IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE BY CREATING AN INSTRUMENT THAT CAN HELP KEEP MISUSE OF MANAGER POWER UNDER CONTROL

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Abstract

Power misuse by managers in organizations is a wide-spread problem that has significant negative consequences for organizational performance. At the same time, published research on attempts of diagnosing power misuse is scarce. As such, organizations keep facing this problem without help from academia on handling it. The authors of this paper suggest addressing the issue by utilizing a regular survey with the purpose of diagnosing potential power misuse by supervising managers of an organization. The information collected via such a survey can be a powerful feedback instrument toward changing or continuing the state of affairs. Such a survey is developed in this paper. The survey has adequate face validity and Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.93. Furthermore, its criterion and discriminant validity results indicate their good levels. Therefore, the survey may be recommended for use in the organizational setting. Utilization of this instrument can potentially lead to the increase of employee accomplishments, and the improvement of organization-wide performance.

Key words: power misuse, managers, subordinates, survey, performance management, organizational power management.

According to abundant research, possessing power by an individual often turns to power misuse with a number of negative consequences that spill over to others (e.g. Hasty and Maner 2020; O'Reilly and Pfeffer 2021; Van Kleef and Lange 2020). Managers, as power holders in organizations, may be fully subject to the negative consequences of power possession (Greer and Chu 2020). When they are, it is destructive for performance of their subordinates and, consequently, for the performance of their entire organizations, as a vast stream of research shows (e. g., Schyns and Schilling 2013).

According to Tepper (2000), supervisors who misuse their power affect their subordinates in a number of negative ways including emotional exhaustion, depression, family-to-work conflict, and experience of perceived injustice. Other consequences include: dissatisfaction of subordinates with the consequent decrease in the level of their performance and increase in their turnover intentions (Husain et al. 2020); increased distrust and resentment among the workforce (Foulk et al. 2018); physical health deterioration of such subordinates (Tobore 2023; Sherman and Mehta 2020); increased fear in subordinates in reaching their goals (Cho and Keltner 2020); drop in confidence (Fast et al. 2012); strong chronic negative emotions which significantly affect emotional and psychological stability (Van Kleef and Lange 2020); decreased level of cognitive processes and memory deterioration (Yin and Smith 2020). Truly, the costs to the organization of power holders succumbing to power are enormous. As such, misuse of power by managers can be a significant factor contributing to reduced level of performance of individual subordinate employees and, consequently, the entire organizations.

At the same time, not all power holders misuse power and develop negative manifestations of power possession, what another solid stream of research shows as well (e. g., Huang and Tian 2021; Sassenberg et al. 2014). There are many managers who do outstanding

job in positively developing their subordinates and their organizations, when everyone wins. It is logical to conclude that in their quest for ways toward performance improvement, organizations deserve to know whether power misuse of their managers is, indeed, a problematic factor and needs to be addressed.

Research Question

Although misuse of power in organizations has attracted significant attention, still there is a noticeable gap in research in terms of diagnosing whether a manager really fell prey to power misuse. As found in literature, a sizable number of authors conducted research to measure organizational *power* via creating and validating new instruments or by using the established ones (e.g., Galić et al. 2021; Kocur and Mandal 2018). However, there is noticeable lack of research in terms of measuring supervisors' *power misuse*, and such research has been less comprehensive. Therefore, the Research Question this paper is guided by is: *development of an instrument to measure power misuse of managers as viewed by their subordinates.* This instrument is developed for the managers in manufacturing and service industries where groups of employee report to a manager.

Why is the identified RQ important?

According to abundant research, misuse of power (without any external control or self-control) is almost inevitable because, to a significant extent, possession of power affects people on the physiological level without individuals being fully consciously aware of this (e.g., Dekkers et al. 2019; Scheepers and Knight 2020; Tobore 2023; Yin and Smith 2020). As Foulk et al. suggested (2018), "leaders may enact abusive behavior… not because they are terrible individuals, but because of situational primes… thus, leaders should be aware of the potential corrupting effects that power may have on them" (p. 675).

A survey can create such an awareness. It can serve as a powerful check-and-feedback mechanism to demonstrate to the power holder themselves as well as to the organization how things are going with the use of power by a specific manager. The manager will continue a chosen managerial behavior if the feedback is positive, and s/he will be asked to change it if not. Such actions have a strong potential to lead to organizational performance improvement.

The Final Survey Created

The final validated survey with good psychometric properties created in this article is the following:

1. Does your supervisor follow the general rules and norms, which everyone else in the organization is expected to follow?

2. Is your supervisor willing to admit mistakes?

3. Does your supervisor treat everyone in the organization (department/function) equally?

4. Is the supervisor willing to take advice from subordinates/you?

5. Does your supervisor view subordinates as important contributors to the success of the department/function/organization?

A Survey Is Created and Tested. What's Next?

A number of researchers (e.g. Guinote 2007; Wee et al. 2017) suggested that managers could fully display the negative consequences of power misuse or they might consciously control them. The factor that makes the difference seems to be the value of doing so for the power holder's personal interests (Fehr et al. 2013). This newly developed survey can serve as an organizational mechanism which attaches the powerholder's willingness to consciously control their use of power to their personal goals of successful career development in their respective organization or/and in their respective business field. For example, including an assessment of a

manager's use of power in their Annual Performance Review, which usually affects financial renumeration and career promotion may serve this purpose. Having an organizational structure in place which assesses the way managers use their power and attaches consequences to this may be very effective to motivate managers to use their power for the benefit of their organizations. The proper use of organizational power can lead to great organizational improvement (Husain et al. 2020; Scholl et al. 2018; Wylezalek and Podkowinska 2018). The suggested survey can be an effective factor in such a structure.

The suggested approach has a potential of improving an organization. If utilized by many organizations in a country, such an approach can potentially lead to improvement of economic development of a country. The entire society will be happier and healthier if organizational power misuse is controlled. The suggested survey may be a meaningful contribution to this.

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