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UZAKTAN ÇALIŞMADA YÖNETSEL GÜÇ: BİLGİ İLETİŞİM TEKNOLOJİLERİ ARACILI İLETİŞİMİN ROLÜ

MANAGERIAL POWER IN REMOTE WORK: THE ROLE OF ICT-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION *

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ÖZET

Uzaktan çalışmanın hızlı biçimde yaygınlaşması, örgütlerin dijital olarak aracılanmış iletişime olan bağımlılığını artırmış ve yönetsel gücün nasıl işlediğini dönüştürmüştür. Bu nitel çalışma, uzaktan çalışmanın yönetsel gücü iletişim üzerinden nasıl yeniden yapılandırdığını incelemektedir. French ve Raven'ın sosyal güç temellerine dayanan araştırmada, dijital platformlar aracılığıyla ekip yöneten, farklı sektör ve hiyerarşik düzeylerden 13 yöneticiyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bulgular, fiziksel varlık ve doğrudan denetime dayalı güç biçimlerinin zayıfladığını; buna karşılık bilgi paylaşımı, güven inşası, açıklayıcı iletişim ve uyumlu etkileşim yoluyla kullanılan uzmanlık, referans ve ilişkisel gücün güçlendiğini göstermektedir. Yönetsel güç, dijital etkileşimle şekillenen dinamik ve iletişim merkezli bir süreç olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yönetsel Güç, Uzaktan Çalışma, Bilgisayar Destekli İletişim, Güç Kaynakları
JEL Kodları: M12, O33

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of remote work has increased organizations' reliance on digitally mediated communication, reshaping how managerial power operates. This qualitative study examines how remote work reconfigures managerial power through communication. Drawing on French and Raven's bases of social power, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 managers from different sectors and hierarchical levels who managed teams via digital platforms. Findings show that remote work weakens power based on physical presence and direct supervision, while strengthening expert, referent, and relational power enacted through information sharing, trust-building, explanatory communication and adaptive interaction. Managerial power emerges as a dynamic, communication-centered process shaped by digital interaction.

Keywords: Managerial Power, Remote Work, Computer Mediated Communication, Power Sources
JEL Codes: M12, O33

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly globalized business environment, the nature of work and its organization are undergoing continuous transformation. Intensified competition, rapid digitalization, and the diffusion of advanced communication technologies have compelled organizations to rethink traditional work practices and managerial processes (Townsend, DeMarie, & Hendrickson, 1998). Among these developments, the expansion of remote work models has emerged as a particularly influential force, reshaping organizational structures, coordination mechanisms, and patterns of interaction by enabling more flexible and geographically dispersed forms of work (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002: 15).

The widespread adoption of remote work accelerated sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced organizations across sectors to rapidly implement alternative work arrangements. Although the pandemic is now considered to have ended, its effects continue to shape contemporary work practices. Many organizations have institutionalized remote or hybrid models, permanently altering how work is coordinated, supervised, and experienced (Manroop et al., 2025: 1). While remote work demonstrated organizational resilience and continuity, it also exposed significant challenges related to communication, social presence, and managerial control. Employees frequently reported reduced access to non-verbal cues and diminished opportunities for informal interaction, complicating collaboration and sense-making processes. In parallel, managers were required to adapt their influence strategies, relying less on direct supervision and more on communication-based forms of coordination and trust-building (Ingusci et al., 2023; Cook, 2023; Emanuel & Harrington, 2024; Olawale et al., 2024).

These developments raise important questions about the exercise of power in organizations. The extensive literature on organizational power and politics emphasizes that power relations are central to shaping organizational behavior, decision-making, and outcomes (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992). Classical approaches conceptualize managerial power primarily through formal authority, control over resources, and hierarchical position. However, in remote work contexts; where physical presence is limited and interaction is largely mediated by digital technologies; the effectiveness of these traditional power bases becomes less certain. Instead, influence increasingly appears to be enacted through communication practices, relational sensitivity, and credibility rather than direct control.

