Organizational Hierarchy: An In-Depth Literature Review

Shaarvi Dashora
mypublishedpaper@gmail.com
Christ University, Bangalore

Abstract

This paper combines the views of 50+ research articles on organisational hierarchy. Upon a thorough analysis of the literature, six subthemes emerged, namely Age differences, Impact on women, Abuse of power, Conflict management, Digital workplaces and Covid-19. These were analysed in detail to see the effects they had on organisational hierarchy. Abuse of power and conflict within and across hierarchies was understood through a multitude of research papers concerning the two. We also looked at how age and gender roles and stereotypes have an influence on how the individuals are treated and the amount of advancement opportunities that they get due to them belonging to a certain category. Lastly, to keep up with the current times, we also viewed how hierarchies fluctuate and modify due to the existence of digital workplaces and how they have had drastic changes in the organisation since they started using digital workplaces in the Covid-19 era.

Keywords: *Organisational hierarchy, Age differences, Impact on women, Abuse of power, Conflict management, Digital workplaces, Covid-19*

Introduction

The American Psychology Association defines hierarchy as "A clear ordering of individuals on some behavioural dimension, such as dominance–submission. A linear hierarchy occurs when all individuals can be arrayed in a strict transitive order along a continuum". A workplace is a building or room where people perform their jobs, or these places generally (Workplace, 2024). Furthermore an Organisational Hierarchy is a form of Social Hierarchy which is defined as systems of social organization in which individuals are arranged by group status and have differential access to social and material resources (Roth & Rios, 2020).

Hierarchies help in a systematic flow of information as well as defining roles. They form a clear chain of command and give more structure to the organisation and its decisions (Meske et al., 2020). Defined hierarchies also provide a sense of structure, which contributes to job satisfaction. Advancement opportunities within hierarchies can act as a motivating factor for individuals. In a study conducted by Friesen et al. (2014), it was found that people at higher levels of hierarchies always have better decision making authorities and access to an abundance of resources. Hierarchies are established because in smaller groups, this differentiation improves task performance and facilitates group performance. Cognitively also, hierarchical organisation is simpler to comprehend. Hierarchies are maintained and perpetuated within organisations and it doesn't rely on the personal positions within the hierarchy (Tesi et al., 2020). Being at different levels of hierarchy satisfies psychological needs as well. The disadvantaged members at the lower levels of a hierarchy also advocate for and support the hierarchical system. It leads to a feeling of self efficacy and it is deemed to be a better option than egalitarian structures. Compensatory control theory supports the notion that structure is better perceived and well received by people (Friesen et al., 2014). This helps the hierarchical settings. A study conducted by Letkemann (2002) on civil servants from a small Regional Planning Office in Alberta, Canada, showed that the workplace had hierarchies but also had a sense of communitas, which was created through shared celebrations and people felt a sense of belonging. They also felt that the hierarchy helped the organisation functionally.

Consequently there are a few disadvantages of hierarchy in the workplace. They can act as barriers between individuals from different levels and lead to a perceived distance among the people, due to which productivity can be affected. It may lead an individual to feel a lack of personal control and increased stress and pressure.

There is also a possibility of exploitation and discrimination among the higher level and lower level employees. It can contribute to negative social dynamics and foster a sense of increased rivalry and competition which may not result in a healthy outcome for the individual or for the institution. A rigid hierarchical organisation can also lead to a decrease in creativity of an individual. A study by Korman et al. (2021) found that a higher hierarchical level was associated with less burnout in an individual.

The sense of power and the sense of self efficacy were mediators, which contributed to a feeling of less burnout. A higher level gave them a sense of power and high self-efficacy, which were identified as necessary for lower levels of burnout. Hierarchies can also lead to power imbalances and feelings of limited autonomy. Individuals at lower level of hierarchy experience higher level of burnout due to lack of control over their tasks. Hierarchies are related to epistemic injustice, where individuals are not treated equally and not given an equal opportunity to contribute (Kwok, 2020). People in the lower rungs of the hierarchical structure may feel like they have a lack of resources, no decision-making autonomy, lack of recognition and limited opportunities for career advancement. This might lead to a sense of powerlessness or job dissatisfaction.

Research by Kauppakorkeakoulu et al. (2023) shows that creativity can flourish in a positive work climate and it doesn't depend on hierarchy. Workplace climates and managerial practices like building trust and creativity are more important in an organisation than a formal hierarchy. Employees in the same department seek feedback from colleagues in their own department more frequently. This says that they do not seek advice or feedback from people on different levels of the hierarchy. This study emphasizes the significance of considering the organizational hierarchy when analysing feedback seeking behaviour in professional networks, highlighting the impact of position on feedback dynamics (Van Der Rijt et al., 2013). Employees perceive feedback from leaders and their colleagues as valuable, which shows the importance of the feedback source. The purpose and implication of this review is to gain a full understanding on factors affecting hierarchies and the changes that need to be made in the current system to eradicate its disadvantages. This will help in policymaking and help in increasing opportunities and productivity, employee satisfaction, guiding innovation, teamwork, improving mental health and well-being, as well as building a more resilient and adaptable organization. There are several subthemes that have been discovered in the process of understanding and reviewing the literature that has been published on understanding these hierarchies as their effects.

