TOWARD A SYSTEM APPROACH FOR POWER AND INFLUENCE IN ORGANIZATION

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Lucrarea abordează domeniul comportamentului organizaţional prin intermediul unei cercetări fundamentale asupra puterii şi influenţei în organizaţie. Scopul lucrării este de a modela fenomenul de putere din organizaţie pe baza unei abordări sistemice.

Analiza s-a focalizat asupra rezultatelor cercetărilor efectuate de psihologi şi sociologi în domeniul cunoaşterii fenomenelor de putere şi influenţă, precum şi asupra rezultatelor cercetării empirice realizate de autori pentru cuantificarea factorilor de putere din organizaţii.

Lucrarea aduce un plus de valoare în domeniu prin posibilitatea integrării, într-o manieră unitară, a procesului de influenţă managerială cu celelalte procese organizaţionale.

This paper approaches the organizational science through a theoretical thinking in the field of power and influence within organization. The aim is to develop a model of power configuration within the organization, applying the system key concepts.

The analysis has been taken into account the following aspects: reviewing the psychologists and sociologists researchers' efforts on power and influence phenomena, and the results of the authors' previous empirical researches on quantifying the power factors within organizations.

The main insight gained by the paper is that the managerial influence process model could be linked to the others organizational processes and integrated into a cohesive whole.

Keywords: organizational science, power Bases, influence tactics

1. Introduction

In our today business environment, the managers spend much of their time attempting to influence their subordinates to perform the organizational work. Each subordinate represent a unique conglomerate of knowledge, qualities, skills,

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weaknesses, and strengths. This is a challenging issue due to which the managers must address all this diversity to accomplish organizational goals.

A low level of emotional and social commitment in performing the organizational work will affect the employees' efficiency. The harmony allows that group' members value the creative qualities of their colleagues. In fact, the capacity of employees to function as a network is a key attribute of any organization.

The manager gathers and manages the knowledge to achieve organization's objectives. Thus, an important factor is constituted by the manager's ability to establish, maintain and develop working relationships based on communication and effective collaboration. As his increasing need for progress and knowledge growing, the best manager creates networks (relational and professional networks) and develops strong relationships within and outside the organization with a significant impact in enhancing his power and influence. Beside this, the manager has to be aware of his own power, knowing the sources that may consolidate it, and the impact on subordinates' behaviour [1].

Many efforts have been made by researchers in attempting to analyse the diversity of individuals' behaviours. The efforts were focused on studying the relationships between managers and their co-workers to establish those factors that may lead to managers and organizational performance improvement. Within organizational science, a particular attention has paid to superior – subordinates relationships through research on power and influence tactics. After a documented research in the scientific literature, we have identified that studies within organizational science are confronting with a lack of systemic approaches due to intangible nature of the field.

Thus, we applied a systemic approach, structuring the results, and enabling the managers to understand, utilize and control the power and the influence, in such a manner that address today's business situations and effectively improve their performance.

2. Literature review

Studying the issues of power and influence has been found its origin in the theoretical approach of Kurt Lewin who considered power as the possibility of inducing force on someone else, or, more formally, as the maximum force person A can induce on person B divided by the maximum resistance that B can offer [2].

After this initial attempt, French and Raven have defined influence as a force one person (the agent) exerts on someone else (the target) to induce a change in the target behaviour, including changes in attitudes, goals, needs, and values. Thus, influence is "kinetic power" just as power is "influence potential ".

However, the most important contribution to knowledge of power is the power classification in five different bases of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power. A sixth basis, informational power, was added later by Raven in 1965 [3].

In 1992, Raven extended the original bases of power into a Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence offering a dynamic view of power and influence processes. In essence, the model describes the agent as rational decision maker who weighs various benefits and costs of the available power bases before invoking one of them to influence the target [4].

A simultaneous approach was developed by Kipnis that studied the influence processes from the agent point of view. The model states that agent's choice of means of influence depends mainly on the resources availability, on agent's capability to invoke a power basis, and on the target's resistance toward the influence attempt [5]. Further, Kipnis at al. found eight categories of tactics: assertiveness, ingratiation, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking, and coalitions [6].

Another contribution to knowledge of power phenomenon is that by which power is approached differently from leadership. This divergence is caused by the fact that power does not imply the existence of compatibility between the objectives of the two parts (the agent and the target), which entails in many situations the exercise of control. Thus, for power the key element is dependence that implies exercise of control through influence tactics, whereas for leadership the key element is trust that implies consensus [7]. In table 1 we present the main differences between power and leadership concepts.

