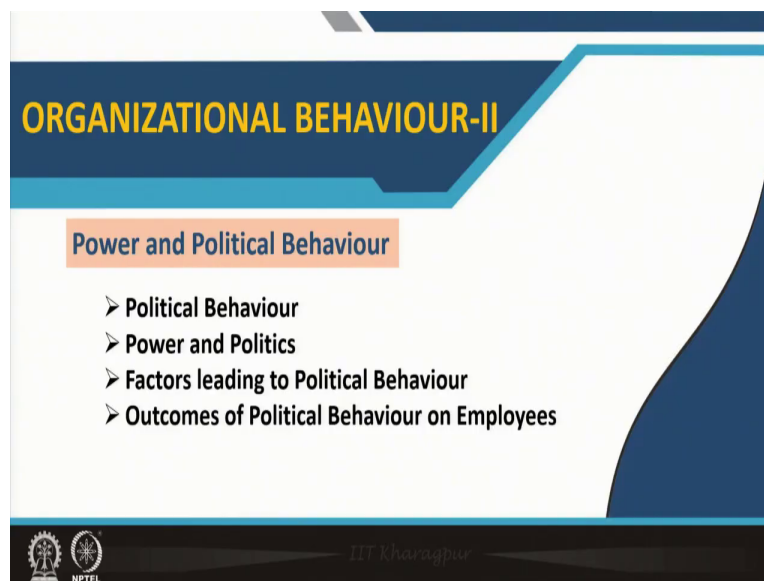**Organizational Behaviour- II**
Prof. Sangeeta Sahney
Vinod Gupta School of Management
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Lecture - 29
Power and Political Behaviour (Contd.,)

Namaskar. We will be continuing with our discussion on the topic, 'Power and Political Behaviour'. This is Module VI. Lecture, IV. In the previous lectures on this particular topic, I have discussed the Concept of Power; the Definition of power; we have contrasted Leadership and Power; we also contrasted Power with Authority and Influence. Then subsequently we discussed the Basis of Power, and in the last lecture I discussed with you, Power Tactics and Coalitions.

Now we will move further, and we will now be discussing Political Behaviour. In today's lecture, we will talk about Political Behaviour, Power and Politics, Factors leading to Political Behaviour, as well as the Outcomes of Political Behaviour on employees. So, this is what we shall be discussing in this particular lecture.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:30)

(Refer Slide Time: 01:32)

So, to start with, what we will be discussing is Political Behaviour, Power and Politics, Factors leading to Political Behaviour, Outcomes of Political Behaviour on employees.

Now if we talk about Political Behaviour, Robbins and Judge have actually defined political behaviour in terms of those activities which are not required as a part of one's formal role in the organization but which influence or attempt to influence the distribution of advantages or disadvantages within the organization. So, what we are talking of is activities which are not a part of one's formal role; they are not a part of the duties and responsibilities; they are not a part of the task to be performed, but which arise, which people undertake, and such activities influence or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization, which means that when it comes to, you know, distribution of resources, when it comes to distribution of benefits, political behaviour comes into action. So, according to Robbins and Judge, political behaviour comprises those activities that are not required as a part of one's formal role in the organization, but which influence or attempt to influence the distribution of advantages or disadvantages within the organization. Now when we talk about, you know, political behaviour, it is characterized by, one, that it is not a part of one's job role and requirements. Two, it makes use of power bases to influence decision making. So, we discussed the power bases in the previous lectures, where we talked about formal power and personal power. We also talked about power bases in the form of individual based power bases and organizational based power bases. We discussed French and Raven's classification of power as position power, reward power, coercive power, expert power, and referent power. So, political

behaviour makes use of these power bases - anyone, and all of these power bases to influence decision making, whether it is goal setting, or whether it is with respect to, you know, processes used in execution of towards achievement of those goals. So, political power also manifests in several forms like hiding information or leaking information, rumour mongering etcetera.