Despite a growing body of research on remote work, virtual teams, and digital leadership, empirical studies explicitly examining how managerial power is enacted and perceived in remote working contexts remain relatively limited. Classical frameworks of power, such as those developed by French and Raven, were originally formulated in face-to-face organizational settings. As a result, questions persist regarding how these power bases are mobilized, transformed, or reinterpreted when managerial interaction is mediated through digital communication tools. Addressing this gap requires closer attention to the communicative processes through which power is exercised and negotiated in virtual environments.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to explore how managerial power relations are transformed in remote work settings, with particular attention to the role of communication in shaping influence, compliance, and resistance. Drawing on theories of organizational power and computer-mediated communication, the study examines how managers adapt their power bases and communication practices in digitally mediated contexts. By focusing on managers' lived experiences of remote leadership, this research contributes to ongoing debates on

organizational power by conceptualizing power not as a fixed resource tied to position, but as a relational and communicative process that is continually constructed through interaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Power as a Relational and Organizational Concept

Power is a fundamental concept in social life and has been extensively examined across multiple disciplines, including political science, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and philosophy (Ayers, 1975; Morriss, 1987; Raven & French, 1959; Yukl & Falbe, 1992; Cohen, 1976; Dahl, 1957). Within political and sociological traditions, power has long occupied a central position, with classical and contemporary scholars such as Aristotle, Weber, and Lasswell emphasizing that social and political relationships are embedded within structures shaped by power, authority, and governance. Lasswell, in particular, argues that political science is fundamentally concerned with understanding how power is structured and allocated within societies (Dahl, 1963: 5; Stinebrickner, 2015: 191).

Approaches that focus on power solely in terms of position or its exercise overlook the fundamental fact that power is exercised over people. From the perspective of those who emphasize only position and application, power does not signify a relationship; rather, it is understood as capacity, capability, enablement, or ability. Such interpretations risk neglecting the relational and reciprocal dimension of power; namely, that it is enacted upon others. If this relational aspect is ignored, the central rationale for examining power relations disappears; the concern with securing individuals' compliance, whether through overcoming or preventing opposition, either as an attempt or as a successful outcome (Lukes, 1974: 34–35; Morriss, 2006: 126).

Post-functionalist power theories have generally developed along perspectives that may be described as Marxist-cultural and structuralist-Weberian. The former concentrates on ideology, hegemony, consumption, and other sources of silence in capitalist societies (e.g., Laclau & Mouffe, 1985); whereas the latter, particularly within historical sociology, has focused on the state as a field of power (Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985). In this context, Michael Mann's conception of power has become central to comparative-historical sociology. Mann theorizes power as existing within organizational networks that respond to fundamental human needs; thereby distinguishing ideological, economic, military, and political forms of power (Hall & Schroeder, 2006; Mann, 1992, 1993; Reed, 2013: 196).

While discussions on power are predominantly contextualized within political paradigms, it is imperative to acknowledge that power extends beyond the political sphere. Political power constitutes merely one dimension within a broader spectrum of social power, which encompasses economic, financial, industrial, and military dimensions (Bierstedt, 1950: 730). From this perspective, power is not merely a political construct but a pervasive social force that manifests across diverse social settings, shaping patterns of influence, control, and coordination in everyday life.

Early conceptualizations of power often emphasized asymmetries in capacity and control. Hobbes, for example, defined power as the ability of one individual to resist or impede the actions of another, highlighting the role of unequal capacities between actors (Hobbes, 1650: 26; Read, 2012: 3). He later described power more broadly as an individual's ability to secure present or future benefits (Hobbes, 1641: 150; Pansarti, 2012: 52). These definitions

foreground power as a structural and instrumental capacity rooted in differential resources and positions.

In contrast to such structural interpretations, later theorists have approached power as a more dynamic and relational phenomenon. Follett conceptualizes power not as domination over others, but as the capacity to act, to bring about change, and to facilitate collective outcomes (Follett, 1941: 181; Melé & Rosanas, 2003: 37). Building on this relational orientation, Lewin defines power as the potential to exert influence over others, emphasizing that the source of power lies in the range of actions available to an individual within a given context (Lewin, 1951: 194; Raven, 1992: 3). Similarly, Salancik and Pfeffer (1977: 3) frame power as the ability to achieve intended outcomes, while Brown and Raven (1999: 6) describe social power as an individual's potential to influence others.

