Chapter 8

Robbins & Judge

Organizational Behavior

14th Edition

Power and Politics

Kelli J. Schutte
William Jewell College

A Definition of Power

- **Power**
  - Power is defined as the ability to get someone to do something that you want.
  - It is the ability to make things happen in the way you want them.

Power and Dependency

- **Power**
  - The capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B so that B acts according to A's wishes

- **Dependency**
  - B's is said to depend on A when A possesses something that B requires
  - The greater B's dependence, the more power A has
  - Dependency is the key to power

- **A person can have power over you only if he/she has something you desire.**

Two Sources of Power

- **Where does power come from?**

- **Two sources of power:**
  - **Formal Power**
  - **Personal Power**

Formal Power

- **Formal Power**
  - Established by an individual's position in an organization
  - Three forms of formal power:

  - **Reward Power**
  - **Coercive Power**
  - **Legitimate Power**

Formal Power

- **Three forms of formal power:**

1. Reward Power

- Power based on the ability to distribute rewards that others view as valuable
- The management can use this power to promote, raise employee salary, and give bonus to their employees.

2. Coercive Power

- A power base dependent on fear of negative result
- It's also called punishment power
- The management can use this power to demote, transfer, fire or deny raises to their employees.

Formal Power

- **Three forms of formal power:**

3. Legitimate Power

- The formal authority to control and use resources based on a person's position in the formal hierarchy

- This comes from the level of hierarchy in which the subordinates report directly to the authority over them for decisions.

Personal Power

- **Personal Power**
  - Power that comes from an individual's unique characteristics
  - These are the most effective

Personal Power

- **Two forms of personal power:**
  - **Expert Power**
    - Influence based on special skills or knowledge
  - **Referent Power**
    - Influence based on personal liking.

Sexual Harassment: A Case of Unequal Power

- **Sexual Harassment:**
  - Any unwanted activity of a sexual nature that takes place in the workplace.

- **Sexual harassment isn't about sex – it is about abusing an unequal power relationship**
  - Harassment can damage the well-being of the individual, work group, and organization

Sexual Harassment: A Case of Unequal Power

- **Two Types of Sexual Harassment:**
  - Quid pro quo:
    - Asking for sexual favors in return for workplace advantages such as hiring, firing, promotion, or work assignment
  - Hostile environment :
    - People in the work place making sexual jokes or giving an uncomfortable looks, can cross over the line into harassment

Managerial Actions to Prevent Sexual Harassment

- **Make sure a policy against it is in place.**
- **Ensure that employees will not encounter retaliation if they file a complaint.**
- **Investigate every complaint and include the human resource and legal departments.**
- **Make sure offenders are disciplined or terminated.**
- **Set up in-house seminars and training.**

Politics: Power in Action

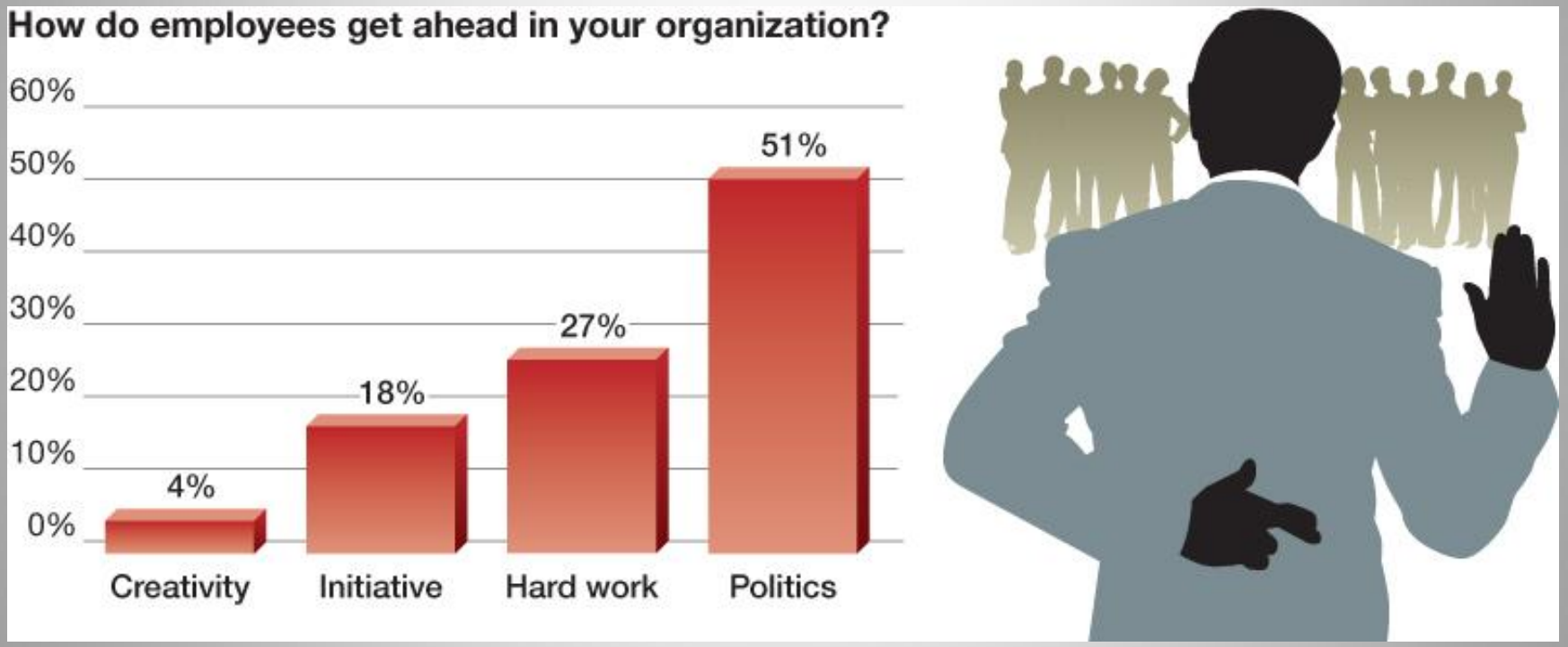
- **Political Behavior**
  - Activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization, but influence the distribution of advantages in the organization
  - These activities are not required as part of the job, but it impacts the way benefits and punishments are distributed within the organization

