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POWER DISTANCE AND EMPLOYEE SILENCE: A REVIEW IN THE SUPERIOR SUBORDINATE'S RELATIONSHIP

"An impact of culture differences and power distance"

Etty Harniza Harun
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Hasni Abdul Rahim
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Musdiana Mohamad Salleh
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Junaida Ismail
Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

ABSTRACT

Hofstede (1992) define culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. The purpose of this review paper is to understand how differences in culture particularly related to power distance may give effect to respond given by employees at workplace. Organizational cultures are the way people realize what goes on in their organizational environment. Meanwhile, the power distance is related to the different solution to the basic problem of human inequality in organization. Therefore, this paper aims to explore a conceptual review on the differences of power distance practised in terms of high and low orientation; and its impact toward the employee silence, as stated in the Hofstede's Theory Dimensions of Culture.

Key Words: Employee's silence, Hofstede's Theory, organizational culture, power distance,

INTRODUCTION

According to Hofstede (2001), the mental programme is already established in each individual childhood and further formed later in academic institutions or organisations. Culture is a part of mental programme. Hofstede and Minkov (2010) states that the concept of culture can best be described by naming symbols, heroes, rituals, and values as its main components. A part of that, culture also can be differed individually. Culture differences mainly related to the power distance, as an example how frequent are employee afraid to express disagreement with their superior or the way these employee responses to their management. Previous study proved that the high-power distance refers to the hierarchical structures are in place and there are rigid positions of leaders and employee. In such organizations, employee is dependent on their leader. Power is limited to a few individuals with gaps in earnings between the leader and the employees. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any organization. The level of inequality is endorsed by the employees as much as by the leaders.

POWER DISTANCE AND SILENCE

"Power distance" has been usually discussed when talk about differences in culture and how its orientation leads to treatment towards people based on a hierarchy and status in society. This paper is trying to look at how categorisation leads to how it has been played out in

organization workplace. Simply say, countries practising high power distance cultures might not feel comfortable with management approaches that decentralise authority and increase worker participation.

Hofstede (1980) defined power distance as the acceptance of inequality in terms of power between the powerful and less powerful members of organisations and societies. When the concept of power distance is well accepted in a society, it may give implications on how work is conducted in a country. The dimensions in power distance are based on the high-power distance and the low power distance. In countries practising high power distance, there's a distinct difference being put in social norms and work conduct. This practise contrasts with the practise done in countries practising low power distance. In this paper, we will try to understand whether employee's silence can be related to the practise of power distance in a certain country and organization. This is in line with a study made by Morrison and Milliken's (2000) in which they found that an employee silence is fostered in high power distance cultures to the extent managers disallowing their subordinates from asking questions or expressing their views. Similarly, a study by Mathew & Taylor (2019), also found that workers in India that emphasize on the concept of caste and elderly hierarchy bring to the effect of workers developing attitude such as "yes boss" and silence orientations towards supervisors.

EMPLOYEE SILENCE

In a human resource function, employees voice is seen as a vital role that is supposed to act as a way of communication between the superior and subordinates. As cited in Emelifeonwu &Walk (2019), employees voice should actually act as an instrument in boosting the decision-making process through the formal and informal channels with the intention to engage employees, increasing their obligations and performance (Armstrong,2006; Marchington, 2007; Newcombe, 2012; Donoghue and Siegel, 2005).

Wilkinson and Barry (2016), on the other hand explained further on the concept of voice in which it is supposed to act as a productive cooperation between capital and labour in increasing long term sustainability of a firm and emphasize on the economic welfare of the workers.

Hence, looking at the role played by voice in an organization, failure to recognize employees voice may actually lead to workers exit the company, keep silent about work issues with co-workers or being dissatisfied about what is happening at the workplace. Continual feeling of not being heard that refers to being denied in terms of employees' voice may lead further to a situation known as the employee silence.

"Employee silence" refers to the intentional suppression of information by employees from others in their organization (Johannesen, 1974). Employee silence is also said to be one of the most significant passive responses that employees display in the face of mistreatment at work (Xu et al., 2015). In understanding employee silence, researchers have listed four dimensions of silence, namely as acquiescent (disengaged behaviour), quiescent (defensive), prosocial (concern for others) silence; and opportunistic silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003; Knoll and van Dick, 2012). Further explained, acquiescent silence is defined as the action of withholding relevant ideas, information or opinion based on resignation. This happens because the subordinate's belief that there is no point in speaking up and he or she is not capable in giving influence to the situation. Quiescent silence on the other hand refers to a person with holding ideas, information or opinion as a form of protection based on fear. It may happen because of the fear of speaking up and are afraid of the consequences. Prosocial silence happens when a person withholds any information or opinion in the hope of benefitting other people in the organization. It is done willingly because of the high concern for others. The fourth dimension refers to the opportunistic silence that is withholding work related areas, information or opinion with the goal of achieving. Even worse, a person may be doing this to the extent of causing harm to others.

CONCLUSION

In general, by looking at findings from previous researcher, we came to an understanding that countries practising high power distance may lead to employee's silence in an organization. Thus, it is very interesting to figure out the factors whether silence means employees are satisfied and have respect towards their superior or silence means a sign of dissatisfaction they had towards the superior. It is also interesting to know whether employees silence in decision making as a sign of potential weakness and incompetence of the leader and is actually the reason why the leader keep on trying to avoid, responding and consulting with employees on organizational issues and make decisions on their own.

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