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This Evidence Summary Paper will examine the effect of referent power on various aspects of organizational management.

The article, “The influence of managerial power and credibility on knowledge acquisition attributes” examines the extent to which the five base managerial powers affect self-managing teams’ willingness to collaborate and share knowledge. It reveals that referent power, also known as “personality power,” does not facilitate specific behavioral skills such as communication, negotiation and organization, which are essential to teamwork and knowledge transfer (John D. Politis, 2005).

To determine the correlation between managerial power and knowledge acquisition and sharing, the article adheres to two substantially proved principles: (1) Organizational development and competitive advantage is and will increasingly be highly contingent on the exchange of tacit knowledge among employees and (2) credibility, a manager’s perceived power, is revelatory of knowledge diffusion. In other words, getting employees to share information, as opposed to retaining it, will give an organization edge over its contemporaries. However, since history has conditioned employees to think that the sole custody of knowledge is beneficial, it takes a specific managerial power to align self-interest with organizational objectives, self-interest being the tendency to harbor knowledge.

Research has shown that the type of managerial power most effective in initiating and catalyzing the dissemination of knowledge is expert power, since managers who provide employees with special knowledge are perceived as reliable and capable. Though a manager yielding referent power is passionate and likeable, he does not encourage employees to monitor his or her performance through teamwork. This is in large part is due to the fact referent power isn’t equated with capability. In environments such as that of a self-managing team, behavioral skills aren’t organic. As a result, employees look to management to create and develop attributes

associated with knowledge acquisition. Since referent power isn't acknowledged to be influential by employees, it has a negative influence on employees' willingness to share knowledge.

The environment of a workplace strongly influences an employee's behavior. Among the various stimuli affecting employee behavior, supervisor power constitutes a significant impetus for employees. The article, "Effects of perceived power of supervisor on subordinate stress and motivation: The moderating role of subordinate characteristics" focuses on the effects of supervisor power on employee stress and motivation. The subordinate characteristics, locus of control and self-esteem serve as mediators in the experiment, in that they are manifestations of motivation and stress respectively and provide employee characterizations (A.R. Elangovan & Jia Lin Xie, 1999).

For example, employees are divided into internals and externals in regards to their locus of control. Internal view what happens to them as under his control, whereas externals view what happens to them as determined by outside factors. This differentiation accounts for both types of employees, since different employees are affected, if at all, to different extents. Similarly, self-esteem is divided into employees with low self-esteem who are more reactive to supervisor influence, and those with high self-esteem who aren't. Employees in all four categories were tested to measure perceived supervisor power.

Referent power was conceived as that which 'makes me feel personally accepted,' and as such, externals had higher motivation and lower stress compared to internals placed under referent power. Thusly, referent power was positively related to a supervisor's referent power for externals, but negatively related to internals. Furthermore, in response to referent power, externals added to organizational productivity more so than internals through their increased levels of motivation. In contrast, due to their relatively high levels of stress in comparison to those of externals, internals

had higher lower job performance due to absenteeism, tardiness and turnover. For organizations, this means an increase in cost for internals subjected to referent power.

The article, “A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates’ style of handling conflict, and job performance” explores the correlation of subordinates’ perceptions of supervisory bases to two conflict-management styles (problem solving and bargaining) and job performance, also known as criterion variables. The results revealed the following: (1) a confrontational or integrating style in which an employee has high concern for self and others, was related to the effective conflict management, (2) a dominating style in which an employee has high concern for self and low concern for others and an avoiding style in which an employee has low concern for self and others are related to ineffective conflict management. Thusly, to positively influence many subordinates, a supervisor would have to employ a power base appealing to many different perceptions (M. Afzalur Rahim , David antonini & Clement Psenicka, 2001).

The power that is most effective in positively influencing the aforementioned criterion variables is referent power. This is because supervisors yielding referent power have high emotional intelligence (EQ), which provides them with a relational ability that is otherwise unachievable with just training and smarts. As a result, they are better able to accommodate subordinates’ needs. Furthermore, studies showed that expert power positively influenced legitimate power. In other words, subordinates like to identify and associate with a supervisor who posses expert power. This is an amalgamation of both referent and expert powers, which are based on subordinates’ attraction and want to emulate personal attributes he or she finds admirable in a supervisor, and subordinates’ attraction to a supervisor’s cognitive capabilities, respectively. Therefore, the positive subordinate perception of expert power adds onto the positive perception of referent power.

Referent power in turn positively affected problem-solving style and negatively affected bargaining style. Problem-solving positively influenced job performance, but bargaining style did not significantly affect job performance. Overall, the experiment suggests that managers can enhance their subordinates' job performance through better conflict management by using more referent power. Increases in job performance would come about through an increase in creative solutions by subordinates, less employee turnover, and a decrease in absenteeism.