Subthemes

Abuse Of Power

The prevalence of this workplace harassment is influenced by hierarchies and is further increased in racial and political contexts (McMahon, 2000). People with a gender bias or a bias against an ethical community may also influence the chances of abuse of power in the workplace. Those in higher authority may exploit their power and misuse their authority to abuse or mistreat their employees. The hierarchical structure can contribute to the normalisation of this culture of abuse and harassment. According to Wright (2020) the individuals may fear that their speaking out against this abuse may lead to worse consequences or their concerns will not be taken meaningfully. Thus, the seriousness in handling of complaints of harassment also majorly influence the power dynamics within the hierarchies. When managers and lower level subordinates have the same level of qualification, there is a greater display of power dynamics and misuse of authority in order to retain their position (Friebel & Raith, 2004). And prevent being replaced by more productive subordinates. This can lead to hiring of less competent people which in turn may be a hindrance toward productivity. Since there are issues in regulation and communication of knowledge amongst the hierarchies, it might result in limited flow of information. Unrestricted communication can also have consequences. For example the information or suggestions may not always be beneficial for the company. Following a chain of command can give incentives to supervisors to recruit the best possible candidates. The results of a study by Tepper et al. (2009) show that the deviant behaviour of an individual depends on how fairly their supervisor treats them. In structures where supervisors hold considerable power over their subordinates, there might be belittling and insulting of employees. Higher power distance between the lower and higher levels can further escalate this problem, but this concept can also be used to moderate the problem. Understanding the influence of this behaviour can help in addressing and eradicating abusive behaviour in the workplace. Promoting respectful and fair interactions amongst all levels. In a study by Rosenblatt (2012) it was found out that Individuals with high social dominance orientation may feel like they deserve the greater power in a hierarchical system. Some group members may put them on a pedestal, further ruining the chances of equal treatment and stature. Extreme power imbalance in a hierarchy can lead to overlooking of corruption and misuse of power will less likely be recognised. Institutional norms may also contribute to this by enforcing structures and norms. This will perpetuate the imbalances and the exploitation more and eventually lead to a working environment that is not helpful or healthy for the individuals. The supervisors in a hierarchical settings have incentives and discretion, while their subordinates are dependent on their superiors, which paves the way for potential abuse of power. Abuse of power can occur at different levels and is manifested through disrespect for individual dignity, interference with job performance and rewards(Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998). There is a need for multilevel analysis of power behaviour among organisations to further understand this problem. These power dynamics influence interaction between individuals of same of different levels in the hierarchy.

Misue of power by supervisors can lead to emotional workplace abuse which is manifested through behaviours like bullying, harassment and manipulation (Penttinen et al., 2019). The perpetrator have unchecked authority and control, which is caused by perpetuation of hierarchy by the workplace. Their abusive behaviours have no consequence, which leads to a toxic work environment. Abuse of authority is more harmful for the organisation and decreases its efficiency (Vafaı, 2002). Abuse of authority is harder to control than other issues such as bribery, which can be removed by providing incentive. It a unique challenge in organisational governance and preventing it will be done by restricting the supervisor's discretion and not letting them engage in this behaviour. There is a need for effective mechanisms to curb these unethical processes.

Strategies to prevent this include developing ethical leadership can promote values of fairness and empathy, and establish a culture of accountability. Creating a caring organisational culture may help in fostering open communication, support systems and zero tolerance policies toward abusive behaviours (Penttinen et al., 2019). Bystander intervention should be encouraged through training and awareness programs. This can help eradicate abusive behaviours. Humour can act as a method to blur the boundaries created by hierarchies. It can enhance ease of communication and create a more approachable environment.

It can boost morale and reduce stress levels, leading to a positive work environment and a sense of belonging and friendship among the coworkers (Rosenberg et al., 2021). It can also help the leaders connect to their team members on a personal level and improve productivity. In a relaxed and playful atmosphere, humour can also lead to fostering of creativity and holistic solutions to problems. It can help diffuse tense situations during a conflict.