These relational perspectives are particularly influential in organizational research, where power is closely intertwined with managerial roles, decision-making processes, and hierarchical relations. Within organizations, power is not only derived from formal authority but also from personal attributes, expertise, and the quality of relationships between actors. Yukl et al. (1996) define power as the potential influence that one individual may exert over another, arising from personal characteristics, relational dynamics, or positional authority. From this viewpoint, power is embedded in ongoing interactions rather than residing solely in formal structures.

Organizational scholars further emphasize that power is exercised and contested through everyday practices. Power holders compete to shape decisions and control resources, and these struggles contribute to the formation and reproduction of organizational structures (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Berger, 2005: 7). Power thus emerges not merely as an individual attribute, but as a relational and contextual phenomenon shaped by organizational conditions and social interactions (Grunig, 1992; Berger, 2005: 7). Weber similarly argues that individuals can influence organizational structures through the strategic deployment of power, underscoring the role of agency in shaping institutional arrangements (Weber, 1978: 942; Hardy & Clegg, 2002: 634).

The effectiveness of power in organizational contexts is often evaluated through its outcomes, namely commitment, compliance, and resistance. Commitment reflects a situation in which individuals willingly embrace an action and demonstrate high levels of engagement, while compliance involves adherence with minimal enthusiasm. Resistance, by contrast, entails active or passive opposition to influence attempts (Falbe & Yukl, 1992: 639–640). Importantly, these outcomes are not fixed responses but are contingent on contextual factors and interactional dynamics. Isaac (1992) challenges unidirectional views of power by emphasizing its reciprocal and negotiated nature, arguing that both dominant and subordinate actors mobilize resources to influence outcomes (Simon & Oakes, 2006: 110). Kelman (1953: 185–186) similarly highlights that individuals' reactions to power depend on situational conditions rather than solely on authority structures.

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding power in organizations is provided by French and Raven (1959), who argue that power is fundamentally rooted in the relationship between the influencing agent and the target. They identify five primary bases of power: coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power (Raven et al., 1998). These power bases rarely operate in isolation; rather, they interact in complex ways that shape managerial effectiveness, employee motivation, and organizational performance.

As organizations increasingly adopt digital, decentralized, and hybrid work arrangements, the enactment of these power bases is undergoing significant transformation. The reduced role of physical presence and the growing reliance on technology-mediated communication raise new questions about how power is exercised, perceived, and sustained in organizational life. In this context, power cannot be understood solely as a function of formal authority or control mechanisms, but must also be examined as a relational and communicative process embedded in everyday interactions. Accordingly, this study builds on classical theories of power while extending them to explore how managerial power is reconfigured in remote work environments through communication practices and relational dynamics.

2.2. The Impact of Remote Working Models on Organizational Communication and Power Dynamics

Advances in digital technologies have profoundly reshaped organizational life by transforming how work is coordinated, monitored, and experienced. The increasing prevalence of geographically dispersed teams and cross-border collaboration has made technology-mediated interaction a routine feature of contemporary organizations. This transformation accelerated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as organizations across sectors were compelled to adopt remote working models on an unprecedented scale (Eberhard et al., 2017: 52; Boland et al., 2020: 2). While remote work had already existed prior to the pandemic, the crisis fundamentally altered both its scope and its organizational significance.

Empirical evidence illustrates the magnitude of this shift. Before the pandemic, remote work was largely concentrated among self-employed workers and individuals in low-income contexts. During the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, however, approximately 560 million people worldwide worked from home, marking one of the most significant transformations in global labor arrangements in recent history (International Labour Organization, 2021). In many organizations, remote and hybrid working models have since become institutionalized rather than temporary responses, reshaping long-term assumptions about supervision, coordination, and managerial control.

