Organizational Design Change and Transformation
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Module - 06
Lecture - 30
Managing Conflict, Power, and Politics

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[FL], we will be continuing with our discussion on Conflict Power and Politics. This is module 6; lecture 5 and this is the concluding session on this particular topic. In the previous sessions, we have spoken about conflict and conflict management, we have spoken about power, we have spoken about political behaviour. In the last lecture, we spoke about factors leading to political behaviour.

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Today, we will continue with the same topic and we will be you know spending some time on discussing the outcomes of political behaviour on employees, thereafter we will speak we will discuss political strategies for power acquisition and we will conclude with impression management.

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Now, in a in the previous session, you know I mentioned to you that political behaviour is natural, it is inevitable and it is something which occurs in organization at all levels and it manifests as legitimate political behaviour and illegitimate political behaviour and the and it has it something which needs to be managed carefully because it can have certain dysfunctional outcomes for the organization.

So, let us see what could be the outcomes of political behaviour on employees? Now, political behaviour leads to decreased motivation, it reduces productivity, it leads to decreased job satisfaction, job commitment and job involvement, it reduces organizational commitment, it reduces creativity, it causes a lot of anxiety and stress for employees, there is employee turnover, attrition rate becomes very high and there and employees exhibit defensive behaviours, both reactive and protective.

For example, they may play dumb, innocent, they may buck pass, they may over confirm, they may bluff, they may play safe, they could be scapegoating, they could be justifications and rationalizations of activity, they could be self protection, misrepresentation of facts and of course, it could also lead to impression management. You know so, the outcomes of political behaviour on employees are very dysfunctional and so hence and so, the you know political behaviour needs to be carefully dealt within organizations.
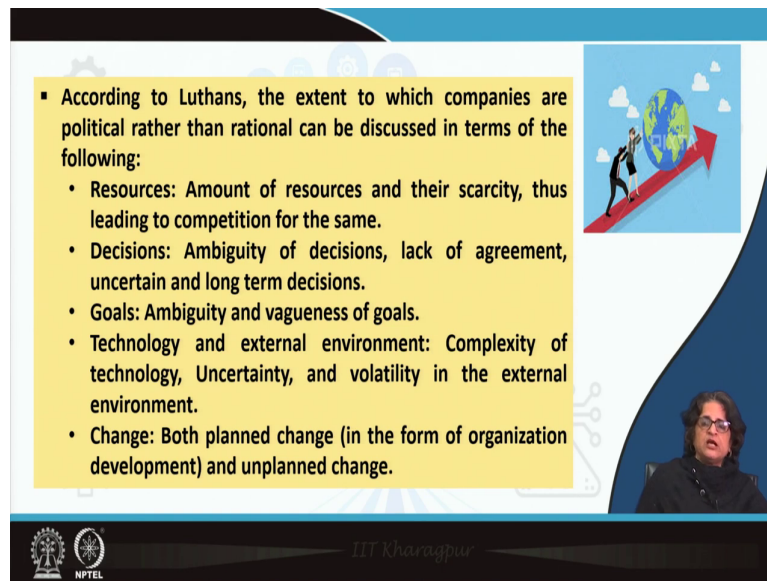
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Now, the effects of political behaviour on people of course, gets moderated by people's political skills and by the culture of the organization. And if you see you know while political behaviour is naturally inevitable, some people you know get more affected by it and some people are lesser affected by it. And so, we say that it is moderated by people's political skills as well as the culture of the organization.

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Now, according to Luthans, the extent to which companies are political rather than rational can be discussed in terms of resources, decisions, goals, technology and change. Coming to resources, the amount of resources and their scarcity you know could lead to competition for the same and this could be one of the reasons why companies you know are political and a companies and employees could get very very political in organizations.

Second is decisions; ambiguity of decisions, lack of agreement, uncertain and long term decisions are again, you know can again lead to political behaviour in organizations. When goals are vague and ambiguous, they also contribute to political behaviour, a complexity of the technology, uncertainty and volatility in the external environment. Again you know could add to you know organizations getting political.

And both you know when we and both planned change as well as unplanned change can cause companies to become political rather than rational. So, according to Luthans you know the extent to which companies are political or rational can be discussed in terms of the resources they have, the kind of decisions and the decision making that occurs, the goals, the technology and the external environment as well as the change and change management of the organization.

