The Impact of #MeToo: A Review of Leaders with Supervisor Power on Employee Motivation

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Abstract
This manuscript intends to advance existing research, specifically, in gender dissimilar supervisor-employee workplace dyads by integrating #MeToo with our existing knowledge concerning supervisor power and employee motivation. With the #MeToo movement re-energized in 2017, power in leadership positions was redefined. As a result, power held by a supervisor is likely to influence outcomes based on gender and the employees' source of motivation. Supervisors who believed they were successful through influence were more likely to exhibit power to achieve success. However, employees' source of the motivation was identified as a moderating factor in those outcomes. Therefore, outcomes were dependent on the type of power the supervisor was using, as well as the source of the motivation that the employee held. Thus, presumptions could be made that those exhibiting influence in the #MeToo movement maintained an intrinsic motivation, believing they could control the outcomes of these situations.

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Compelling Phenomenon & Origination

In late 2017, the #MeToo social media campaign empowered women to come forward against prior sexual assault/harassment/inappropriate behavior they experienced, often in business settings. It began in 2006 with Tarana Burke; then, actress Alyssa Milano is credited as revitalizing it October 15, 2017 (Pflum, 2018). Within 24 hours, the "me too" phrase was used by nearly 5 million people in 12 million posts and tweeted more than 200,000 times (500,000 more times the following 24 hours) (France, 2018; Sini 2017). The #MeToo campaign highlighted situations when men in positions of power took advantage of their rank. In turn, this placed women in compromising circumstances including in the hiring and/or promotion process, among others. Prior to the #MeToo movement, victims of sexual harassment or other unwelcomed (often sexual) encounters did not feel as though they had much of a voice. They did not feel as though they could stand up for themselves after falling victim to these situations and kept silent, not reporting the instance(s) to the proper authorities. Because of the #MeToo movement, these women collectively stood together to create a voice. They were not afraid to make accusations and hold accountable those who abused their power. This movement influenced the 2018 Golden Globe Awards, as well as the 2018 State of the Union, where attendees wore black to show support and solidarity for these victimized women and other women who had not yet come forward.

The survivors of the #MeToo campaign were victims of a negative power influence, often from those in leadership roles, which affected their motivation – how they approached various situations, with whom they communicated, how they interacted with others – achieving outcomes to go *all in* as they normally would have or *just enough* to satisfy requirements. These women may or may not have been hired or promoted because of their #MeToo experience, but in each situation, the power enacted upon them made an impression on the trajectory of their professional careers, emotional well-being, and motivation.

It is fair to assume those accused supervisors (most often males) within the #MeToo movement expected some degree of respect when enacting their power over the submissive employee or potential employee (most often females). Those victimized employees (or potential employees) who had a strong internal drive to be successful would be significantly less motivated in these situations. However, these same employees would be more motivated when supervisors demonstrate expertise within their field or industry, rather than coercive power. Through this #MeToo movement, knowledge, awareness, and tolerance brought to the forefront many discussions regarding the nature of business relationships, particularly between employees and employers, and more specifically, the power dynamic within the supervisor-employee relationship.

Power Defined

It is imperative for employers to understand the impact that supervisor power has on employees. Pairing supervisors who exhibit a particular type of influence, combined with gender dissimilarity (i.e. male supervisors-female subordinates and female supervisors-male subordinates) with a distinct type of motivation (e.g. internal or external) will moderate employee motivation and therefore, may alter employees' ability to produce meaningful results. The different types of power that supervisors exhibit will lead to varying degrees of employee motivation. It is not enough to know that the different power types can influence employee motivation.

Two social psychologists, John R. P. French and Bertram Raven, researched, studied, and analyzed the notion of power in a number of circumstances. In 1959, they concluded multiple power dynamics (or bases) were potentially exemplified in a given situation. Each of these power dynamics identified by French and Raven intended to motivate individuals (or groups) in a positive manner to achieve a calculated or purposeful outcome. Jarratt and Morrison (2003) studied power decades later, and their research suggested outcomes such as *lower commitment* would result when relationships contain an imbalance of power, i.e. domination by one party over another.