So, as Robbins and Judge have said, that political behaviour comprises those activities which are not required as a part of one's formal role in the organization, but those activities that influence or attempt to influence the distribution of advantages or disadvantages within the organization. So, you know, what are the characteristics of political behaviour? One, it is not a part of the job role and the requirements; Two, it makes use of power basis to influence both goal setting and execution of plans; And three, it manifests in several forms - could be either hiding information, or leaking information, or rumour mongering, etcetera. So, these are all manifestations of political behaviour.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:43)

Now, political activity and political behaviour is seen in all organizations, and it occurs because people have different goals and interests, and resources in the organization are scarce; reward policies, you know, are often unclear and vague; and because of these reasons, people often, you know, are fearful; there is anxiety, there is tension, there is fear, and because of this, you know, people try to indulge into political activity and behaviour to be able to safeguard themselves. So, they try to indulge in political activity, and political behaviour; they try to exercise power in whatever way they can so that they can safeguard themselves. I repeat political

activity and behaviour occurs because, you know, the goals and interests are varied across people, across departments, across groups, across teams; and resources are scarce. Very often reward policies are unclear and vague, and this leads to a lot of fear, anxiety in people; it leads to a lot of tension within people, and they want to safeguard their interests, and they want to safeguard themselves, and so they indulge in political activity and political behaviour and this is very normal for organizations. In fact, it is inevitable, but when we talk of political activity, it is also dysfunctional for the organization. There is always a potential for conflict, whether this conflict is interpersonal conflict, or it is intergroup conflict, or it is organizational conflict. And so, political behaviour in an organization although normal, and inevitable is also dysfunctional.

But it is something which cannot be avoided; it will always happen, and this political behaviour in organizations, can assume forms which are legitimate and illegitimate. So, what we have in organizations is both, legitimate political behaviour as well as illegitimate political behaviour. Now what is legitimate political behaviour, and what is illegitimate political behaviour? Let us go into that now.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:48)

Now, when we talk about legitimate political behaviour, it is normal day-to-day politics; normal day-to-day politics - gossiping, complaining about your colleagues to the supervisor, or to the manager, attacking others, blaming others, you know, controlling information, forming coalitions, impression management - all that is a part of legitimate behaviour.

What is impression management? Impression management is the process by which people try to,
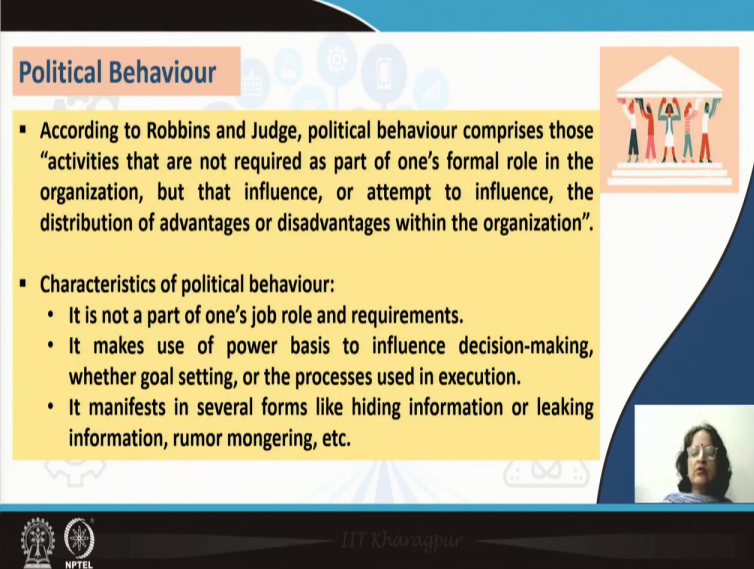
you know, create very favourable impressions about themselves to others. So, very often it is, you know, trying to create a better image of oneself, and not so good image of another. So, what people try to do is that they try to, you know, enhance their image but they also try to, you know, degrade another person's image through political behaviour.

So, any kind of gossiping, complaining, you know, day-to-day acts of blaming others, controlling information, forming coalitions, impression management - is all a part of legitimate political behaviour. We also have something called illegitimate political behaviour. Now illegitimate political behaviour is something which is very dysfunctional for the organization. It is detrimental to the interests of the people and to the organization, and based on one's self-interest, and use of power for personal gain, you know, this kind of a political activity becomes illegitimate political behaviour. So, political behaviour that is detrimental to the interests of the people and to the organization, and is based on one's self-interest and use of power for personal gain and for personal advantages and benefits, is something which is regarded as illegitimate political behaviour.