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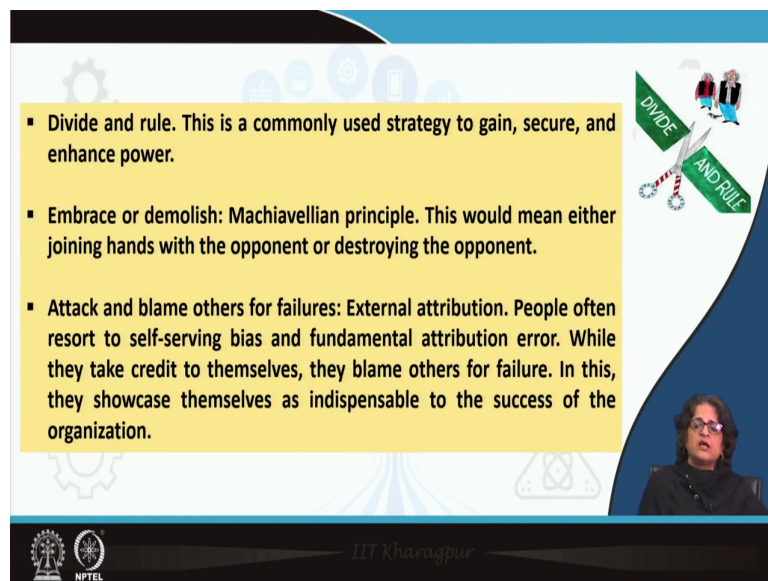Let us now come to political strategies for power acquisition. There are several strategies which individuals or which groups could use for power acquisition. First is association and alliances. So, associating with powerful people or with people in important positions both within the organization and outside the organization is commonly used strategy to acquire power.

The second is coalition. Coalition of people or groups of people you know help gain strength, help gain a lot of power and that could also be used for power acquisition. Information, hiding information, manipulating it, controlling information is also used as a means to secure power or to enhance power. And control of resources you know and you know, reciprocal and sequential interdependencies also are a way to gain power.

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So, reciprocal and task interdependencies and control over resource allocation is also a way to gain power. Another strategy which is used is divide and rule a very commonly used strategy to gain secure and enhance power. You know we also see the you know the another strategy which is adopted which is embrace or demolish which is typically you know the Machiavellian principle this would mean either you join hands with the opponent or you destroy the opponent.

So, this is also a way a strategy which is used to acquire power. Another strategy which is used to acquire power is attacking and blaming others for failures which is which we refer to as external attribution. People often resort to self-serving bias and fundamental attribution error you know where when something is good or something is successful they take credit to it, but when something is negative or something is a failure they blame others for it.

So, while people have a tendency to take credit to themselves they blame others for failure and in this case they showcase themselves as somebody who is absolutely indispensable to the success of the organization and because they are actually attributing the failure to somebody else and attributing all the success to themselves.

So, attacking others and blaming others for failures while crediting one's own self for success is also a strategy which is used for power acquisition. So, people resort to self-serving bias and fundamental attribution error and they take credit to themselves and they blame others for failure and in this way they showcase themselves as somebody who is indispensable to the success of the organization.

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Another strategy which is used is the foot in the door or the camels head in the tent technique which is a tactic that is used to make a person comply with a larger request by first making a agree to smaller requests. So, through repetitive and successive stages of agreeing to smaller requests the person begins to comply to larger requests as well.

So, in this way you know a person starts with making very small request from his boss and then gradually the small request turns into bigger and bigger and bigger requests and so, you know one person may be able to acquire power over the other ok. This could be used by the subordinates, this could also be used by the superiors and another way to acquire power is wait for the situation to get worse.

So, when thing go actually out of control you know and the situation is very bad you know then there are always chances of a new power force emerging.

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Now, what are guidelines for reducing or overcoming the negative impact of political behaviour and organizations? The first thing is have very clear cut, very transparent communication flows. You know at every level at you know try to have platforms for communication, provide opportunities for dialogue and increase the scope for discussion. This could be face to face, this could be virtually done through electronic means, but ensure that the communication is clear and transparent.

Second formulate and circulate clear policies and procedures and rules and regulations because when there is clarity of policies or procedures of rules and regulations chances of political behaviour becomes low or less. Provide sufficient resources so, that you know there

it is a win-win situation for everybody. And there is no scope of a win-lose where one wins at the expense of the other no try to have a win-win situation, have sufficient resources.