The question for employers is, *when a supervisor exhibits influence in a particular manner, is the outcome different when exemplifying a specific power dynamic?* Understanding the significance of supervisor power in a professional relationship can have an impact on an employee's motivation. Consequently, these power dynamics that French and Raven (1959) identified are interrelated with one another (a supervisor can demonstrate legitimate, coercive, and expert power in one sentence), circumstantial, and/or relationship-based. Another component to consider when thinking about power is motivation and the resulting behavior of the intensity of one's beliefs. It is natural to support others with similar beliefs, whether part of a group or individually (Smith, Jost, & Vijay, 2008). For example, if an individual were to oppose the beliefs of a work group, he or she may be less likely to speak up or confront the other individual(s) due to the potential *overpowered* feeling, not respected professionally, or feeling disliked. An individual's sense of personal power was often specific to his or her relationship with that other person (or the people within the group) (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012); an individual's degree of perceived sense of personal power over another person or group was relative to whether or not that individual would be willing to address the situation with that person(s). If an individual had a high sense of personal power, the potential for confrontation would increase. Similarly, if an individual had a low sense of personal power, he or she would be less likely to challenge the person(s). Moreover, the strength of the degree to

which an individual feels positively or negatively about a given situation and how the anticipated results personally affect the individual would be another motivating factor. However, gender affects power dynamics as well.

Gender, Related to Supervisor-Employee Dyads

Gender in the workplace has been researched over multiple decades demonstrating the imbalance of power because of gender. Researchers investigated the differences between genders in leadership roles (Schuh, Hernandez Bark, Van Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, & Van Dick, 2013), further contributing to small body of research of women with leadership responsibilities (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Oakley, 2000; Schuh, et al., 2013). This paper contributes to workplace gender differences specifically related to supervisor-employee dyads. Furthermore, it argues that power held by a supervisor is likely to influence outcomes based on gender and the employees' source of motivation. Due to the cultural reaction from the #MeToo movement, it assumes that gender has the potential to influence employee motivation – whether it enhances, mitigates, or neutralizes it.

Decades ago, the discussion arose of whether or not managerial effectiveness was based on specific traits or personal characteristics, rather than gender (McClelland, & Burnham, 1976). Regardless of research results and the various achievements of multiple female professionals, gender bias remained in the workplace. Studies continued to reveal gender stereotypes in the managerial process and potential promotional process (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995) and gender bias in leadership positions (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995).

When examining gender in managerial roles, research demonstrated that the role of the gender of the supervisor influences employees in a variety of ways. Moreover, both employee tenure as well as job satisfaction (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Keiser, 2012). Other workplace research found supporting evidence that gender played a significant role in the supervisor-employee dyadic relationship as related to a number of organizational factors and outcomes, resulting in gender bias (Dobbins, Pence, Orban. & Sgro, 1983). Lastly, and to further demonstrate the value of researching supervisor-employee relationships as related to gender, a study conducted of nearly 8,000 working professionals confirmed that a supervisor's gender influenced employee job perception (Valentine & Godkin, 2000).

Locus of Control

Employees have an inherent spectrum of motivation ranging from internal (self-determined) to external (not self-determined), as identified in the self-determination theory (Ryan, Williams, & Deci, 2009). Employees can move along a continuum from those who are naturally motivated to those who are motivated due to external factors. Organizations that identify and encourage particular power dynamics for supervisors to enact coupled with the knowledge of where each employee subsides along this spectrum, could create an ideal environment for employee motivation. Thus, producing optimal results in the workplace.

Ryan, et al.'s (2009) self-determination theory, coupled with Rotter's (1966) locus of control, provide insight into an employee's source of motivation, determining whether an individual's success was interpreted based on intentional personal behavior or external forces. Those with an internal locus of control will internalize the power enacted upon them, feeling a degree of personal responsibility. Individuals with an external locus of control are likely to place blame elsewhere. Nonetheless, the perception of each leader power resulted in different

motivational outcomes for employees. Goodstadt and Hjelle (1973) argued that (pp. 194-195):

> *An individual's relative belief in the internal or external control of reinforcement is an important determinant of his expectancy of successful influence. Externally controlled persons have the expectancy that they cannot influence people or events, and therefore the externally controlled subjects... had little expectancy for successful influence in their role as supervisor. Internally controlled persons, however, do tend to believe that they have power to influence the events and people around them.*

Thus, those supervisors who believed they had the ability to be successful through influence, were more likely to exhibit power to achieve success. However, employees' source of the motivation was a moderating factor in those outcomes, that is, outcomes were dependent on the type of power the supervisor was using as well as the source of the motivation that the employee held. Thus, presumptions could be made that those exhibiting influence in the #MeToo movement maintained an intrinsic motivation (according to the self-determination theory), believing they could control the outcomes of these situations.

Anderson, John, and Keltner (2012) also performed research with respect to power and locus of control. Applied to a workplace perspective and based on the research identified within this manuscript, scholars argued that employees with an internal locus of control who felt in control of their outcomes (i.e. effective, powerful) were more likely to be successful. However, those with an external locus of control were less likely to hold themselves accountable for their actions and placed blame elsewhere for their individual results and/or career performance.