The expansion of remote work has been accompanied by the widespread integration of computer-mediated communication (CMC) into everyday organizational processes. Communication technologies such as email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaborative platforms have increasingly replaced face-to-face interaction as the primary means of coordination and decision-making. Over time, electronic communication has become more prevalent than traditional channels such as telephone or in-person meetings, facilitated by declining technology costs and the rapid transmission of information across networks (Siegel et al., 1986; Baltes et al., 2002: 156–157). As a result, CMC has become an indispensable infrastructure through which organizational relationships are enacted.

Theoretical perspectives on CMC offer important insights into how these technological shifts reshape communication and power dynamics. Early approaches emphasized the limitations of mediated interaction, particularly the reduced availability of nonverbal cues. Social Presence Theory argues that communication media vary in their capacity to convey social and emotional information, with reduced social presence potentially weakening interpersonal influence and authority (Short et al., 1976). Similarly, Social Context Cues Theory highlights the absence of contextual and status-related cues in CMC, suggesting that

mediated environments may flatten hierarchies and alter traditional patterns of dominance and control (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986).

At the same time, subsequent research challenges deterministic views that portray CMC as inherently inferior to face-to-face communication. The Hyperpersonal Model suggests that individuals adapt to mediated environments by strategically managing self-presentation and relational cues, which can, over time, foster strong interpersonal bonds and even intensify relational dynamics (Walther, 1992: 52). From this perspective, the absence of nonverbal cues does not eliminate influence but rather shifts it toward linguistic, relational, and symbolic forms of communication.

These insights are particularly relevant for understanding power in remote work contexts. In the absence of physical proximity and continuous visual oversight, managers can no longer rely primarily on authority derived from presence, surveillance, or immediate supervision. Instead, power must be enacted through communication practices that establish credibility, trust, and mutual understanding. Prior studies indicate that managers in virtual teams tend to rely less on coercive tactics and more on explanation, persuasion, and relational influence to secure cooperation (Panteli & Tucker, 2009; Mack & Goretzki, 2017).

Nevertheless, remote communication also introduces new constraints. The lack of social context cues may hinder observation, reduce opportunities for informal sense-making, and complicate the interpretation of emotional signals. Managers frequently report difficulties in assessing motivation, detecting disengagement, and responding to resistance in virtual environments. As a result, communication technologies play an ambivalent role: they simultaneously enable new forms of coordination and reshape the conditions under which power is exercised.

Taken together, the literature suggests that remote working models do not simply weaken or strengthen managerial power, but fundamentally reconfigure how power is produced and sustained. Power in remote work settings increasingly emerges through communicative competence, relational sensitivity, and the ability to adapt influence strategies to digitally mediated contexts. Despite growing interest in virtual teams and digital leadership, empirical research explicitly examining how managerial power bases are transformed through communication in remote work environments remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how managers experience, interpret, and enact power in remote work settings, focusing on communication as a central mechanism through which influence is negotiated.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Aim, Scope, and Significance

This research attempts to examine how organizational power is exercised and perceived within the context of remote working models. Rather than treating power as a static attribute tied to formal authority, the study adopts a process-oriented perspective that foregrounds communication and interaction as central to the enactment of power. The research is grounded in key theories of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), including Social Presence Theory, Social Context Cues Theory, and the Hyperpersonal Model, which together provide a conceptual foundation for understanding how communication technologies reshape perceptions and enactments of power in remote work environments.

Social Presence Theory offers a framework for examining how reduced physical presence in remote work influences perceptions of authority and the quality of communication between managers and employees. Social Context Cue Theory contributes to understanding how the absence of nonverbal and contextual cues in virtual communication reshapes hierarchical relations and alters both the expression of authority and the communicative behavior of subordinates. The Hyperpersonal Model urther informs the analysis by highlighting how actors adapt to mediated environments through strategic self-presentation and relational cue management, potentially reshaping traditional power dynamics.

Within this theoretical framework, the study seeks to explore how power is experienced and enacted through communication practices in everyday managerial interactions. Accordingly, the study focuses on identifying patterns in how managers describe their use of power bases, communication strategies, and influence tactics in remote work contexts.