Conflict Management Within Hierarchies

Interpersonal conflict among individuals in organisational hierarchies is driven by the interaction between status and power. They form the basis for formal and informal hierarchies, which can lead to cycles of conflict and demeaning behaviour. The negative emotions harboured by individuals in a lower level of hierarchy can facilitate conflict and the exertion and display of power by individuals at a higher position can further be detrimental for the situation. Research in this paper by Anicich et al. (2016) has shown that individuals in low-status/high-power roles tend to engage in more conflicts with their coworkers compared to other combinations of status and power. The vicious cycle of conflict and demeaning treatment shows that the structural dynamics of hierarchies, beyond just individuals can contribute to issues in the workplace. Power imbalances between employees in different hierarchical levels exist. It can contribute to conflicts due to perceived unfair treatment and lack of communication. Hierarchical structures can hinder effective communication, especially at different levels. This might lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which not only impact interpersonal relationships, but also impact the organisation as a whole. Members at the higher level of hierarchies often dictate decision making, conflicts may arise when the lower level employees feel excluded from this process or when these decision impact them negatively ("Conflict Management in the Workplace," 2022). Conflicts in hierarchies may escalate due to the structure, where disagreements can move up the chain of command. This can intensify conflicts as it escalates, impacting overall work and productivity, therefore bringing a loss to the organisation itself. This study by found out that a hierarchical structure can complicate conflict management in a hierarchy. The ranks and dynamics withing the organization can contribute to conflicts due to differences in power. Limited resources within hierarchical structures can also cause complications due to competition, and the power structures within the hierarchy may cause additional problems. Interaction between different generation in a hierarchy can lead to conflicts due to their varied perspectives, work styles, values and misunderstandings. Poor communication is also identified as a factor causing problems within the hierarchy. Issues in trust among different levels can impact the organisational balance. Building trust through transparent communication and actions is crucial for effective conflict management within organisational hierarchies (Koesnell et al., 2019). The formal hierarchy in organizations, with its branching and nesting structure, can lead to upward status disagreement (USD) where individuals believe they have higher status than others (Yap et al., 2022). Individual also consider informal status positions while interacting, this is an import part to look upon while talking about conflict management. Conflict may occur when there is a disparity in how individuals perceive their own status compared to others. Identifying and understanding the moderators of conflict will be a step towards managing conflicts.

Mediation plays a crucial role in managing conflict between employers and employees. The perception and effects of conflicts, as well as the evaluation of mediation, differ between employers and employees in hierarchical settings (Muller et al., 2008). Employees express more anger during mediation, which shows how emotional the nature of conflict is. Gender differences also have a varying effect on conflict, where women experience negative effects than men. ,Mediators also reveal the underlying interests and emotions. Even though both genders express anger equally during conflicts, satisfaction is more in men. Supervisors ten to view mediators as more effective compared to their subordinates, in hierarchical labour conflicts. Subordinates' perceptions of mediation effectiveness are particularly influenced by their perceptions of procedural justice, especially when they experience low levels of procedural justice. In such cases, their views on mediation effectiveness are negatively impacted, unlike supervisors (Bollen et al., 2011). The hierarchical position in an organisation can change how individuals see the mediation process. Thus power dynamics should be considered when looking for conflict resolution.

Age Differences

The hierarchical structure within organisations can be impacted due to age related bias. It shapes dynamics and has an influence on the decision making processes. Higher levels of hierarchies may participate in ageism if they are not effectively managed. This can happen if there a lack of age friendly human resource management practices (Naegele et al., 2018). The older employees may face discrimination and exclusion due to this. Traditionally, these hierarchies are associated with abuse of power, overconfidence and reduced connections to others. A study by Jennings et al. (2022) it was seen that age influences how individuals understand and navigate through social hierarchies in the workplaces. Younger employees may lean toward challenging the tradition and seek flatter structures. Older employees may support the structure and order that hierarchies provide them. There are significant impacts on the employees of greater age after restructuring of the hierarchical system in an organisation. Older employees may face challenges in career progression due to change in responsibilities and since there is a flatter hierarchy there is a lack of job security (Bown-Wilson, 2011). There is a lack of advancement opportunities. The older employees are more accustomed to the traditional hierarchical arrangements and may find it difficult to adjust, which can lead to loss in productivity. There is a need of management of advancement proactively to keep up with the evolving organisational space. It was challenging for employees adjust to changes in general, adaptive self efficacy was a mediating variable and was used to understand the effects.

There is a difference in experience, skills and perspectives of employees of different ages. Older employees may face a challenge with the hierarchical structure if yonder managers or supervisors hold beliefs of stereotypes about their abilities. Age diversity in hierarchical structures can lead to more innovation and the combination of young and old people can bring in fresh ideas as well as wisdom that comes from work experience (De Paula Couto & Rothermund, 2019). Age discrimination can prevent promotion and advancement opportunities for them and eradicating these age relates biases can help achieve a dynamic work environment with equal contribution. . Understanding of how age influences the perception of hierarchies can help creative more effective work environments. By recognising these issues, there can be interventions to combat this and promote a better workplace.