In the issue, the literature research on social power and influence tactics reveals a strongly increased interest in these matters, both in terms of the theoretical thinking and in terms of empirical research. Besides rigorous empirical testing, suggesting possible models, solutions to social problems that leaders are confronting with, will be the major test for the progress made toward better understanding influence and power processes.

Table 1

Power & Leadership: Key features

Key Features	Power	Leadership
Objectives	Different	Compatible
Strategy	Control	Consensus
Dimension	Dependence	Trust
Research Direction	Influence tactics	Leadership styles

3. The bases of the approach

The various contributions on social power and influence tactics demonstrate that there is increasing recognition that knowledge of power phenomenon in organization should be carefully managed, because managers' performance can be enhanced not merely possessing authority (legitimate power) but knowing how to use the influence tactics to achieve the business objectives. Based on our research, the scientific literature encompasses a wide range of studies regarding the power phenomenon, but there are lacks of systemic approach.

Today, emphasis is on development of integrated management approach that focuses all managers' effort toward achieving the organizational objectives. An integrated approach is one in which all of the parts are inter- related. A change in any one of the parts will influence the whole. Every organization has specific goals with the aim to best meet the needs of its market. This requires a deep analysis of all internal and external environmental factors entailing designing the strategies to accomplish the objectives.

But this is the first step. Implementing strategies is the most challenging step thereby strategies are typically implemented through people. Successful implementation requires managers to posses both technical and social skills. This means there are two dimensions within organizational context.

The first dimension is the technical side of the management process, which requires managers to apply specific management tools and techniques for managing the organizational context.

The second dimension is the socio-cultural side of the management process. In contrast with the technical side, this dimension requires managers to have interpersonal/soft skills necessary to orchestrate successfully different parts within organization. This dimension also involves focusing on creating social systems within organizational environment that combines the talent of different employees working to complete the work.

The hart of the socio-cultural dimension deals with influencing people/employees to meet objectives and perform successfully. It is impossible to consider leading people as a type of social influence without tacking also into account the concept of power. Through exercising power managers change the course of events, overcome resistance, and get employees to do things that they would otherwise do not do [8].

Therefore, we have considered studies on power and influence which have distinguished two key characteristics of social power: *static characteristic* - influence potential -, and *dynamic characteristic* - kinetic power/power in action [9]. The two key characteristics of power have their anchors in social sciences, but

might be linked to the organizational context. Understanding the way in which power and influence may be integrated within organizational context has beneficial effects on organizational performance.

4. The power configuration model

The scientific literature defines the influence as the processes by which power is exercised and authority is legitimated. Influence translates the potentiality of power into the realized action of leadership.

Influence behaviour involves the change of the behaviour of an individual or a group. In each case, some sort of dynamic relationship exists between the agent and the target of the influence attempt. The influence agent may be a subordinate trying to influence the superior or a leader attempting to influence the followers or subordinates. Thus, the influence behaviour may be exerted in three directions: upward, downward, and lateral.

For the purpose of our power configuration model, only the downward direction of influence attempt is relevant. In this case, the influence agent is the manager who is trying to influence the subordinates.

In attempting to comprehend the power phenomenon, we propose a systemic approach of power that put all pieces into a cohesive whole. We consider that the power configuration as a system – inputs, transformation process, and outputs - helps the manager to gather, manage and use the organizational knowledge in a adequate manner, managing the subordinates successfully.

Starting with the process definition as a set of interrelated actions and activities performed to achieve a specific set of results, exercising the power may be configured as a process with inputs, outputs, and tools (fig. 1).

The inputs.

*They a*re referring to a broad range of variables that may trigger the influence process. We structured the inputs in two different categories depending on the influence complexity (table 2).

In practice, the manager exercises his power through applying the influence tactics. Choosing the influence tactics is determined by the power factors, such as: age, gender, personality, educational background of the manager, and so on.

Another important factor is the objective of the influence attempt. In organization, the manager exercises the power based on his objectives. These objectives vary in a large spectrum from assigning work, changing behaviours, gaining assistance, getting support to obtaining personal benefits. The researchers

demonstrated that assigning work and seeking a change in subordinates' behaviour were made most often in a downward influence attempt, and that getting support or gaining personal benefits was usually directed upward [10].