So, it would reduce the negative, it would reduce political behaviour to a great extent. The next is place organizational interest over own self-interest. Ultimately it is the organization which is paramount and an employees must understand that organization interest should be placed above all other interests.
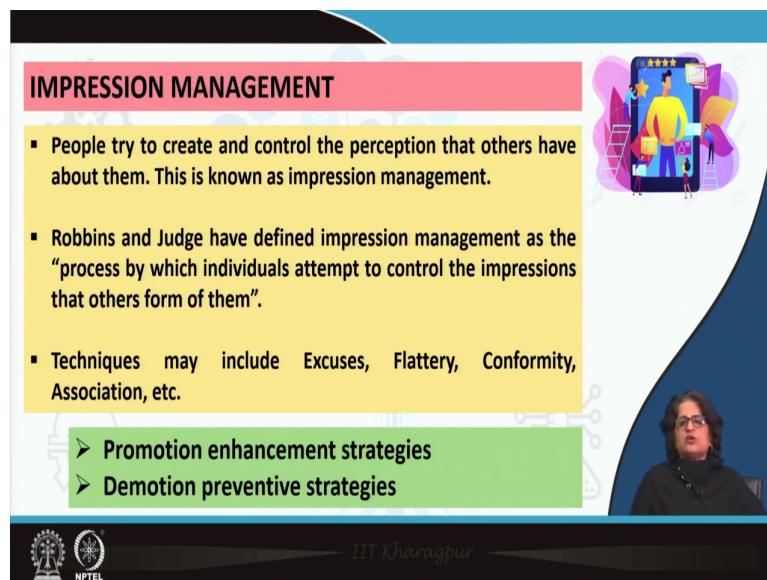
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Question fairness and impartiality of a judgment ensure the judgments are fair. Manage change strategically we have discussed change, organizational change in the previous week and it is very important that organization manage change very very strategically. People have to be you know informed and made aware of the need of change and they have to be involved in the process of change management.

Politics cannot be stopped in any organization so people must be sensitized about becoming politically savvy and in. So, the political behaviour and organizations can be controlled.

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Finally, we come to impression management. Now, you know people always have you know people always try to create and control the perception that others have about them. They try to you know create a very you know good picture about themselves, the good image about themselves and they try to create and control you know what others think of them, what others perceive of them and this is known as impression management.

So, the process by which people try to control the perception that others have of them and they try to you know create a good, create a create an image of themselves is actually impression management. So, Robbins and Judge have defined impression management as a

process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions which others have of them. And techniques could include excuses, flattery, association, conformity etcetera.

So, we when people indulge in impression management activities you know they could either you know go in for promotion enhancement strategies or they could go in for demotion preventive strategies. So, impression management tactics could be either in terms of promotion enhancement strategies or demotion preventive strategies.

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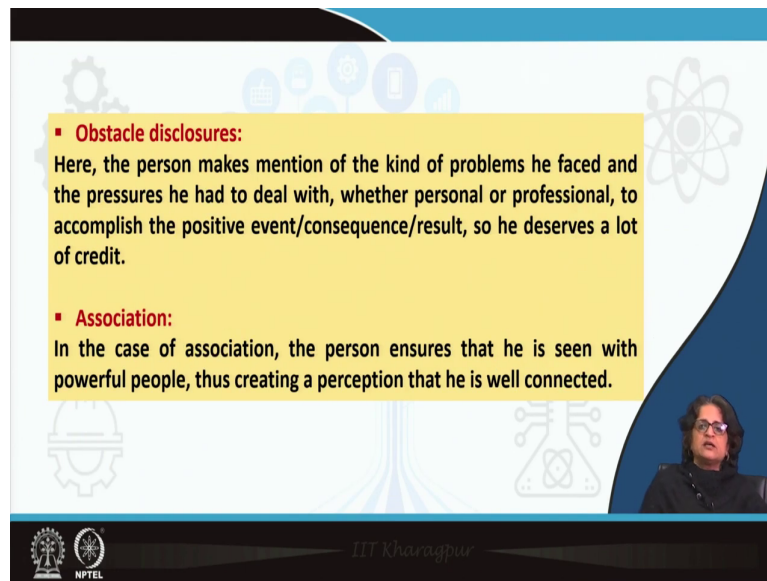

What are promotion enhancement strategies? Now, the in promotion enhancement strategies the person tries to maximize his responsibility you know for a positive event or for a positive consequence of and so, he tries to maximize his responsibility for something positive that has occurred. This could be in the form of entitlements, enhancements, obstacle disclosures and associations.

