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#### SOCIAL POWER IN ORGANIZATIONS: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### ABSTRACT

Organizational behaviour could be understood around some key concepts perhaps one of the most critical of which is social power. Regardless of the power holder and power types, social power could be prevalent for any types of organizations if something is being performed. Although social power have begun to formulate since 20th. century, people in the past, especially governor or forerunner of society, had also used power sources to affect each other some of the most widespread of which are charismatic and traditional authority. In modern and postmodern management world, more interactive, communicative and humanistic power types have become prominent to appeal the members of the organizations where as bureaucratic and mechanic types were prevalent at the beginning of former century. This article have intended to analyse social power types formulated by scholars from past to now briefly.

**Keywords:** Social Power, Power Types, Leader-Member Interaction, Authority, Power Holder

# ÖRGÜTLERDE SOSYAL GÜÇ KONUSUNA TEORİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

#### ÖZET

Örgütsel davranışlar güç ilişkilerine göre şekillenmekte ve bütün sosyal ilişkiler bir çeşit güç ilişkisini yansıtmaktadır. Güç türünden ve onu kullanandan bağımsız olarak her örgütsel etkinliğin arka planında bir tür güç ilişkisini görmek mümkündür. Bu anlamda güç, bireylerin sosyal yaşamda diğer insanları etkilemek için kullandıkları yetenek olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Gücü kullanan kişinin tarzına, çalışanlarla olan iletişim biçimine ve örgüt iklimine göre farklı sınıflandırmalara ayrılan güç konusu, genel anlamda karizmatik, yasal ve geleneksel güç türleri şeklinde alt kategorilere ayrılabildiği gibi daha ayrıntılı olarak ödül, zorlayıcı, yasal, karizmatik, uzmanlık ve bilgi güç türleri şeklinde sınıflandırmalara da tabi tutulmuştur. Bu çalışmada geçmişten günümüze kadar örgütsel yaşamda geçerli olan güç ilişkileri irdelenmekte ve teorik bir çerçeve sunulması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Güç, Güç Türleri,

Lider-Üye Etkileşimi, Otorite, Güç Sahibi



#### 1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

Organizations are the dominant institution in the modern world. People come together to accomplish some things, jobs, works or task that they are unable to do by themselves. It is a kind of interactive or communicative process that people affect each other in organisations to achive the goals. While some people play central role in a group with their natural characteristics or charisma, some try to be effective depending on position and the others come into prominence by expertise. Anyway, there are continuous and interactive process that has been the fact for all organizations whenever people come together and power is one of the basic concepts that plays critical pole within organizations.

Power is one of the key concepts for organizations that enable managers to achieve the goals. Social power is defined as an ability to control others and characteristically defined as inclined to coercion. Coercion could be both legitimate, straitforward and behaviour alteration as a result of psychological pressure. People tend to accept social compliance by imitating the groups. Whether it is formal or informal, group membership has a strong psychological impact on most people. A group can have many influence on its members, perhaps the most significant of which is that individuals stifle their own preferences in favour of the group's code of behaviour. The Solomon Asch experiment is an example of group effect over people that person was consciously influenced by the false response of the control group although knowing the answer for sure (Berkowitz, 1991, 274; Kuokkanen ve Leino, 2000, 238; Rollinson, 2002, 322; Gibson, et al, 2003, 277; Brauer ve Bourhis, 2006, 611).

Leader's effectiveness in organization is to some extend bound to power sources they have. It is the leader who moves human and material sources in order to achieve the organizational goals, had no other choice than to organize members, or he had to do all the jobs by himself It is leaders' inspiration, vision and ability to transform huge mass into organization and complex human strive into performance. Cooperation and coordination are the keys of group effectiveness when leader activates members and provide support of subordinates and surroundings (Koçel, 1989, 241; Pfeffer, 1992, 27; Drucker, 1998, 232). Synergy, as a result of group performance, is the key that contemporary organizations targetted to succeed. All public and private organizations have been better comprehended humanistic side of management since 19th century and had to give up Tayloristic approach. Social organizations are flagrantly open systems in that input of energies and the conversion of output into further energetic input consist of transactions between the organizations and its environment. By doing so, all these factors contribute to enhance the power of leaders as well as socialisation, cultural norms, ability to cope with ambiguity, informal groups, hierarchy, and participation of employees to decision making is crucial (Wilson, 1992, 11; Osland, 1994, 71).

