

# Power and Politics

(13-1)

# Concept of 'Power'

- **Power** refers to a capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B, so that B acts in accordance with A's wishes.
  - Power may exist but not be used.
- Probably the most important aspect of power is that it is a function of **dependence**.
- A person can have power over you only if he or she controls something you desire.

# Five Bases of Power

## ➤ Formal Power

- Coercive Power
- Reward Power
- Legitimate Power

## ➤ Personal Power

- Expert Power
- Referent Power

# Five Bases of Power

- Which Bases of Power Are Most Effective?
  - Personal sources are most effective.
  - Both expert and referent power are positively related to employees' satisfaction with supervision, their organizational commitment, and their performance, whereas reward and legitimate power seem to be unrelated to these outcomes.
  - Coercive power usually backfires.

# Dependence in Power Relationships

## ➤ The General Dependency Postulate

- When you possess anything that others require but that you alone control, you make them dependent upon you and, therefore, you gain power over them.
- Dependence, then, is inversely proportional to the alternative sources of supply.

# Dependence in Power Relationships

- What Creates Dependence?
  - Importance
  - Scarcity
  - Nonsubstitutability

# Influence Tactics

- Research has identified nine distinct influence tactics:
1. Legitimacy
  2. Rational persuasion
  3. Inspirational appeals
  4. Consultation
  5. Exchange
  6. Personal appeals
  7. Ingratiation
  8. Pressure
  9. Coalitions

# Influence Tactics

- Some tactics are more effective than others.
  - Rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, and consultation are most effective when the audience is highly interested in the outcomes.
  - Pressure tends to backfire.
  - Both ingratiation and legitimacy can lessen the negative reactions from appearing to “dictate” outcomes.

# Influence Tactics and Levels

## Exhibit 13-1

### Preferred Power Tactics by Influence Direction

<u>Upward Influence</u>	<u>Downward Influence</u>	<u>Lateral Influence</u>
Rational persuasion	Rational persuasion	Rational persuasion
	Inspirational appeals	Consultation
	Pressure	Ingratiation
	Consultation	Exchange
	Ingratiation	Legitimacy
	Exchange	Personal appeals
	Legitimacy	Coalitions

# Power and Corruption

## ➤ Does power corrupt?

- Power leads people to place their own interests ahead of others.
  - Powerful people react, especially negatively, to any threats to their competence.
- Power leads to overconfident decision making.
- Those most likely to abuse power are those who are low in status and gain power.
- Power doesn't affect everyone in the same way, and there are even positive effects of power.

# Political Behaviors in Work

- **Political behavior** – activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization, but that influence the distribution of advantages within the organization.
  - Outside of one's specified job requirements.
  - Encompasses efforts to influence decision making goals, criteria, or processes.
  - Includes such behaviors as withholding information, whistle blowing, spreading rumors, and leaking confidential information.

# Nature of Political Behaviors

## Exhibit 13-2 Politics Is in the Eye of the Beholder

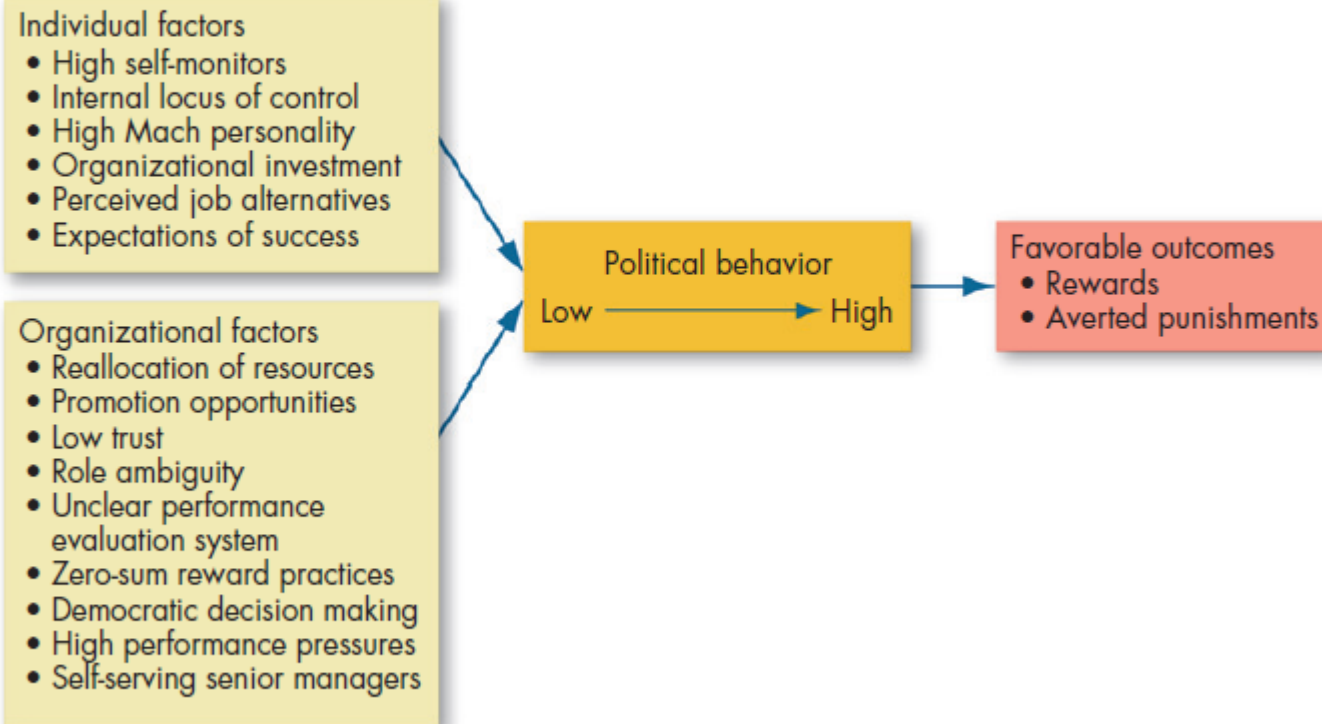
A behavior one person labels as “organizational politics” is very likely to seem like “effective management” to another. The fact is not that effective management is necessarily political, although in some cases it might be. Rather, a person’s reference point determines what he or she classifies as organizational politics. For example, one experimental study showed that power-oriented behavior performed by a permanent, tenured employee is seen as more legitimate and less harsh than the same behavior performed by a temporary employee. Take a look at the following labels used to describe the same phenomenon. These suggest that politics, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