So, people often, you know, try to harm other people's work. They try to destroy the other person's hard work. There is sabotage, and all that is this kind of activity is actually illegitimate political behaviour. So, they may go to the extent of spoiling another person's work. Like for example, there is a person who has to make a presentation to the boss, the next day, and somebody, you know, ensures that the presentation is deleted from the computer. And so when the person who is supposed to present his work goes to office the next day, he finds that there is nothing he has on his laptop or on his computer which he can use as a presentation. So, what one person has done is that he has actually destroyed the work of the other, and when one party or one person tries to destroy the work of another person or another party, we all know it is a conflict, and it is very dysfunctional, and it is actually a sabotage. So, one person is trying to harm the interests of the other for his own self-interest. So, there is Person A who has been asked to make a presentation to the boss, but Person B who is who does not like A, or who is jealous of A, or he does not want A to be appreciated by the boss, or who does not want A to be good in the eyes of the boss, he just goes and, you know, this Person B goes and destroys the work or the hard work of A so that A has a sorry face to show the next day, and the impression about A in the boss's mind could fall down.So in that way this kind of a sabotage is regarded as an illegitimate political behaviour. So, most of the political behaviour which we see, is something which is a

day-to-day politics, and it is something which is regarded as legitimate. So, most of the political behaviour that happens in organizations is legitimate political behaviour.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:37)

Now I will go back to the definition by Robbins and Judge, where we said that political behaviour is activities that are not required as a part of one's formal role in the organization but that influence or attempt to influence the distribution of advantage and disadvantages. Now what happens is, you know, as we discussed, resources are scarce, okay; everybody wants the resources and these resources are scarce, and so, there is competition; there is some conflict also which may happen, which may occur and why? Because, you know, people want to have a share of those resources. Now the resources are scarce, so which would mean that it is a win situation for some, a lose situation for some, and people try to maximize their gains; people want to maximize the share of resources; and so they indulge in political behaviour, they indulge in political activity so that they can influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages of what of the resources in the organization. So, this is what actually leads to political behaviour.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:46)

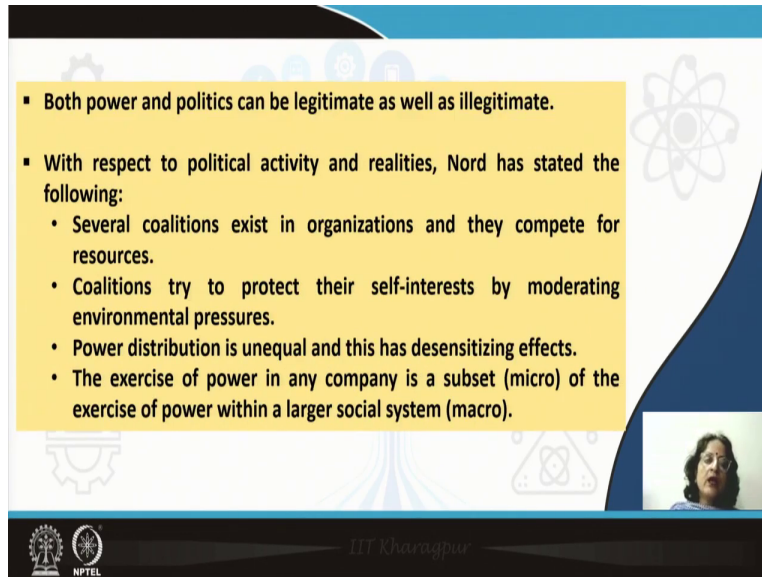Now let us come to Power and Politics. Now power and politics, are closely inter-linked; they are totally intertwined, because the acquisition of power depends to a great extent on the kind of political strategies that one uses. And while power has different basis, yet we see that whether it is leaders or whether it is managers, they must actually indulge in some kind of a political activity; they must actually rely on, you know, some political strategies. And so power and politics are regarded to be closely intertwined because the acquisition of power depends to a great extent on the kind of political strategies that are used. Also, both power and politics are used in organizational decision making. You know, as we discussed in the previous lecture, that a manager may have position power but that becomes stronger when, you know, few managers get together and form a coalition. So, when they form a coalition they are more powerful, as compared to when they are operating alone. So, as a coalition, they are in a better bargaining position, whether it is with respect to goal setting or execution of plans, and so we see that managers use both power and political behaviour, you know, to get things done through people, and to exercise control over other people. So, both power and politics are used in organizational decision making, whether it is goal setting or execution of plans, and they are used to influence goals and objectives, processes, as well as the criteria used in decision making.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:33)