# 2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

Social power that one of the key subjects of organizational studies needs to be underlined enough in order for clear understanding for interpersonal relations. Whether it is sometimes interchangeably used with influence strategies, any person could sometimes apply social power depending their social status. No matter how superior or inferior a person is, relations between people could reflect some degree of social power. For this, it worth to tackle the social power issue in terms of organizational analysis and by the perspective of theoreticians in the literature. In this study, definition of social



power and its historical backround have been analysed from past to present.

# 3. POWER SOURCES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT (TARİHSEL BAĞLAMDA GÜÇ KAYNAKLARI)

The earlier written document about the role of power in management was reported to be in religious context that were mainly about advice and testament of the wise men in ancient civilizations. The basic concept of the management also had appeared before Medieval. It is also asserted that the artistic craft and technical competencies are in some respect keys to be leader in Mesopotamia and clergyman refers themselves to God they need more power to govern to society (Shafritz ve Hyde, 1992, 1; Bursalıoğlu, 2003, 2). Organization and management styles of Egyiptian Pyramids keep secrecy even today of how they were built in that times, military strategies of long lasted wars between Turks and Chinese, democracy backrounds of Ancient Greeks shaped by the advice of Aristotle, Socrates and Platon, leadership and legislative procedure in governmental process of prophets Moses and Mohammed had been the earliest examples of management practises. Charismatic authority of leaders so unlimited that over time, traditional heredity succession continued and reached to the medieval. The major figures of administrators are sultans and clergymen before the modern management thought. Managerial power generally rooted in mainly due to traditional, charismatic or magical authority (Özalp and et al. 1997, 20).

In pre-scientific times philosophers, prophets, commanders and kings had revealed speeches about human nature, loyalty, solidarity and governmental procedures for their society. Wise men in far East histories such as Laotzse, Confucian, Buddha had underlined the positive sides of human nature and cooperation with others. Aristotle, Socrates, Machiavelli, Castiglione were the ones that won a name for their unique ideas of society in their times. The characteristics of good leader and successfull sultans had been documented and advised by the famous and wise Turk statesman such as Yusuf Has Hacip, Farabi, Gazali, Nizamulmülk, Ibn Haldun, Sarı Mehmet Pasha (Bursalıoğlu, 2003, 7; Başaran, 2000, 45).

At the beginning of 18th. and 19th century empowerment, power transfer and share to those who are managed had begun to be discussed that were belonged to superiors in the past. French theoretician Montesquieu had underlined diffuse of power within society in order for democracy. Power cumulation is crucial threat to hinder freedom of poeple and division of power is essential point of administration. Socio-politic philosopher Tocquieville pointed the demise of limiting character of centralization and bureaucracy, then advised decentralization and division of legislation, execution and jurisdiction (Zeitlin, 1997, 92).

#### 4. POWER PERCEPTION IN MODERN WORLD (MODERN DÜNYADA GÜÇ ALGISI)

Significance and impetus of the production process and communication style heve required today and future could be renewed (Drucker, 1998, 33). Reward for high efficiany and effectiveness, coercion for failure were the basic principle of Tayloristic management style that is considered irrelevant and unconsidered for workers. Organizational behaviour have been emerged by counter dependency between subordinate and superiors. The dimension of the power in organizations created by leaders and their considerations for members and perception of members towards leader. Power is a kind of blood that enliven organization and powerless in organizations are due to patronizing behaviours. Leaders who feel unsecure in organization



usually tend to apply coercion. As a result, unplanned use of power in organization have caused aimless, ineffective and commanding style of management (Lung, 1992, 179).