Types of Workplace Politics

- **Forming coalition**
  - Groupism
  - Gossiping
  - Forming negative aspect on others
- **Attacking and blaming**
  - Not accepting faults
  - Blaming others
  - Targeting on others
- **Controlling information**
  - Giving wrong information
  - Refuse to share knowledge

Describe How Politics Work in Organizations

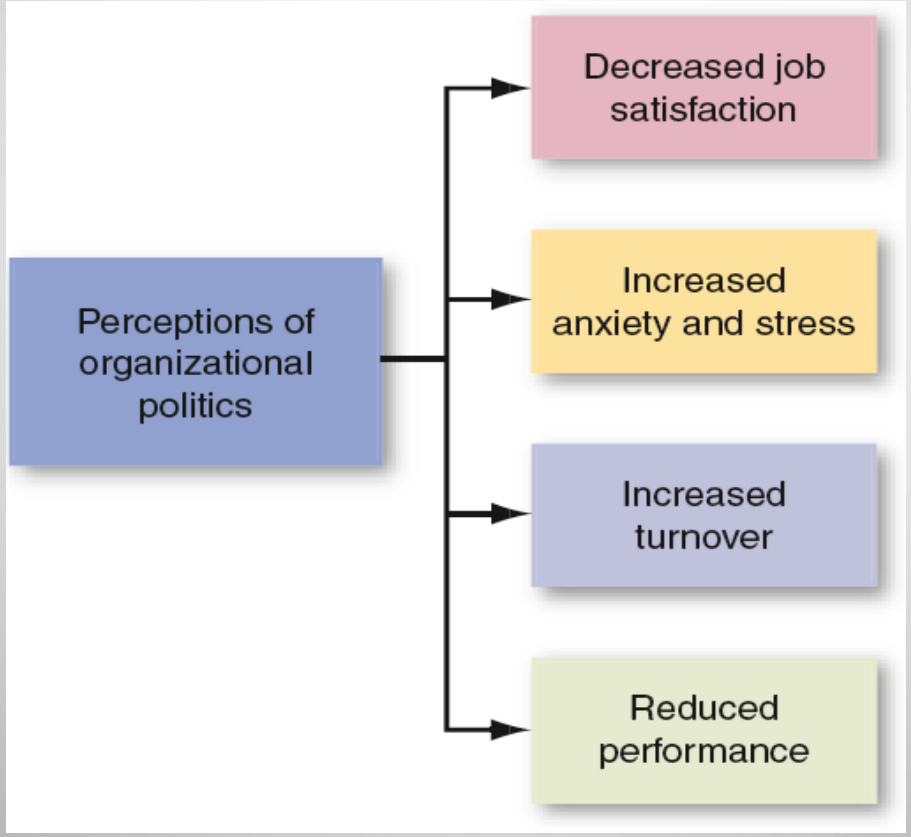
OB POLL Importance of Organizational Politics from



Source: Based on D. Crampton, "Is How Americans Feel about Their Jobs Changing?" (September 28, 2012), http://corevalues.com/employee-motivation/is-how-americans-feel-about-their-jobs-changing.

Employee Responses to Organizational Politics

- **Most employees have low to modest willingness to play politics and have the following reactions to politics:**



Global Implications

- **Politics Perceptions**
  - Negative consequences to the perception of politics seem to be fairly widespread
- **Preference for Power Tactics**
  - The choice of effective tactics is heavily dependent on the culture of the country in which they are to be used
- **Effectiveness of Power Tactics**
  - Still open to debate; too little research has been done

Summary and Managerial Implications

- **Increase your power by having others depend on you more.**
- **Expert and referent power are far more effective than is coercion.**
  - Greater employee motivation, performance, commitment, and satisfaction
  - Personal power basis, not organizational
- **Effective managers accept the political nature of organizations.**

Chapter Questions

1. **Define the following terms:**
   (i) Power
   (ii) Politics
   (iii) Sexual harassment

2. **Explain the THREE forms of formal power and TWO forms of personal power.**

3. **Give THREE examples of workplace politics.**