And again, both power and politics can be legitimate as well as illegitimate. Remember, when we discussed the power bases, we said that, you know, power bases can be legitimate, they can also be illegitimate; and when we discussed politics and political behaviour a short while ago, we said that political behaviour can both be legitimate as well as illegitimate. So, both power and politics can be legitimate as well as illegitimate.

And with respect to political activity, and the realities associated with political activity, you know, Nord has stated the following. He says that several coalitions exist in the organizations, and they compete for resources; and the coalitions try to protect their self-interests by environmental pressures, by moderating the environmental pressures; and the power distribution is unequal, and this has a desensitizing effect; and the exercise of power in any company, is a subset of the exercise of power within a larger social system. So, he has actually emphasized upon how coalitions exist in organizations, and how they operate, and how they compete for resources, and how, you know, coalitions try to protect their own self-interests by moderating the environmental pressures, and Nord explains that power distribution is unequal, and exercise of power in a company, is actually a very micro part of the exercise of power within a larger macro, you know, system. So, exercise of power in a company is a subset, or is a micro part of the exercise of power, within a larger social system which is more macro.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:17)

Now what are factors leading to political behaviour? Now there are several factors which lead to political behaviour, and these can be categorized into individual factors and organizational factors. So, there individual factors which can lead to political behaviour, and there are organizational factors which can lead to political behaviour. So, let us discuss these one by one.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:35)

Now, when we talk about individual factors, these factors relate to, or pertain to, the individual traits and characteristics to people's personalities, to their traits, to their characteristics. Like for example, when people have a high need for power, okay, the likelihood of political

569

activity will be very high. So, when the need for power is high, naturally they will be more politically active, and they would, you know, try to indulge in politics, to get to gain more and more power. So, when people have a high need for power, they would indulge in political activity so that they can become powerful. So, when people have a high need for power, the likelihood of political activity will be high. Also, certain needs and motivations, as well as personality traits and characteristics, which contributes to political behaviour. Like for example the traits, include self-monitorship, or internal locus of control; there is need for power or Machiavellianism; and the needs and motivations include the job involvement, the alternative job opportunities, the expectations of success with respect to use of political behaviour, etcetera. So, we see that when, you know, people have a certain personality traits and characteristics, or when they have certain kinds of needs and motivation, they indulge in this kind of a political behaviour.

So, I will like to elaborate a little more on the traits which actually contribute towards political activity and political behaviour. So, we have self-monitorship. Now, what is self-monitorship? Now self-monitoring is a construct which refers to individual differences in the manner, you know, people monitor, and manage their presentations of self, their emotions, their behaviours; and self-monitorship actually reveals how much people monitor their own self-presentations, their expressive behaviours, and their non-verbal affective displays, which means their non-verbal body language, as well as their feelings and emotions. So, it is a personality trait that refers to an ability of a person to regulate his behaviour to accommodate social situations such that appropriate or desired public appearances can be made.

So, whenever people are high on self-monitorship, there is a tendency that they would indulge into political activity and political behaviour.

The second is internal locus of control. Now locus of control is the extent to which people feel that things are within their control, okay; which means that the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcomes of events in their lives. So, we have something called internal locus of control, and external locus of control. When people feel that, you know, that they have a control over the outcome of events in their lives, they can control things which happen to them, they can have a control over environmental forces, they are said to have a high internal locus of control. On the other hand, when people feel that they do not have a control on what happens to them, and the external factors are much more powerful, you know,

over outcomes or events in their lives, they are said to have an external locus of control. So, when people have an internal locus of control, they feel that they have a control over events that influence their lives. And they can control, you know, events; they can control the, you know, forces which actually, you know, influence their life. So, in that case, you know, again the political activity or political behaviour will be high. In other words, when people feel that they have a control over forces, or they have a control over events, you know, which will, you know, and they are masters of their own destiny, in that case, they are said to be possessing internal locus of control. And when people have a higher internal locus of control, the chances of their indulging in, or the likelihood of their indulging in political behaviour and political activity is high. So, locus of control is the degree to which people believe that as opposed to external forces, they have a control over the outcome of events in their lives. So that is why, you know, they are said to possess internal locus of control uh. So, internal locus of control, you know, can be defined as the extent to which people feel that they as opposed to external forces which are beyond their influence, these people feel that they have a control over the outcome of events in their lives. So they are said to possess internal locus of control, and in cases of internal locus of control, they will be indulging in political behaviour and political activity.