Impact on Women

Hierarchies in the workplace have been associated with discrimination, which leads to extrapolation of effects such as glass ceiling, reinforcement of stereotypes and unequal treatment (Tobiasiewicz, 2022). This can impact their job satisfaction and sense of belonging. Hierarchies can create power imbalances which disadvantage women and do not allow them to have voices and influence. Their opportunities for leadership roles are hindered. Due to this there also detrimental effects to the organisation, as a part of the workforce is not recognised, and their full potential is not harnessed.

Women in workplaces have lesser opportunities of advancements at all levels of hierarchies in the corporate workplace, even after all other factors like age, education, tenure and experience were controlled (Kunze & Miller, 2017). There was also data that women were more likely to work part time jobs than men, which reduced their advancement opportunities. This caused a promotion gap which exists across all ranks. In this research paper by Cavaletto et al. (2019), they studied gender composition at the highest hierarchical levels in Italian firms and correlation with career progression of women. They found out that hierarchies have a significant affect on women's advancement opportunities. The presence of hierarchies and discrimination can create barriers, which reduces their access to higher leadership positions and decision making roles. Other challenges like glass ceilings, unequal pay and exclusion will also impact their professional growth. This paper by Acker (2020) talks about how corporate hierarchies are abstract categories and lack workers and gender. The link between masculinity and organisational power was considered apparent enough for it to not have any debates on it, Organizations are seen as gendered processes where gender and sexuality are often obscured through a gender-neutral discourse, impacting women's experiences in the workplace. Gender, the body and sexuality play an important role in controlling the narratives and process of work of women in organisation. This affect how women navigate and advance along hierarchies in the workplace. Hierarchies also impact women's interactions in a male dominated space. They face varying levels of disadvantages including lack of access to opportunities and support, gendered and heterosexual norms within hierarchies can cause constraints (Wright, 2015). Hierarchies which follow along the route of gendered dominance norms contribute to the unique and negative experiences women have in the workplace. Informal interactions within hierarchies can perpetuate these issues and impact the women who want to thrive in a male dominated space.

The gender wage gap is caused by a number of factors, including workplace hierarchies. Women face issues in climbing the corporate ladder like initial job assignments and field of education, which affects advancement opportunities. Both explicit and implicit discrimination is apparent, due to which their initial job applications or field of education are heavily influenced. The anticipation of discrimination can lead to displacement of talent, as women may opt for fields they may perceive less impact of discrimination on their careers (Kauhanen, 2017). Despite progress in gender equality over the years, women are not represented in high paying careers, which contributes further to the wage gap. The hierarchical relationships between women and women managers are influenced by factors like family values, religion, sociocultural values and organisational cultures. Women in senior leadership positions may provide support to other women for career advancement, bu this support will be limited and will be conditional (Hurst et al., 2016). This affects their women to women solidarity. Some women may feel the need to distance themselves from other women and also hindering their career progression to favour their own. This is a mimicry of patriarchal structures which eventually will prove disadvantageous to the women themselves as well as their fellow women coworkers. This will lead to exclusion of women from top management roles.

The underrepresentation of women in high leadership positions or at higher levels in the hierarchy is a reason due to which their career opportunities and advancement are limited. Thus introduction of quotas or voluntary targets, as well as incentive based system which gave reward based on work done, irrespective of hierarchical level or gender can be one of the solutions to this prevalent issue (Kaftandzieva & Nakov, 2021). Addressing these disparities will help promote equality and create a workforce that is utilised to its fullest potential, instead of focusing on the bias. A supportive and equal opportunity for advancements will also provide reinforcements which will be source of motivation to work harder, not just for women and the minority genders, but for men as well. A facilitation of supportive environment will help women in career advancements and form a bond which can lead to flatter and less exploitative hierarchies.

Hierarchies In Digital Workplaces

Technology enables interactions and reduces the formal perceived barriers in cross hierarchical communication. According to Meske et al. (2020) due to digital transformations organisations are encouraged to reduce rigid hierarchies and help in passing of knowledge, ultimately improving productivity. Digital work platforms can help in ease of access of all kinds of information, which would help in increasing transparency and redefining hierarchical boundaries as well as increase productivity through ease of use. In the past, the workplaces had a clear hierarchical set up with defined levels of authority and responsibility, but with the impact of digital transformation there are changes in communication and the employees have become more flexible and fluid and less dependent. In some modern workplaces there is something called a flattened hierarchy, where there are less levels of management and more collaborative and decentralised (Döngül & Cavaliere, 2022). Virtual teams can work beyond geographical borders and it will lead to a more networked and interconnected organisational structures, thus challenging traditional models. Digital workplaces are causing shifts in the traditional organisational hierarchies. There is a change in power dynamics due to distribution of position and control within the hierarchies. There is also a shift in the availability of jobs due to automation and there is an obvious change in the hierarchical structures due to this (Johannessen, 2018). The distribution of power is affected and there is a reconfiguration of roles and status. Through the paper by González and Popescu (2022), it was inferred that the degree of digitisation in an organisation can impact the hierarchies in that workplace differently. Digital tools and technologies may redefine roles in the organisation, which may challenge the existing hierarchical structures and will also promote better decision-making processes due to this. The leaders should be able to adapt to the new settings and be open to have a more collaborative, flexible approach and lead toward a networked or matrix based structure. Virtual communication tools enabled employees across departments and hierarchical levels to work seamlessly with each other, which will reduce the rigidity of the traditional hierarchical structures.