Power use in schools could be visible when principal targetted to achieve gools in organization. A wide range of power tactics can be identified some of which are commonly used in specific contextual settings. Schools are also identified as economic, politic and social system that are usually power bounded. Decentralization, decision making, power and politics are the contemporary concepts that affect power use in schools (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, Mc Carthy and Wirt, 2004, 232). Bush (1995) stated that studies about effective management have increased since 1980 that leadership was the topic of central debate. Reform, restructuring and innovation calls have been intensified, motivational factors in schools instead of coercion have been focused. Power use in schools have been subjected to debate in different perspective in literature. More than one power source could be seen in schools that expert and referent powers emerge together generally, coercive and legitimate powers have been less relational to each other, and coercive generally emerges alone (Warren, 1968, 955). Although relationship between teacher-student and teacher-principal have sometimes based on symbolic authority use, it is rare to generalize it (Hoy and Miskel, 2001, 217).

Power and authority are also the subject of philosophical consideration. Power and information are usually used in same context that can be viewed in schools. Principals as power holder generally depends to legitimate power. Formal and informal power relations are generally observed between teachers and principals. Although formal structure of schools entails some sort of formal authority that is legitimate power, informal power that principal sometimes need to apply. Legitimacy and rules connected with formal authority where as values, senses and climate are related with informal authority (Marshall, 1996; Hoy and Miskel, 2001, 220).

Referent power that were prevalent in traditional organizations have become to replace by bureaucratic authority when mass production had begun to dominate in industrialization process after technological developments and social progress had gain impetus in choatic times, then expertise in organizations and transformational leadership had begun to be discussed more to appeal the needs and expectations of organizations. Empowerment is another strategic concept that have been debated to achieve organizational goals and provide effectiveness. It is devolution process of some degree of authority to subordinates when to make decision in organizations. It is alleged that total quality, team spirit and shared decision making are the process of empowerment in organization. To what extent subordinates should be empowered and who manages this process are keys to discuss. It will be more common that traditionally dominant power types such as legitimacy and coercion have better been transformed into humanistic styles. It has also come to agenda not only teachers but also students should been involved to decision making process in order to alleviate suppression, boredom and unwilling atmosphere of schools. In spite of the fact that wide range of power use have been classified, it is also the subject of debate to which power sources best suit certain organizational settings. Situational approach is seem to best applicable so as to appeal different kinds of members in organizations when talking about schools. It is asserted that principal should have wide variety of choices and alternatives to motivate teachers and provide suitable learning setting as an instructional leader. Transformational leadership is identified as a bridge between leader and subordinate that is focusing on vision, mission, synergy, open communication, and



shared decision making. It differs from other types in the point to manage chaotic and continously transforming environment and to plan future strategically (Bulach, 2000; Achilles, Keedy and High, 1999, 34; Balcı, 2001; Şişman, 2002; Turan ve Syn, 2001).

When principal enacts power sources in organization such as expertise, coercion, legitimacy, reward and referent it is possible to face with reactions that mostly depend to subordinates personality and their perceptions about organizations. Leaders have to estimate possible reactions of subordinates before applying to power and manage the organization effectively. Subordinates react variously to powerholder when they are subjected to power in organization that are listed Table 1 below (Rollinson, 2002, 414):

Table 1. Power bases and possible reactions of subordinates (Tablo 1. Güc kaynakları ve astların olası tepkileri)

(Tablo 1. Güç kaynakları ve astların olası tepkileri)							
REWARD POWER	Committed	Will most likely accede if subordinate believes request is important to power holder					
	Compliant	Will normally accede if subordinate rewarded and the reward is granted in an impersonal way					
	Resistant	Subordinate is unlikely to accede if reward is given in an arrogant or manipulative way					
COERCIVE POWER	Committed	Subordinate is unlikely to commit him or herself under coercive pressure					
	Compliant	Subordinate will usually comply if request is not applied punitively but helpfully					
	Resistant	Subordinate is likely to resist if request is applied in a hostile or manipulative way					
REFERENT POWER	Committed	Subordinate is likely to accede if request is presented personally in a subtle way					
	Compliant	Subordinate will probably accede if request is seen as important to power holder					
	Resistant	Will probably resisted if subordinate belives request will bring harm to leader					
LEGITIMATE POWER	Committed	Subordinate is likely to accede to request if it is viewed as appropriate and made in a polite way					
	Compliant	Subordinate will comply if request is seen as legitimate					
	Resistant	Subordinate will probably resist if request does not seem legitimate					
EXPERT POWER	Committed	Will accede if power holder and subordinate share same goals and request is persuasively made					
	Compliant	Subordinate will probably comply even when apathetic about goals so long as request persuasively made					
	Resistant	Subordinate is likely to oppose power holder if request is made in an arrogant way					