Also, as I just said when people have a high need for power, the likelihood of political activity is high. And there is a trait which is Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism in psychology refers to a personality trait, you know, which actually defines a person so focused on their own interests, that they would manipulate things around them; they would deceive; they would cheat; and they would exploit others to achieve their goals. So, people who possess this trait of Machiavellianism will go to any extent to manipulate others, to deceive others, to exploit others, to achieve their goals; and so, they are also said to be high on, you know, high on political activity; they are supposed to be very prone to indulging in political activity and political behaviour.

So, whenever people, you know, possess traits of self-monitorship which relates to impression management, or they have a higher internal locus of control when they feel that they are masters of their own destiny and they can control forces for effective outcomes for them, or when there is a higher need for power, or when people, you know, are Machiavellianists in nature, which means that they are focused, so highly focused on their own interests, that they can manipulate, deceive and exploit others - with all of these traits, we see that political activity

and political behaviour will be high.

Coming to needs and motivation. When people are highly involved in the job, they have alternate job opportunities, when they feel that success on the job depends a great deal, on the use of political behaviour. In these cases we see, that again the likelihood of a person indulging in political behaviour will be high. So, individual factors, you know which pertain to individual traits and characteristics, can lead to political activity, can lead to political behaviour.

So traits including self-monitorship, locus of control, need for power, Machiavellianism, and needs and motivations including job involvement, alternative job opportunities and expectations of success being linked with political behaviour.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:41)

Apart from this, we have organizational factors which also can lead to political activity and political behaviour. So these organizational factors - they pertain to organizational characteristics be it organizational structure, or leadership style, or the culture and environment in the organization. So, organizational structure and leadership style will include, you know, aspects like scarcity of resources, and changing resource allocation, promotion opportunities, downsizing. So, in these cases we see that there are always chances of political activity increasing. Like while discussing the definition of political behaviour, we said that people try to exert influence so that they can, you know, get a maximum share of resources, or they can influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages in the organization. So, the same thing here, you know, when there is a scarcity of resources, when there is changing resource allocation,

when promotional opportunities are limited, when there is downsizing - in all of these cases, you know, political activity and political behaviour will increase. The organizational culture and environment also contributes towards political activity and political behaviour. Certain companies, certain organizations, the environment is such or the culture is such that there is very little political activity; political behaviour is very less. But in certain organizations, in certain companies, you know, there is huge amount of politics, huge amount of political activity and political behaviour. So, you know, the issues that need to be addressed are with respect to, you know, trust, clarity of roles, clear performance appraisal systems, you know, emphasis upon win-win situations, participative decision making, you know, realistic performance targets- so these are certain issues that need to be addressed. Like for example, wherever there is low trust; or where there is a lack of clarity with respect to roles; where the performance appraisal systems are vague; where in most cases, it is a zero-sum reward allocation in terms of one party winning at the expense of the other; or where there is participative decision making; performance targets are not realistic and there is huge pressure; self-serving bosses means bosses like to take credit for everything which the subordinates do; and wherein managers themselves indulge in political activity in all of these cases, we will see that political activity will be high. So, both organizational structure and leadership style as well as organizational culture and environment, contribute to political behaviour and political activity in the organization.