So, what is entitlement? When a person uses entitlement as a promotion enhancement strategy he or tries to showcase that he or she has not been given enough credit for the positive outcome. He or she has been given something, but not enough. So, that is what is entitlement? He uses it as a strategy to showcase that whatever he has achieved you know is great and whatever he has been rewarded is not so great.

So, he tries to show that he tries to show that he has not been given enough credit for the positive event. The second is enhancement. In the case of enhancement the person who has received the credit for the positive event or for the positive outcome basically you know it points out that he put in much more effort and created a much bigger impact than what was originally thought of or what was originally expected.

So, while in the first he tries to relate it to relate his outcome to the reward in the second he tries to relate the outcome with the expected originally thought you know outcome. So, in this way he tries to show that what he has achieved is much more than what was expected.

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In the third, you know which is obstacle disclosures here the person makes mention of the kind of problems that he faced the kind of pressures that he had to deal with at the personal front at the professional front to be able to achieve those objectives or to be able to achieve that positive outcome.

So, in a way what he is trying to show is that he had to why he has been able to you know achieve a positive outcome, but for that he had to actually cross a lot of hurdles he had to he had to face a lot of you know he had to deal with a lot of pressures he had to deal with a lot of obstacles. And you know he suffered and he faced a lot of personal and professional impediments or personal and professional pressures to achieve what he has been able to.

So, he has been able to achieve something, but he had to put in a lot to get that something. So, he tries to show that he had to deal with a lot of pressures and he had you know to achieve or

to get closer to the goal and to achieve that goal he had to go through a lot of problems a lot of obstacles and this is what is obstacle disclosure?

So, in this so, what he does is he tries to showcase to everybody that while he has achieved the outcome the he faced a lot of hurdles he faced a lot of problems and he faced a lot of pressures. The next is association and association the person you know tries to create a favorable impression about himself by being associated with other powerful people and to showcase that he is a very well connected and well networked.
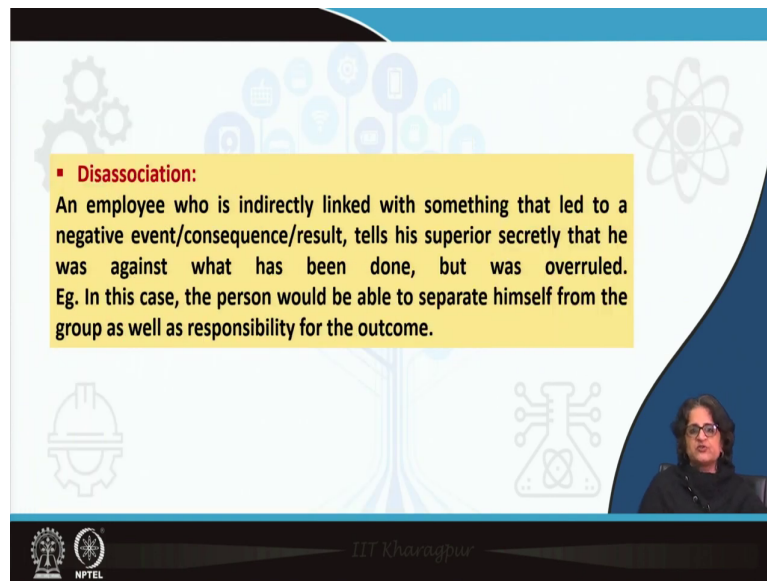
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Now, you know just as you have a promotion enhancement strategies to create impressions similarly you have demotion preventive strategies which also helps in impression management. Demotion preventive strategies you know used when a when the person is trying to minimize the responsibility for a negative outcome or for a negative consequence.

So, that nobody blames him for the failure you know. So, you know what he tries to do he is he tries to minimize you know the responsibility for a negative outcome so that he is not blamed. Now, demotion preventive strategies could manifest as accounts, apologies and disassociation.

So, in accounts as a demotion preventive strategy the employee attempts to excuse himself or tries to justify his action he says that for example, he would say that he missed out on a deliverable because he was working on another important you know assignment. So, he basically tries to excuse himself by justifying you know his action and by saying that he could not do something because he was trying he was actually in the middle of something even more important.