The managers do not operate in a vacuum, so that the organizational influence must be carefully considered. Most organizations have developed unique and describable cultures. These cultures are reflected in numerous factors such as values, norms, beliefs, expectations, view of authority relationships and work ethic. These factors have a direct influence in choosing the influence behaviour.
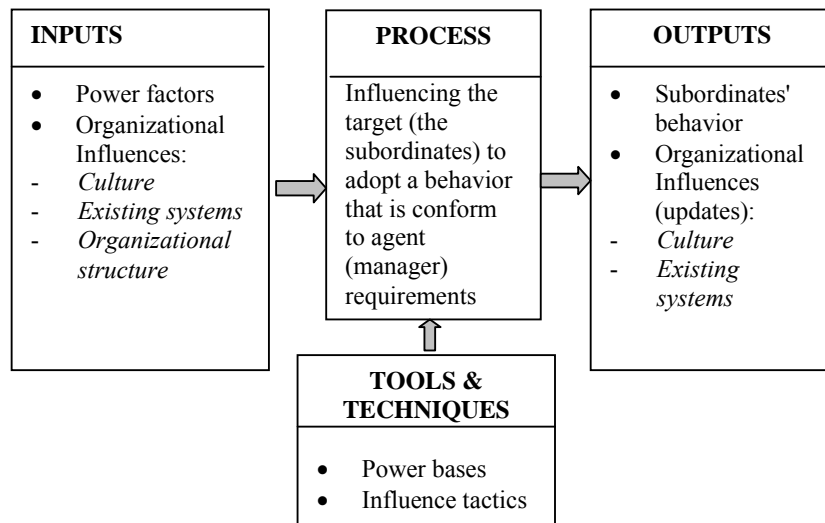
INPUTS	PROCESS	OUTPUTS
• Power factors • Organizational Influences: - *Culture* - *Existing systems* - *Organizational structure*	Influencing the target (the subordinates) to adopt a behavior that is conform to agent (manager) requirements	• Subordinates' behavior • Organizational Influences (updates): - *Culture* - *Existing systems*

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

• Power bases
• Influence tactics

Fig.1. The Power Configuration Model

Table 2

The power configuration model: Inputs pattern

Inputs	Influence complexity	General description	Operational description
Power factors	Low	Personal variables	Age, Gender, Educational background, Personality, Values, Beliefs
		Contextual variables	Objective of the influence attempt Target behaviour, needs, values, beliefs
Organizational Influences	High	Organizational culture	Values, norms, beliefs, expectations, view of authority relationships, work ethic
		Existing systems	Information system Management system
		Organizational structure	Functional/Matrix organization Span of control

The maturity of the organization with respect to its existing systems can also influence the managers in choosing the influence behaviour. Based on our previous empirical research on power factors, we have synthesized these in only two variables: information system and management system. Information system encompasses a wide range of variables with respect to information flow between managers and their subordinates such as gathering, integrating and disseminating the information. The management system refers to the way in which the processes, tools, techniques, and resources used by the manager are aggregated to manage the organization [11].

The structure of the organization often constrains the availability of resources with a major impact on power bases and influence tactics use. The organizational structures vary in a spectrum from functional to matrix structure and determine the managers' level of authority and the managers' span of control. As researchers stated, the choice of influence tactics is moderated by the span of control. For instance, the managers with more than 16 subordinates are more likely to exercise negative forms of influence than those supervising a smaller group [12].

Tools & Techniques.

As we previously discussed, one of the key insights in the literature on social power defined power within two characteristics: static and dynamic [9]. We have approached the static characteristic of power as power basis and the dynamic characteristic as influence tactics (table 3).

Table 3

The power characteristics

	Characteristic	**Description**	**Correlation**
Power	Static	Influence potential	Power basis
	Dynamic	Power in action	Influence tactics

Within the organizational context, the managers use specific tools and techniques to fulfil their objectives. In the scientific literature, the tool is defined as something tangible used in performing an activity to produce a product or result, whereas the technique is a systematic procedure employed by a human resource to perform an activity to produce a product or result, and that may employ one or more tools [13]. We have focused our research on linking the static and dynamic characteristics of power to transformational process within the systemic approach.

Considering the researchers' opinion regarding power sources tend to be relatively stable whereas influence tactics are highly contextual, we have established that power bases are manager's tools and influence tactics are their techniques used to obtain the subordinates' compliance (table 4).

Researches on the use of power within the organisations reveal that managers need power tools to achieve the organizations objectives. In addition, the way managers use power tools affects human relations and organizational performance. Thus, one of the most challenging aspects of managers' job is to augment their power through increasing power bases awareness and coping problems using influence tactics in an adequate manner.

Table 4

The relationships between power/influence and tools/techniques

	Tools	**Techniques**
Power basis	The managers' capability to influence the subordinates in order to obtain their compliance	
Influence tactics		The sum of influence tactics that managers may use to obtain a specific result (subordinates' compliance)

In table 5, we show a brief description of the available manager's power tools [14].