Whenever there is a scarcity of resources, changing resource allocation, limited promotion opportunities, downsizing - political activity will increase; political behaviour will increase, and this pertains to organization structure and leadership style. On the other hand even when there is low trust, unclear roles, vague performance appraisal systems, zero-sum reward allocation practices, wherein one party loses at the expense of the other, participative decision making, unrealistic performance targets and huge pressures, a self-serving bosses or political activity by managers in the company - in all of these cases, you will see that the political activity and political behaviour will be high, and the extent of people's use for and people's desire, extent of people's desire to indulge in political behaviour and political activity will also be high.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:28)

Outcomes of Political Behaviour on Employees

- Political behaviour leads to:
  - Decreased motivation.
  - Reduced productivity.
  - Decreased job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment.
  - Reduced creativity.
  - Anxiety and stress, and employee turnover.
  - Defensive behaviours: reactive and protective: eg. playing dumb, buck passing, overconforming, bluffing, playing safe, scapegoating, justification, self-protection, misrepresenting etc.
  - Impression management.

Now what are the outcomes of political, you know, behaviour on employees? Whenever there is political activity, there is political behaviour, it leads to decreased motivation, reduced productivity because people become fearful; people are anxious; people are scared; people begin to worry, and not everybody is able to indulge in political behaviour and political activity; not everyone is able to handle these kinds of pressures or fears or anxieties arising out of political behaviour; not everybody is able to, you know, deal with an environment which is very political. So, political behaviour leads to reduced motivation and productivity. There is decreased job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment. People think of quitting the organization; there is there is reduced creativity; there is huge amount of stress; as I just said, people feel that they want to leave the organization; so employee turnover is high; and people actually, you know, there is defensive behaviour on the part of the people. Now this defensive behaviour from people could be both reactive and proactive. Like for example, people could play dumb as if they do not know anything, okay or buck passing – buck passing meaning, blaming the other person or putting the responsibility on the other person for something, you know, which was, you know, passing the blame on others. Or putting the responsibility on others, for a failure or for something, you know, wrong or bad that has happened in the organization. Over conforming. Over conforming means, saying yes to anything and everything that the boss says, and abiding by all rules regulations etc. Bluffing which could be lying. Playing safe, means trying to keep one's position safe, and blaming others; attributing others for failure - attributing either external causes in the environment, or attributing other people for failures and trying to

portray one's own self as absolutely innocent. Scapegoating. Now what is scapegoating? Scapegoating is the practice of basically singling out a person or a group for unmerited blame, and consequent negative treatment or punishment. So, you are trying to single out a person or a group of people, for unmerited blame, and consequent punishment or consequent negative treatment. So, that is a scapegoating. Justification, you know, giving reasons for something which you have done, and that is undesirable. Self-protecting. Misrepresenting facts, hiding facts or say you know, trying to you know prevent information being shared. So, all this is a part of defensive behaviours which could be reactive, which could be protective, and so defensive behaviours could be both reactive and protective. And so a reactive and protective meaning, either you are playing dumb, or you are bluffing, or you are scapegoating, or you are justifying, or you are self-protecting, or you are misrepresenting, or you are over-confirming, or you are passing the buck.

And another outcome of political behaviour is impression management. Impression management is the process or a method by which people try to frame or forge very favourable impressions about themselves in the eyes of the manager or in the eyes of the management.

And they try to, you know, they may try to degrade the other person. So, they try to enhance their own image and/or degrade the other person's image. So, impression management is also one of the outcomes of political behaviour on employees. So, political behaviour leads to decreased motivation; fears; anxieties; stress; reduced productivity; employee turnover. Employee turnover is attrition. People leaving the company and going; decreased job satisfaction; job involvement; decreased organizational commitment; reduced creativity; defensive behaviours which could be both reactive, and protective and impression management.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:10)

Now the effect of political behaviour in organizations, the effects of political behaviour on people in organizations, is actually moderated by people's political skills and culture. So, as I said a little while ago, some people can have that, you know, ability to handle political activity and political behaviour or, you know, indulged by others. Some people can manage that, you know, some people can handle political activity of others; they can manage that; they can they can handle the stress associated with that. And so they have the skill and the ability to deal with, you know, situations which are highly political. But some people are not able to do it. So, the effects of political behaviour on people is moderated by people's political skills. Some people have the knack, have the ability to handle political activity around them.

They can manage to control political activity and political behaviour around them; they can manage to, you know, reduce the negative consequences on them which can happen because of this political activity, but some people are not able to do that. So, the effect of political behaviour on people is moderated by people's political skills. It is also moderated by the culture in the organization. As I said in some companies, the culture is such that it it leads to a huge amount of political activity and political behaviour.