Research Contribution

From a practical sense, and ideally upon hire, intentionally pairing certain employees with particular supervisors could create an optimally productive work environment – both for the employee and supervisor. This pairing would deliver high-quality results, high morale, and an excitement to be successful – all creating a healthy and pleasant work environment. Thus, both the supervisor and employee's motivation levels would be high because of this relationship. Each employee and supervisor have different personality traits, i.e. different ways of feeling motivated. Therefore, it is important to capitalize on demonstrated synergies between particular physiological make-ups (i.e. how one is wired) between supervisors and employees. For example, employees who have an inherent drive to be successful may work best under supervisors who have demonstrated expertise, rather than supervisors who expect respect because of their position within the organizational hierarchy (Elangovan & Xie, 1999).

On the other hand, consider a business environment where employees with an inherent motivational state, who naturally believe they have little control over outcomes. Those employees are likely to exhibit minimal effort. Assuming these employees paired with supervisors exemplifying an unattractive, negative power (otherwise known as coercive power), the working relationship is more likely to become a struggle (Goodstadt & Hjelle, 1973). As a result, exerting more effort will create a more productive working relationship between the supervisor and employee, rather than the employee being there to work or for the enjoyment of the position. When a working situation exists where employees are already tenured in a position and new supervisors take responsibility over those employees, understanding the inherent motivational state within the employee and the manner in which

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supervisors express their power would prove valuable. Once the two individuals within this working relationship dynamic understand the other person's point of view and rationale behind his or her behavior, the relationship has the potential to develop and adjust in a manner in which the two parties interact to produce an optimal working environment, i.e. strong motivation to deliver exceptional results.

Research Gap

There are numerous studies reviewed throughout this manuscript, with particular focus on power, gender, and motivation between supervisors and employee dyads within workplace contexts. These studies demonstrate how an employee's motivation result is enhanced, mitigated or neutralized, using gender as a primary moderator and employee locus of control as a secondary moderator. An outcome that needs further investigation is an employee's type and degree of motivation, particularly relating to the employee's perception of supervisor influence. Fayankinnu (2012), along with various other scholars (Akinnawo & Fayankinnu, 2010; Einarsen, Howel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau, & Oguz, 2000) researched gender differences within the workplace and the majority of scholarship appears to lean toward male dominance globally. Resulting from a particular supervisor influence, employee motivation is likely to be altered accordingly.

However, a number of research gaps existed when analyzing the relationship between power and motivation. First, Anderson et al. (2012) reaffirmed that little is known about personal power, attitudes, or viewpoints within various power dimensions (i.e. the degree an individual has control over others), and the impact gender has on personal boundaries in a situation involving power. Guinote (2007) addressed the research gap in suggesting future research should capture the impact of individuals holding a submissive position in a power relationship. Furthermore, it should capture how the results of the submissive position within this relationship spark self-regulatory behaviors hampering performance. Third, Elangovan and Xie (1999) confirmed that a minimal amount of prior research focused on the employee's perception of supervisor power and the behavior outcomes of the employee. While these independent scholarly sources researched varying elements of dyadic power relationships, they highlighted the need to focus on the resulting behaviors of power influence in dyadic relationships.

The research from Anderson et al. (2012) supported the need to address boundaries in power relationships as demonstrated in the #MeToo campaign. This manuscript attempts to emphasize the importance of power within dyadic relationship and the necessity of boundaries, particularly within the supervisor-employee relationship. In a business context, the organization should create an optimal environment for the supervisor-employee to function and operate. The manner in which influence is shown to the employee in this dyadic relationship will influence the employee's motivation to be successful, either favorably or negatively. Lastly, Elangovan and Xie (1999) conducted a study of the employee's perception of supervisor power and the moderating effects on the employee, specifically, locus of control and self-esteem.

In summary, each supervisor is likely to have an individualized power preference. Similarly, in the supervisor-employee dyadic relationship, each employee is likely to have individualized preferences for which power he or she responds to or dismisses. Thus, this review contributes to existing literature by highlighting that future research should investigate the dyadic configuration of supervisor influence (or power), particularly on employees who demonstrate

an internal and external perception of control (i.e. the impact each power has on an employee with an internal or external locus of control), resulting outcomes, and the impact of gender dissimilarity.

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Mary Kovach is an Assistant Professor at Miami University. She graduated with her BA from Baldwin Wallace University, her MBA from Cleveland State University, and her PhD from Miami University. Her professional experience includes 15 years with Fortune 500 organizations. She has held numerous leadership positions, including managing multi-million-dollar global business units. She holds a LEAN Six Sigma Black Belt certification, as well as multiple Agile certifications. Mary's research interests include leadership, motivation, and power. Dr. Kovach can be contacted at kovachm2@miamioh.edu.