The second is apologies in apologies he the employee quietly apologizes to the superior for the negative consequence and he says that something like this will not happen again he sorry about it and he will not repeat it in future.
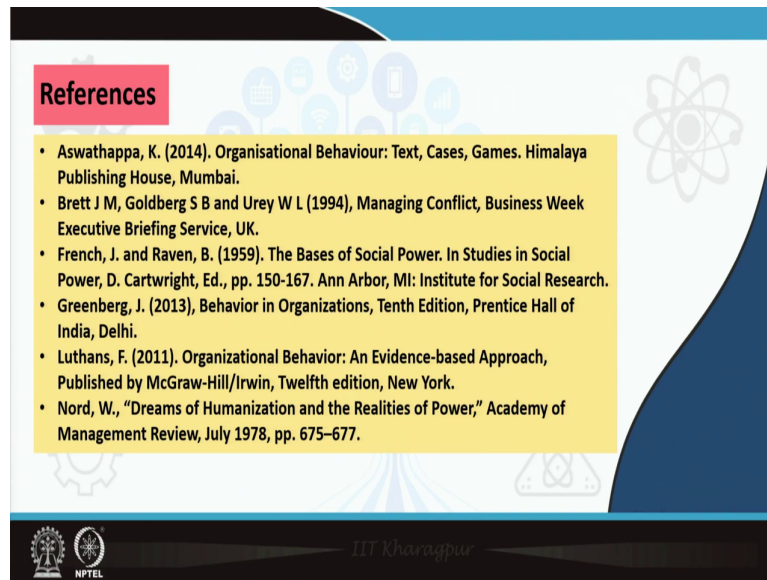
And in disassociation the employee who is indirectly linked with something that led to the negative consequence tells his superior secretly that he was against what has been done and, but he was overruled. So, he says that you know he tries to separate himself from the group as well as from the personal responsibility of that outcome.

He says that he was for example, he would tell the boss that he was not in favor of this decision which was implemented and has brought such negative outcomes and he was not in favor of it and he also voiced his disagreement to it. But no, but and voiced his opinion about it, but nobody listened to him.

So, the employee here you know tries to disassociate himself by saying that he was overruled and so he was helpless and so in so, this so. In fact, this is a very commonly used strategy where people try to dissociate themselves when something negative happens and they try to

you know so, so that you know the outcome or negative outcome cannot be attributed to them and would be attributed to other members in the group.

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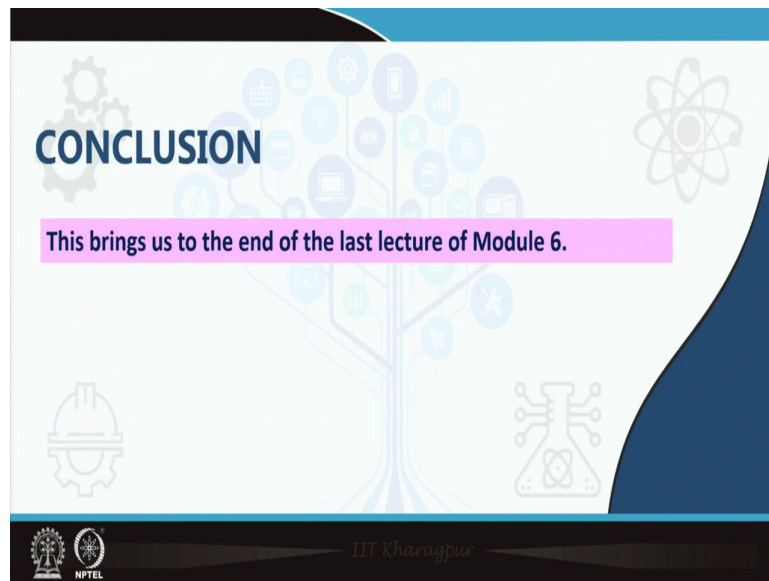
So, with this I come to a conclusion of this lecture and of this module which is module 6. With this I also come to an end of my lectures with you on organizational design change and transformation. The subsequent modules will be taught by other faculty, Professor Srinivasan and Professor Susmita Mukhopadhyay from Vinod Gupta School of Management at IIT kharagpur.

Thank you so much.