In some companies, in some organizations, political behaviour and political activity, is not encouraged, and a lot comes you know, a lot of it is also impacted by the culture in which people live. The culture, you know, you can say the national culture; in some countries, the people are not, you know, very political oriented, and political activity is not encouraged.

But in some cultures, there is huge amount of political activity and this national culture
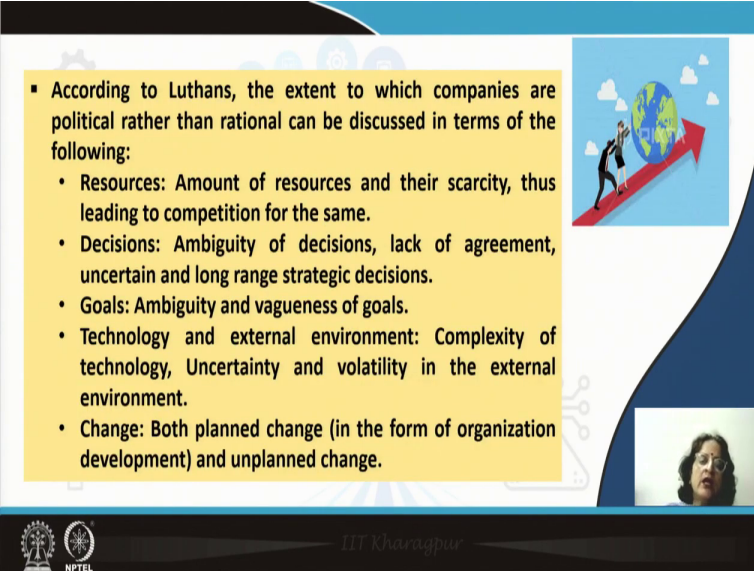
also has an impact on the organization. So, in some companies, in some organizations, there is huge amount of political activity and political behaviour while in some organizations, it is less. So, the effect of political behaviour on people it gets moderated by people's political skills in the manner in which they can practice politics, and prevent the ill effects or the negative consequences of such political activity, and political behaviour on their own self, and the culture of the organization and of the country.

So, I repeat, there are people who can handle the stresses associated with political activity; there are people who cannot handle the stress; and there are people who have the skills to be politically inclined, and there are people who do not have this skills to be political inclined.

So, the effect of political behaviour is moderated by people's skills, as well as their abilities to indulge in politics, and to protect themselves from politics or ill effects of political behaviour. So, it is also moderated by the culture to which they belong.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:20)

Now according to Fred Luthans, the extent to which companies are political rather than rational can be discussed in terms of, you know, five factors. First is resources. So, the amount of resources and their scarcity thus leading to competition for the same, you know, will actually have an impact on, you know, how political the company is. We remember we go back to the definition where we spoke about that political activity, is you, know activities which people indulge in to influence the distribution of advantages or disadvantages in organizations.

So the same thing which comes in here, is the resource; and the amount of resources and

their scarcity leads to competition for them, and you know, and the extent to which companies are political rather than rational, depends upon resources and the amount of resources and the scarcity.

Second is the decisions. So, ambiguity of decisions, lack of agreement, uncertainty and long-range strategic decisions, are again factors which we which will determine the extent to which companies are political rather than rational.

So, if decisions are ambiguous, there is lack of agreement, there is uncertainty, the chances of companies being political is much higher as compared to a situation where decisions are clear and non-ambiguous, and there is agreement on the decision and on, you know, policies and procedures for implementation of the decisions, and when decisions are certain. So, decisions is also another factor which will determine; the nature of the decision is also another factor which will determine, whether companies are political or they are rational.

The third is goals. Ambiguity and weakness of goals is another factor which affects, you know, companies indulging into political behaviour.

Technology and the external environment. By technology, we mean the complexity of the technology, and uncertainty and volatility in the external environment. Both of these actually, you know, have an impact on a company being political rather than rational.

And finally we have change. So both planned change in the form of organizational development or unplanned change, will actually determine whether a company is political or it is rational; whether the company and the people indulge in political behaviour, or they do not indulge in political activity and political behaviour.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:55)

(Refer Slide Time: 38:04)

So, with this, I come to an end of our lecture on Political Behaviour. We will continue with the topic in the next lecture. Thank you.