- Committed Subordinate tends to identify with and accept the power holder; he or she is prepared to put additional effort into the task where is seen as important to the power holder.
- Complaint Subordinate will normally work at a reasonable pace, so long as the power holder's wishes do not involve additional effort.



• Resistant subordinate is someone in conflict with the power holder and, in order to thwart the power holder's wishes, he or she will look for an opportunity to neglect the task.

Using these subordinate reactions and applying them in different context could lead emergence of power bases. The outcomes of different subordinate reactions were forecasted in respons to power holder's request.

There could be seen some basic and similar concepts developed by scholars although slightly differ one another when looked literature closely to define the power sources in organizations. Studies about social power had been done basically after distinguished scholar Kurt Lewin's student Jhon R.P. French and B. Raven. The classification about organizational power has later been reformulated by Raven (Bruins, 1999, 11; Penner, 1999, 158). French and Raven's classification about social power have been appreciated one of the most approved types in organizational psychology and behaviour. After Raven's reformulation, the original five dimensional power sources in 1965, additional informative power bases results in six, later it has been extended to fourteen dimensional power types in 1990's. Adopted version of power classification could be seen in social science between superior-subordinate, psycholog-teacher, supervisor-teacher, principal-teacher, instructor-student (Koslowsky, Schwarzwald and Ashuri, 2001, 456). The five specific power bases consisted of coercive, reward, legitimate, referent and expert power bases. Expert and referent are personal power bases because they were derived from power holder where as legitimate, reward and coercive powers were positional bases since they typically had stemmed from a position in hierarchy (Nesler, Quigley, Aguinis, Lee ve Tedeschi, 1999, 751).

Organization's climate, culture and members' expectations affect power holders' attitude. It is rare to observe coercive power in schools where the educational level is high and professional, whereas it is possible if the condition is opposite. Referent, legitimate and expert power are considered more democratic in respect to reward and coercive powers. It is reported that changes in economic politic and social settings have also transformed the roles of principals. Principals have to renew their leadership roles after the debates of decentralization, accountability of students' learning and teaching process of teachers. It is better for leader to transform their legitimate, directive and centralized style into cooperative and shared decision making process with teachers that can guide schools (Hall, 1977, 209).

Among managers, downward and lateral use of power can be changeable according to the context. Power strategies of reward and coercion were greater for middle managers than for lower level managers. It is indicated that the reward, coercion and legitimacy than do lower level leaders. People of higher status were perceived as employing harsh strategies and sancions where as people of low status resorted to weak strategies such as friendliness (Schwarzwald, Koslowsky ve Allouf, 2005, 647).

Theoreticians seem to state similar meanings by using different concepts when looked closer to table. Technical, personal, referent, coercive and legitimate power types are mostly preferred by scholars in order to analyse organisational interaction. It could also put forth that different conceptualiztions in table are overlapping since theoreticians professed similar or same root although uttered disparate.

Table 2 illustrates the common concepts revealed in literature that were discussed by scholars underlying different characteristics.