Table 5

The managers' power tools

Tools	**Description**
Reward power	The manager's capability to provide the subordinates with desired outcomes such as pay increase or job promotion
Coercive power	The manager's capability to effect negative consequences, such as demotion or transfer
Legitimate power	The manager's right to make a request, based on his official position in organization
Referent power	The manager's capability to seek the subordinates' compliance, based on the subordinates' desire to please the manager
Expert power	The manager's capability to influence subordinates' behaviour gained by experience, education or training

These definitions approach the managers' power as independent sources, distinguishable. The reward, coercive, and legitimate power, often derived from organizational policies and procedures, have determined some researchers to associate these three types of power in a single category of *organizational power*.

Similarly, expert and referent power are both based on personal characteristics, and they are lumped together into the category of *personal power* [15].

The organizational power category rests on the managers' structural position and represent the power a manager receives as a result of his/her position in the formal hierarchy of an organization. Positions of authority include reward and coercive powers, whereas legitimate power rests on the acceptance by members of an organization of the authority of a position.

The personal power category includes personal characteristics such as expertise and charisma, which may be used to get others to do what the managers want. Expert power, wielded as a cluster of expertise, special skill, and knowledge, has become one of the most powerful sources of influence. As organizations become more specialized, managers become increasingly dependent on expertise to achieve organizational objectives.

The manager's techniques cover a wide range of influence tactics. The use of influence tactics varies depending on the manager's perception of the type of power (power tools) they hold in the organization and the direction of the influence. The direction of influence tactics has been the topic of ongoing studies by many researchers. It has been identified numerous influence tactics, such as rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, ingratiation, personal appeal, exchange, coalitions, legitimating, and pressure [16].

As the researchers state, there is a significant correlation between direction of influence and the use of influence tactics. For the purpose of our power model configuration, we approached the tactics used by managers in downward direction.

In table 6, we present some of the possible actions enclosed in the manager's influence tactics [17]. We have to notice that pressure is the tactic that is most likely to determine discomfort to the subordinates and to bring a high level risk of resistance and social consequences to the manager. At the opposite side are tactics such as exchange, inspirational appeal and ingratiation that are most likely to generate a high level of work commitment for subordinates.

Another valuable contribution at knowing of influence tactics was brought by Lee Blaine in 2001, who proposes three categories of managers' influence tactics: power rests on fear, power rests on correctness, power based on principles [18].

The first category encompasses a variety of tactics based on coercive power, such as pressure, legitimization, sanction, upward appeal, and assertiveness.

The second category refers to inter-related power arisen from bargaining and trade-offs. These influence tactics are better than the first one, but have

limited effects on individuals. The parts involved in influence process are permanently monitoring the environment aiming at identifying better opportunities.

The third type of influence tactics is based on trust and respect from the others. The significance of trust is deeply rooted in personal values and principles such as dignity, fairness, openness, the pursuit of truth, and respect. Thus, building trust is viewed as the key factor in exercising the manager influence because of its sustainable effects on subordinates.

Table 6

The managers' influence tactics

Tactics	Description
Inspirational appeal	The manager uses the subordinates' values, ideals, and aspirations when proposing a new task
Consultation	The manager seeks the subordinates' commitment by implicating them in planning of a future task
Exchange	The manager offers something valuable for subordinates in return for their performing
Ingratiation	The manager acts very polite while making his request
Legitimization	The manager asks the subordinates to adhere with organizational rules, policies or practices
Pressure	The manager sets a deadline for subordinates' compliance

The outputs are referring to subordinates' behavior in terms of commitment, compliance or resistance. The subordinates will comply if the manager's requests are understood, are consistent with the objectives of the organization, are compatible with the interests of the subordinates and are within the capabilities of them.

The commitment happens when subordinates welcome the influence process and accept it as reasonable and legitimate. In this case, the subordinates will offer exceptional quality, will build strong employee team spirit, and will work with passion. The resistance behavior appears when the subordinates do not agree with the manager influence tactic and either actively or passively resists it. As a general rule, the manager's power increases when subordinates feel personal commitment and acceptance of the manager's ideas and decisions.

Consequently, exercising the influence process has a major effect at the organizational level, organizational communication and management system being affected by this one. The updated organizational influences become new inputs for future reiteration of influence process.

5. Conclusions

In today's organizational environment, integration, as key role of managers, directs attention both to technical and sociocultural side of management processes. Effective managers balance the application of management techniques with interpersonal competencies for energizing the employees. This requires managers to be skilled in acquiring and exercising a wide range of influence tactics aiming at gaining subordinates commitment and support.

From a theoretical standpoint, this model is important because it seeks to reveal the power configuration in organization so that the managers can learn to lead more effectively.

Modelling the influence relationships by a systemic approach is a valuable insight thereby highlights understanding, applying and following the managerial power process in order to achieve the organizational goals.

Developing the power configuration model is our future objective in order to integrate the model within the others organizational processes such as socialization, creativity and learning processes.

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