<b>“Political” Label</b>		<b>“Effective Management” Label</b>
1. Blaming others	vs.	Fixing responsibility
2. “Kissing up”	vs.	Developing working relationships
3. Apple polishing	vs.	Demonstrating loyalty
4. Passing the buck	vs.	Delegating authority
5. Covering your rear	vs.	Documenting decisions
6. Creating conflict	vs.	Encouraging change and innovation
7. Forming coalitions	vs.	Facilitating teamwork
8. Whistle-blowing	vs.	Improving efficiency
9. Scheming	vs.	Planning ahead
10. Overachieving	vs.	Competent and capable
11. Ambitious	vs.	Career minded
12. Opportunistic	vs.	Astute
13. Cunning	vs.	Practical minded
14. Arrogant	vs.	Confident
15. Perfectionist	vs.	Attentive to detail

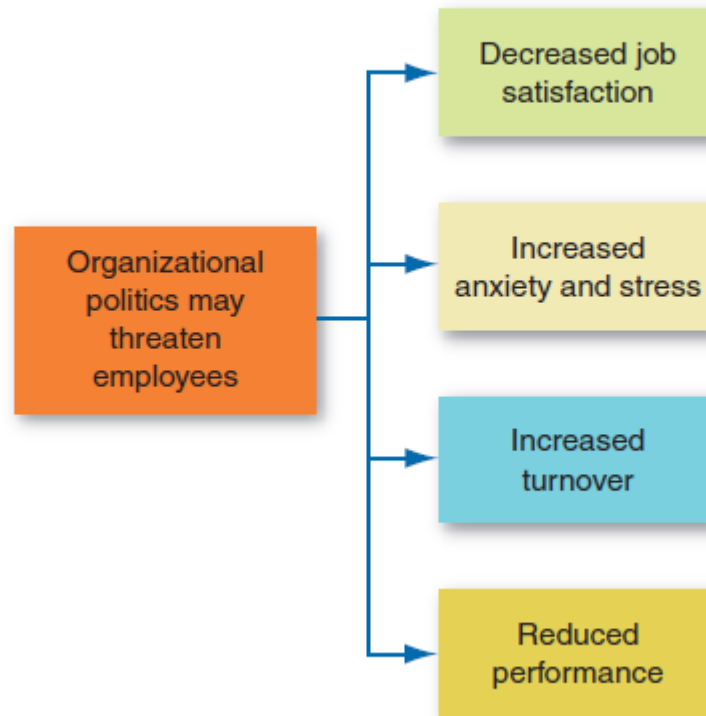
# Causes and Consequences of Political Behaviors

Exhibit 13-3

## Factors That Influence Political Behavior



# Outcomes of Work Politics

**Exhibit 13-4****Employee Responses to Organizational Politics**

# Instances of Organizational Politics

## Exhibit 13-5

### Defensive Behaviors

#### Avoiding Action

**Overconforming.** Strictly interpreting your responsibility by saying things like “The rules clearly state . . .” or “This is the way we’ve always done it.”

**Buck passing.** Transferring responsibility for the execution of a task or decision to someone else.

**Playing dumb.** Avoiding an unwanted task by falsely pleading ignorance or inability.

**Stretching.** Prolonging a task so that one person appears to be occupied—for example, turning a two-week task into a 4-month job.

**Stalling.** Appearing to be more or less supportive publicly while doing little or nothing privately.

#### Avoiding Blame

**Buffing.** This is a nice way to refer to “covering your rear.” It describes the practice of rigorously documenting activity to project an image of competence and thoroughness.

**Playing safe.** Evading situations that may reflect unfavorably. It includes taking on only projects with a high probability of success, having risky decisions approved by superiors, qualifying expressions of judgment, and taking neutral positions in conflicts.

**Justifying.** Developing explanations that lessen one’s responsibility for a negative outcome and/or apologizing to demonstrate remorse, or both.

**Scapegoating.** Placing the blame for a negative outcome on external factors that are not entirely blameworthy.

**Misrepresenting.** Manipulation of information by distortion, embellishment, deception, selective presentation, or obfuscation.

#### Avoiding Change

**Prevention.** Trying to prevent a threatening change from occurring.

**Self-protection.** Acting in ways to protect one’s self-interest during change by guarding information or other resources.

# Implications for Managers

- If you want to get things done in a group or an organization, it helps to have power.
- As a manager when you want to maximize your power, you can increase others' dependence on you.
- You will not be alone in attempting to build your power bases.
- Try to avoid putting others in a position where they feel they have no power.

# Implications for Managers

- By assessing behavior in a political framework, you can better predict the actions of others and use that information to formulate political strategies that will gain advantages for you and your work unit.
- Employees who have poor political skills or are unwilling to play the politics game generally relate perceived organizational politics to lower job satisfaction and self-reported performance, increased anxiety, and higher turnover.
- Understand and also help your employees understand the importance of becoming politically savvy.