The article, "Antecedents of Influence Outcomes" studies the effect of agent powers on target commitment as manifested by compliance or resistance. Unlike prior studies, this experiment functions on the ultimately proven principle that power, influence tactics and the content of an influence attempt are separate factors that effect target commitment. Agent powers and their respective content factors for a specific incident were measured by a short questionnaire. The questionnaire pertaining to referent power asked the following questions: (1) how well do you like this person? (2) this is the type of person you respect or admire (3) how essential is this request for the performance of the work? And (4) does the request involve doing something that is pleasant and enjoyable? For all the aforementioned questions, an employee could circle in a range of 1-4, 1 being the least important and 4 being the most important (Gary ` , Helen Kim & Cecilia M. Faibe, 1996).

An effective manager was one who showed the ability to influence his subordinates, peers and superiors in the face of the "content factors" mentioned above. An influence attempt in which a supervisor used consultation, inspirational appeals, strong rational persuasion, but not pressure tactics was said to account for the highest rate of target commitment. However, since the study examines the relationship not only from a supervisor to a subordinate, different influence attempts have different effects depending on the relationship dynamic. For example, consultation and

inspirational appeals were found useful in downward (from higher up to subordinate) and lateral (among peers).

Unlike other agent powers, referent power positively affected the outcome of an influence attempt regardless of the tactics used and the content factors. Many participants in the study revealed this was because even though they were not particularly inclined to carry out certain tasks, they did so out of friendship with the agent and a desire to maintain this close friendship in the future. However, targets of the study asserted this. Agents of the study, those yielding agent powers, provided assertions of their own, but they could only speculate a target's level of enthusiasm. An agent was subjected to "impression management tactics", or when a target pretends to be enthusiastic about an agents' request to make a favorable impression. Overall, the article shows that a manager's use and cultivation of referent power makes it easier for him to gain co-operation from people, regardless of how important, feasible or enjoyable a task was perceived to be. Target commitment, as this is also known, then increases productivity within an organization.

The article, "Supervisor Power Bases, Co-operative Behavior and Organizational Commitment" analyzes the influence of manager power bases on each other and on subordinate co-operative behavior and organizational commitment. Specifically, the study is conducted on several Spanish organizations during a transition period from dictatorship to democracy in the country as a whole. These drastic changes trickled down to organizational management in companies, calling for a change in management style. As a result, this study was especially revelatory, as it studied the potential for influencing subordinates of organizations in a changing as opposed to a static environment (Lourdes Munduate & Miguel A. Dorado, 1998).

Results from the study show that personal power bases, a person's abilities or skills were associated with lower levels of conflict than were position power bases, hierarchal status. In other

words, managers yielding personal power bases were more successful in ensuring subordinate cooperation and commitment. This was essential in Spain more so than in other countries, since managers had to try to win the commitment of members in order to make the proposed changes needed for an increasingly new and democratic work setting.

More specifically, results showed that both reward power and expert power had a positive influence on referent power, a personal power base. Referent power in turn, positively influenced both co-operative behavior and organizational commitment in a changing environmental setting. The study stresses that subordinates' commitment correlated strongly with general satisfaction and that both commitment and satisfaction correlated significantly with self-reported performance. This means that referent power, which can induce subordinates' desired outcomes, appeases resistance to change.

In four of the five aforementioned studies, referent power was the managerial power base most positively associated with important facets of organizational management such as target and organizational commitment, motivation and productivity. In turn, each of these factors work to improve overall employee performance, ultimately providing companies with creative solutions they would have otherwise not had. It is implicit throughout all five articles that referent power provides a touch of humanity in a contrastingly regimented and disciplined environment. This aspect of referent power is what allows employees to identify with managers.

The only exception to this was the effect of referent power on employees' willingness to share information with each other. This may well be attributed to the fact that a commonly instilled way of thinking has been "knowledge is power"- an idea that suggests one hoards knowledge. Also known as "the folly of wishing for A while rewarding B", this way of thinking hopes to create productive working environments, while disallowing for the most important aspect of productivity in a global work setting: team work. With employees seeking to better their own

positions within a company, they don't communicate well enough to better their organization as a whole. In such situations, referent power isn't received well by employees because they tend to associate with supervisors who show capability through knowledge. Referent power in this case, doesn't provide a desirable association with the acquisition of knowledge.

This contrasts the notion set forth by the fifth study, which stated that a manager yielding referent power could get an employee to commit to a task he or she might not have eventually wanted to do. If this is true, should not employees be willing to share information under a manager utilizing a referent power base? After all, the fourth study is conducted in a changing environment. The transition from sequestering knowledge to changing knowledge is also a transition, but in perspective. Why then does referent power have a positive effect on organization commitment in a changing work environment in study four, but a negative effect on a change in thinking in study one?

Works Cited:

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