The rise of digital tools in organisational settings is leading to fairer structures, which facilitate like holacracy, due to which there is a distribution of decisions, information and even authority (Roberts, 2019).

This leads to changes in the traditional hierarchies. Networked decisions are being made with music more ease, this shows there is a significant enhancement in human interaction amongst the employees. This can also lead to reduction of boundaries within the hierarchy and promote a healthier work environment. Information and communication technologies have a dual impact on the workplace hierarchies. It affects the structure and can both centralise or decentralise it. In the paper by Gerten et al. (2019) it was found that managerial employees are significantly more impacted as it was found out that only they are benefited from the increase in autonomy. There is a complementary relationship between information and communication technologies and skills, knowledge and responsibilities, particularly for the managerial employees who receive more autonomy. Digitisation can blur the lines of

traditional hierarchies and enable faster and efficient communication across all hierarchical levels. Implementation of technologies like this may help in enhancing flexibility and will give increased autonomy and decision making power on all hierarchical levels (Cazan, 2020). Constant connectivity and reliance on digital tools may lead to challenges like constant monitoring across the levels, which will impact employee work life balance.

Virtual world and workplaces can decrease stressors commonly found in traditional offline work environments; this can lead to reduction of hierarchies. They foster collaborative learning and enhancing communication within individual from the same level as well as a different level of hierarchy. It also will lead to exploration of affordances brought by virtual world and the system as a whole, which may impact hierarchies. This paper by Koles and Nagy (2013) also mentions that hierarchies may be accentuated when there is a bad market state in the organisation. It might also lead to perpetuation of stereotypes and other social biases. Due to the negative atmosphere caused because of the bad market states, the stereotype-based perceptions may be heightened, and it will lead to strengthening of the hierarchy as well as the individual not working to their fullest potential. The presence of a geographically diverse workforce may also lead to stereotypes and perpetuation of the hierarchies. Digital technologies also help in excessive monitoring and control through tools. In a paper by Aloisi (2018) The concept of hierarchical outsourcing is explored where platforms outsource labour while maintaining managerial control. This is a significant step in the evolution of hierarchies. There is a division of work responsibilities and removal of the formal employing entity. This challenges the regular understanding of markets, hierarchies and networks in terms of getting employees through digital platforms. The paper also suggests a need for adaptations and reinventions in the employment relationship due to the current nature of this reshaping.

Thus, to fix these shortcomings, In designing a digital workplace, understanding hierarchies is essential for creating an environment of communication and collaboration as well as supporting the diverse needs of employees. The design should account for all levels of the hierarchy and ensure that all their needs are catered to. Basic factors, performance factors and enthusiasm facts need to be considered (Schmidt et al., 2018). Incorporating a participatory design approach that involves all levels of employees to create technologically advances workplaces as well as make them align with the diverse working styles of the employees.

Covid-19 and Its Influence on Organisational Hierarchies

The Covid-19 crisis led to a shift in workplaces and there were a large number of employees working from home. There was obvious difficulty in executing tasks and delegation of work, especially for people at the managerial position (Stoker et al., 2021). This showed a change in leadership behaviours. Employees also felt like the managers didn't have enough control, and lower level employees felt like there was a decrease in delegation. Covid-19 pandemic influenced organisations and hierarchies by affecting control, delegation and leadership dynamics. The Covid-19 situation encouraged a flexible approach and challenged the narrative. It forced organisations to adapt to remote work policies and decentralised the hierarchies. This decentralisation allowed for more collaboration across all levels and the decision-making process became more inclusive and rapid (Kalina, 2022). All the levels participated in the decision-making processes. These circumstances demonstrated increasing resilience and adaptability among the employees. The pandemic led to reshaping of the traditional hierarchies since they had to adapt to the abrupt changes. The leaders and supervisors recognised that there was a need for reshaping the structure and that's why they adopted to agile work methods, new ways of coordination and new leadership styles (Ali et al., 2022). It accelerated the existing holistic methods of running and organisation by creating a need for those and the individuals had to adapt accordingly. The training systems taught them to develop a varied range of skills which led to a change in the hierarchies. These original needs were recognised and implemented during the pandemic, which led to a lot of positive changes in the work environment.

