the more part the politics plays in one's ability to perform.
6. In order to be successful in the corporate world, people need power.
7. There are many types of powers.
8. All have their advantages and disadvantages.
9. Power may be used for both the benefits of an organisation or disadvantage for it.
10. Politics may be used for both, self benefit without harming others or harm to others.
11. Influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behaviour or feelings of another person.
12. Individuals who use power in organisations are organisational politicians.
13. Power that arises from a person's expertise, knowledge or talent.
14. When the source of power is a person's control over rewarding outcomes, the power is called reward power.

8. Keywords

- ✓ **Expert Power:** Power that arises from a person's expertise, knowledge or talent.
- ✓ **Influence:** Influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behaviour or feelings of another person.
- ✓ **Interpersonal sources of power:** It involve the relationship between the person who holds power and those who are influenced by him or her.
- ✓ **Organisational politicians:** Individuals who use power in organisations are organizational politicians
- ✓ **Power:** Power refers to the potential or actual ability to influence others in a desired direction.
- ✓ **Reward Power:** When the source of power is a person's control over rewarding outcomes, the power is called reward power.

9. Review Questions

1. Can you describe your ideal employee? What is the type of power that he has to attract you?
2. What display of power or play of politics would you make to become your ideal employee?
3. What do you support more- reward or reprimand and why?
4. Internal Politics is good for an organization. Discuss.
5. There is no employee who wants growth in his career but doesn't want to have power. Does growth and power go hand in hand?
6. The greater the power, the lesser is the politics one plays in an organization. Do you support this argument? Give reasons for your argument.
7. Do you think that people engaged in office politics can be good decision makers? Why/ Why not?
8. What do you think about uncertainty being a determinant of political behaviour of the employees in an organization?
9. Which one do you prefer among jungle fighters and gamesman and why?
10. What can be the reason behind dysfunctional political behaviour in organizations? How do you suggest preventing it?
11. What would you call the political behaviour in which your boss comes to you and says, only you can do it right? I can always count on you, so I have another request. Does he really come to make a request?
12. What among pressure, upward appeal, coalition and ingratiation, do you discount most and why?
13. Which characteristics of effective political actors do you possess? Which do you need to work on?

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Power | 2. Agent, target |
| 3. Agent | 4. Interpersonal sources of power |
| 5. Central groups | 6. False |
| 7. False | 8. False |
| 9. False | 10. (b) |
| 11. (d) | 12. (c) 13. (a) |

*****GOOD-LUCK*****