Table 2.	Common	points o	of the	power	bases	in	literature
(Tablo	2. Güç	: kaynakl	arına	ilişkir	n orta	k n	oktalar)

	Max Weber (1900)	French and Raven (1959)	Amitai Etzioni (1964)	Kenneth Leithwood (1980)	Henry Mintzberg (1987)	T. Sergiovanni (1992	Jhon Kotter (1996)	C. Hales (1997)	C. Bulach (2001)	C. Evans 2001)
Traditional	*									
Legitimate	*	*							*	
Coercive		*	*						*	
Reward		*							*	
Referent	*	*					*			
Technical		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Marketing				*						
Decentralization				*						
Strategic management				*						
Economic			*					*		
Normative			*					*		
Buraucratic						*				*
Control of Sources					*					
Personal					*	*			*	
Moral						*			*	
Physical								*		
Situational									*	
Sincerity							*			
Compliance							*			
Psychological										*

Power in organization have been attracted many scholars attention in sociology and psychology, one of the most well known of all is Weber. Each scholars has made classifications which are overlapping conceptually in some degree. One of the most distinguished classification of these belonged to Weber that are charismatic, traditional and legal authority (Katz ve Kahn, 1966, 206; King 1983). Leithwood classified leaders' effectiveness depending on the subjects of decentralization, expertise, strategic management and environmental issues (Leithwood, 2001) Etzioni identified power use in organization as coercive, normative and economic (Etzioni, 1961, 5). According to Sergiovanni (1992) there are four basic administrative power based behaviours to provide effectiveness in organization that are bureaucratic, personal, technical and moral. Mintzberg (1987, 365) defined power sources in organization as controlling the sources, technical craft and information where as Hales classified authority as physical, economic, informative and normative. Kotter (1996, 427) underlined informal types of authority in organizations that are sense of sincerity, loyalty to leader's expertise, attribution to leader and devotion with leader. Evans (2001, 158) similarly divided authority as bureaucratic, technical and psychological.

Fiedler (1959, 362) summarized several studies about leadership, group effect and situational factor comparing management style and group effectiveness.

 Group effectiveness greatly depends to leaders' style and his relation to subordinats.



- The most influential leadership style emerges when group is ready for power to be exerted. Leadership and compliance of subordinats is directly related to power use in organizations.
- Since leader effectiveness depends style of leadership, both factors required to go hand in hand. The fact that it is extremely hard to change the style of poeple, situational factors could be reorganized as a result of organizational engineering.
- Formal authorities include legitimate, reward and coercion where as informal authorities consist of expert and referent power that are emphasizing the personal characteristics in organizations. There is positive and direct relation between formal authority and hierarchical structure of organizations.

It is argued that although gender usually considered as a personal variable in social research, it also reflects the influence of one's cultural milieu. Men are expected to be more independent competetive, active, self confident and adventureus where as women considered as sensitive affectionate, obedient and conforming, similarly, use of harsh bases are more acceptable among men and less so among women. Depertures from these expectation are viewed as violating gender related social pattern of behaviour. Empirical findings on power usage have shown that men resort more frequently to harsh strategies than women do (Schwarzwald and Koslowsky, 1999, 25). The assumption that individual who are low self esteem tend to be expected more harsh power couldn't be supported by studies. Indirect use of power has said to be more effective in organization. Group members attributed to be more powerful is the dominant perceived assumption (Lippitt, et al, 1959, 247).

Although direct researches about principals' power resources in school settings had been limited in literaturete, there were several studies had investigated the power usage in human resource management and organizational effectiveness in social psychology. It is essential to analyze the current situation in order to delve into power usage in organizations. Power use could result in chaos and conflict unless it suits to situation and individuals where as only one power source could no longer provide effectiveness. It is common that 85 percent of company managers supported that human resource is more precedent than the other factors for increasing human performance (Hall, 1977, 212; Güzelay, 2007, 3)

### 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION (TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ)

Power as a key concept, shapes the relations of people in organisations. It has played important role in the past in the forms of traditional, charismatic, coercive etc. to facilitate organizational life and enact performance. It is and will also be the dominant figure of the life whenever poeple come together no matter how different and unique it is uttered in any time and any place in the world. Leaders eventually need some sort of power to lead members, superiors have to apply some to perform the task and principals should have some to motivate teachers. Anyway, regardless of the time, despite the changeable characteristics depending of the context, leaders need power sources to achive the goals in organizations. Whether it is stated verbally or not, traditional or modern, technical or humanistic group leaders have to be aware of the power sources that is best suited to organisation they are running to.



#### NOTICE (NOT)

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