The pandemic had accelerated the trend of a flattening hierarchy (Savić & Dobrijević, 2022), this meant that there was a reduction in a number of levels, better decision making and efficient communication. Since organisations had to adapt quickly, the management of hierarchies is also an issue. The changing work setup and the need for quick decision making as well as the amount of uncertainty in the world posed as challenges. Reevaluating this has helped them provide solutions and function better in the long run. Managers at different levels of the hierarchy had difficulty working with the risks and environment. The attention was shifted toward the physical surroundings and managing risks, this shows a shift in priorities and consequently a shift in hierarchies (Reineholm et al., 2022). It revealed deficiencies in the regular working structures, and it was evident that the classic hierarchical system was not beneficial. Blurring of the traditional hierarchical structures and more interaction among employees though the virtual commination methods was seen as a major change in the Pandemic. This in turn helped reduce the rigid compulsions of hierarchical structure and paved the way for more efficient working. This paper by Surma et al. (2021) also has a similar outlook like the previous ones, where denaturalisation of decision making was one of the positive outcomes of this. Increased level of collaboration among the levels helped in making better informed decisions. There was an increased shift in focus of employee well-being across all levels, with an emphasis on mental wellbeing and empathy being the common theme.

Conclusion

In conclusion this research paper looks at workplace hierarchy through multiple lenses and tries to explain the extent to which each of these category's effects it. Conflicts are majorly exacerbated by hierarchical structures, they can contribute to conflicts due to the power dynamics created by it. There are issues in status, communication and access to the limited resources. This creates a sese of unhealthy competition and eventually conflicts. Mediation is important, but its effectiveness varies on the kind of conflict, who its between (like higher level lower level or same level in the hierarchy). This is due to procedural justice and power dynamics that exist. Addressing these can help manage conflicts. Abuse of power goes hand in hand with the levels of hierarchy and humans can take the opportunities presented to them for abuse of power. Workplace harassment and abuse has its roots in hierarchical structures. The power dynamics and biases lead to a toxic environment of shame and abuse. Fear of retaliation and consequences prevents the individuals or victims in the situation might be the reason why they take the abuse and don't report it. This allows their supervisors to misuse their authority even more. Strategies like ethical leadership, open communication as well as use of humour to lighten the environment and make it less stressful can be used to mitigate abuse of employees in the workplace. The next category looked at is gender. Women are traditionally at a disadvantage when looked at by the lens of patriarchy in any institution. Hierarchies in the workplace have a different effect on women that they do on men. Research shows that they have lesser advancement opportunities.

This reduces their ability to go to higher decision-making positions in the hierarchy. Theres problems like the gender wage gap, glass ceiling, challenges while dealing with other women managers and unequal treatment in general. These can be combated by using creating incentive-based systems, provisioning equal opportunity and an environment that is supportive of women in general. Another factor looked at in this research paper is Age. Age based discrimination impacts individuals career progression and job opportunities. Younger employees challenge traditional structures and create a system that works better for them, which in turn improves the productivity. Age diversity can combine multiple perspectives and be root for innovation. To create effective workplace environment, balancing and taking the benefits of older and younger employees is important. Further along we see how digital workplaces have an effect on reshaping the hierarchical structure of organisations. They have reshaped the idea of a traditional hierarchy as it promoted more communication and information sharing as well as reducing rigid structures. Technology enhances functions like transparency and decision-making autonomy across all levels in the hierarchy. Challenges like stereotypes and excessive monitoring still remain. To create an effective digital workplace, there is a need to understand the perspectives of all the people in a hierarchy. Digital workplaces were ubiquitous in the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Covid-19 Pandemic caused a great shift in workplaces and lead to rapid changes like remote work environment and flattening of hierarchies. Managers had challenges in delegation meanwhile employees had increased collaboration amongst themselves. There was emphasis on resilience, adaptability, and a focus on employee well-being, which helped in reshaping the traditional hierarchical structures.

References

[1] *workplace*. (2024). https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/workplace

[2] Roth, Z. C., & Rios, K. (2020). Social Hierarchies. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 5054–5060). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_1833

[3] Meske, C., Kissmer, T., & Stieglitz, S. (2020). Bridging formal barriers in digital work environments – Investigating technology-enabled interactions across organizational hierarchies. *Telematics and Informatics*, *48*, 101342. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2020.101342

[4] Friesen, J. P., Kay, A. C., Eibach, R. P., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Seeking structure in social organization: Compensatory control and the psychological advantages of hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *106*(4), 590–609. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035620

[5] Tesi, A., Pratto, F., Pierro, A., & Aiello, A. (2020). Group dominance in hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing organizations: The role of social dominance orientation, need for cognitive closure, and power tactics in a person–environment (mis)fit perspective. *Group Dynamics*, *24*(2), 102–114. https://doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000117

[6] Letkemann, P. G. (2002). The Office Workplace: Communitas and Hierarchical Social Structures. *Anthropologica*, *44*(2), 257. https://doi.org/10.2307/25606085

[7] Korman, J. V., Van Quaquebeke, N., & Tröster, C. (2021). Managers are Less Burned-Out at the Top: the Roles of Sense of Power and Self-Efficacy at Different Hierarchy Levels. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *37*(1), 151–171. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-021-09733-8

[8] Kwok, C. (2020). Epistemic injustice in workplace hierarchies: Power, knowledge and status. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, *47*(9), 1104–1131. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453720961523

[9] Meske, C., Kissmer, T., & Stieglitz, S. (2020). Bridging formal barriers in digital work environments – Investigating technology-enabled interactions across organizational hierarchies. *Telematics and Informatics*, *48*, 101342. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2020.101342

[10] Johannessen, J. A. (2018). *The Workplace of the Future*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429441219

[11] González, A. L., & Popescu, C. R. G. (2022). The effects of digital organizational functions on the workplace. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 103–114). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003283386-11

[12] Roberts, D. (2019). The digital social workplace, people over process. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 188–198). https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367028749-19

[13] Gerten, E., Beckmann, M., & Bellmann, L. (2019). Controlling Working Crowds: The Impact of Digitalization on Worker Autonomy and Monitoring Across Hierarchical Levels. *Jahrbücher Für Nationalökonomie Und Statistik*, *239*(3), 441–481. https://doi.org/10.1515/jbnst-2017-0154

[14] Döngül, E. S., & Cavaliere, L. P. L. (2022). Digital sustainability for workplace strategies. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 163–172). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003283386-17

[15] Koles, B., & Nagy, P. (2013). Virtual worlds as digital workplaces. *Organizational Psychology Review*, *4*(2), 175–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386613507074

[16] Cazan, A. M. (2020). The digitization of working life: Challenges and opportunities. *Psihologia Resurselor Umane*, *18*(1), 3–6. https://doi.org/10.24837/pru.v18i1.457

[17] Aloisi, A. (2018). The Invention of the Future. Does Platformisationn Redefine the Notion of the Firm? *Social Science Research Network*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3124389

[18] Schmidt, C., Praeg, C. P., & Gunther, J. (2018). *Designing Digital Workplace Environments*. https://doi.org/10.1109/ice.2018.8436349

[19] McMahon, L. (2000). Bullying and harassment in the workplace. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *12*(6), 384–387. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110010343666

[20] Wright, S. (2020). Hierarchies and bullying: an examination into the drivers for workplace harassment within organisation. *Transnational Corporations Review*, *12*(2), 162–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/19186444.2020.1768790

[21] Vafaı, K. (2002). Preventing abuse of authority in hierarchies. *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, *20*(8), 1143–1166. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0167-7187(02)00003-6

[22] Friebel, G., & Raith, M. (2004). Abuse of Authority and Hierarchical Communication. *the RAND Journal of Economics/the Rand Journal of Economics*, *35*(2), 224. https://doi.org/10.2307/1593689

[23] Rosenblatt, V. (2012). Hierarchies, Power Inequalities, and Organizational Corruption. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *111*(2), 237–251. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1204-y

[24] Penttinen, E., Jyrkinen, M., & Wide, E. (2019). Methods to Prevent and Tackle Emotional Workplace Abuse. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 63–74). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19993-7_4

[25] Tepper, B. J., Carr, J. C., Breaux, D. M., Geider, S., Hu, C., & Hua, W. (2009). Abusive supervision, intentions to quit, and employees' workplace deviance: A power/dependence analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *109*(2), 156–167. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2009.03.004

[26] Vredenburgh, D., & Brender, Y. (1998). No Title. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *17*(12), 1337–1347. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1005775326249

[27] Rosenberg, C., Walker, A., Leiter, M., & Graffam, J. (2021). Humor in Workplace Leadership: A Systematic Search Scoping Review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.610795

[28] Naegele, L., De Tavernier, W., & Hess, M. (2018). Work Environment and the Origin of Ageism. In *International perspectives on aging* (pp. 73–90). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73820-8_5

[29] Jennings, R. E., Sabey, T., Wellman, E. M., Hemsley, R. S., Kim, D., Sabey, T., Zhong, R., Lanaj, K., Lee, S., & Somaraju, A. (2022). When Hierarchy Helps: Exploring Positive Outcomes of Social Hierarchies at Work. *Proceedings - Academy of Management*, *2022*(1). https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2022.17756symposium

[30] Bown-Wilson, D. (2011). The Role of Age in Career Progression: Motivation and Barriers to Fulfilment in Older Employees. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 129–149). https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230299115_9

[31] Niessen, C., Swarowsky, C., & Leiz, M. (2010). Age and adaptation to changes in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *25*(4), 356–383. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683941011035287

[32] De Paula Couto, M. C., & Rothermund, K. (2019). Ageism and Age Discrimination at the Workplace—a Psychological Perspective. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 57–80). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-59232-8_4

[33] Stoker, J. I., Garretsen, H., & Lammers, J. (2021). Leading and Working From Home in Times of COVID-19: On the Perceived Changes in Leadership Behaviors. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *29*(2), 208–218. https://doi.org/10.1177/15480518211007452

[34] Kalina, P. (2022). Efficiency, Effectiveness and Wellness in the post-COVID Workplace. *Humanities and Social Science Research*, *5*(1), p1. https://doi.org/10.30560/hssr.v5n1p1

[35] Ali, A. J., Calderón, L. L. L., Riccetto, P. A., Del Carpio, P., Nouchi, E. E., Fuenzalida, J., Gómez, M., Hein, A., Molina, O., & Williams, M. (2022). *Questioning hierarchies: Senior leaders' views on how global civil services changed during the pandemic*. https://doi.org/10.35489/bsg-peoplegov-rp_2022/003

[36] Savić, A., & Dobrijević, G. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work organization. *the European Journal of Applied Economics*, *19*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.5937/ejae19-35904

[37] Reineholm, C., Ståhl, C., & Lundqvist, D. (2022). Bringing risk back in: managers' prioritization of the work environment during the pandemic. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, *16*(1), 4–19. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijwhm-03-2022-0041

[38] Surma, M., Nunes, R., Rook, C., & Loder, A. (2021). Assessing Employee Engagement in a Post-COVID-19 Workplace Ecosystem. *Sustainability*, *13*(20), 11443. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132011443

[39] Tobiasiewicz, E. (2022). Mechanizmy stratyfikacji płciowej w strukturach organizacji start-upów technologicznych. *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, *71*(3), 191–218. https://doi.org/10.26485/ps/2022/71.3/9

[40] Kunze, A., & Miller, A. R. (2017). Women Helping Women? Evidence from Private Sector Data on Workplace Hierarchies. *the Review of Economics and Statistics*, *99*(5), 769–775. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00668

[41] Cavaletto, G. M., Pacelli, L., & Pasqua, S. (2019). Women helping women? Chain of command and gender discrimination at the workplace. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies/Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, *24*(2), 350–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571x.2019.1576418

[42] Kauhanen, A. (2017). Gender differences in corporate hierarchies. *IZA World of Labor*. https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.358

[43] Hurst, J., Leberman, S., & Edwards, M. (2016). Women managing women. *Gender in Management*, *31*(1), 61–74. https://doi.org/10.1108/gm-03-2015-0018

[44] Acker, J. (2020). Excerpts from "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 325–335). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003071709-29

[45] Wright, T. (2015). Women's Experience of Workplace Interactions in Male-Dominated Work: The Intersections of Gender, Sexuality and Occupational Group. *Gender, Work and Organization*, *23*(3), 348–362. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12074

[46] Kaftandzieva, T., & Nakov, L. (2021). Glass Ceiling Factors Hindering Women's Advancement in Management Hierarchy. *Journal of Economics, Management and Trade*, 16–29. https://doi.org/10.9734/jemt/2021/v27i230327

[47] Anicich, E. M., Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2016). When the Bases of Social Hierarchy Collide: Power Without Status Drives Interpersonal Conflict. *Organization Science*, *27*(1), 123–140. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.1019

[48] Conflict Management in the Workplace. (2022). *Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199828340-0293

[49] Koesnell, A., Bester, P., & Niesing, C. (2019). Conflict pressure cooker: Nurse managers' conflict management experiences in a diverse South African workplace. *Health SA Gesondheid*, *24*. https://doi.org/10.4102/hsag.v24i0.1128

[50] Yap, A. J., Madan, N., & Puranam, P. (2022). Formal Hierarchy As a Source of Upward Status Disagreement? A Theoretical Perspective. *Organization Science*, *33*(1), 464–482. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2021.1523

[51] Muller, P., Bollen, K., Euwema, M., & Coene, E. (2008). Mediation in Hierarchical Conflicts: The Role of Gender and Anger. *Social Science Research Network*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1298621

[52] Bollen, K., Ittner, H., & Euwema, M. C. (2011). Mediating Hierarchical Labor Conflicts: Procedural Justice Makes a Difference—for Subordinates. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, *21*(5), 621–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10726-011-9230-1

[53] Kauppakorkeakoulu, Yliopisto, A., Laitos, K., Tiedekunta, K. J. P., Psychology, F. O. E. A., Yhteisö, H. T., Talous, K. L. J., Aikuiskasvatustiede, Resurssiviisausyhteisö, Johtaminen, Wellbeing, S. O., Education, A., & Wisdom, S. O. R. (2023). *The relationship of collective creativity with managerial work and workplace climate in hierarchical and less hierarchical organizations*. https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/86632

[54] Van Der Rijt, J., Van Den Bossche, P., & Segers, M. S. (2013). Understanding informal feedback seeking in the workplace. *European Journal of Training and Development*, *37*(1), 72–85. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090591311293293