3.2. Research Design

A qualitative study approach was used to investigate the complex power dynamics in remote work. Using purposeful sampling combined with a maximum variation strategy,13 managers from different sectors and hierarchical levels were selected. All participants had experience in both remote and face-to-face management, enabling comparative reflection across work contexts.

This sampling strategy aimed to capture shared patterns across heterogeneous cases, consistent with the logic of maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no substantively new codes or themes emerged during analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. The choice of online interviews aligned with the empirical focus of the study, as it mirrored the communication conditions under which participants exercised managerial power. Interview questions explored participants' communication practices, perceptions of authority, experiences of influence and resistance, and strategies for managing power in remote settings.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect confidentiality.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, review, definition, and interpretation. This approach was chosen for its flexibility and its suitability for identifying patterned meanings across qualitative datasets while remaining sensitive to context.

Coding and analysis were supported by MAXQDA 2024. Rather than quantifying themes, the analysis focused on the interpretive significance of recurring patterns in participants' narratives, consistent with an interpretive qualitative approach. Themes were iteratively refined through repeated engagement with the data and constant comparison across cases.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study followed the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was enhanced through member checking, whereby participants were given the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on their statements. Peer debriefing was conducted through regular discussions with academic colleagues to challenge interpretations and reduce researcher bias.

An audit trail documenting analytic decisions, coding revisions, and theme development was maintained throughout the research process to enhance transparency and dependability. These procedures helped ensure that the findings reflect participants' perspectives while remaining analytically rigorous.

4. FINDINGS

When examining the participants professional and demographic traits, all participants were in managerial or specialist positions across diverse sectors, including manufacturing, telecommunications, energy, banking, logistics, and IT. A total of 13 individuals participated in the interviews, comprising 7 women and 6 men, with ages ranging from 31 to 56 years. In terms of marital status, 10 participants were married while 3 were single. Regarding educational attainment, 8 participants held a master's degree, 4 had a bachelor's degree, and 1 held a doctoral degree. Most participants had considerable experience with remote work, commonly between 2 to 6 years. The sample included organizations with both pyramidal and matrix structures, and participants occupied managerial roles at various hierarchical levels, ranging from first-line supervisors to senior executives. Common job titles among participants included human resources manager, sales manager, finance manager, and software group manager.

4.1. Managerial Power Bases in Remote Work

The first theme identified in relation to managerial power in remote working models was Managerial Power Bases in Remote Work. This theme captures managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the types of power they draw upon and how these power bases are enacted in remote contexts.

Within this theme, six sub-themes were identified: effective relationship management power, legitimate power, expert power, referent power, reward power, and coercive power. Among these, effective relationship management power emerged with the highest frequency. This sub-theme represents a relatively exploratory and practice-driven form of power that extends beyond the traditional classifications in the literature, emphasizing relational competence, trust-building, and adaptive communication.

The remaining sub-themes align with the classical power bases defined by French and Raven (1959). Among these, legitimate power was referenced most frequently, whereas coercive power appeared least often (see Table 1).

Table 1: Managerial Power Bases in Remote Work

Power Bases	**Lower Level**	**Middle Level**	**Upper Level**	**Total**
Legitimate Power	0	**3**	**3**	**6**
Coercive Power	0	1	0	**1**
Reward Power	0	1	**2**	**3**
Referent Power	0	1	1	**2**
Effective Relationship Management Power	1	**7**	**4**	**12**
Expert Power	0	1	**2**	**3**
SUM	**1**	**14**	**12**	**27**
N = Documents	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)	**13 (100%)**

Effective relationship management power was further differentiated into the following dimensions: building credit, acting friendly, fostering a sense of belonging, and adjusting communication tone according to the employee. These practices highlight managers' efforts to tailor their interaction styles to individual employees in order to sustain influence in the absence of physical proximity.

An illustrative quote is provided below:

"Generally, I am a manager who prioritizes human relations in my approach; I enjoy utilizing my interpersonal relationships, and I believe I am good at it. I try to act according to what we call 'tailoring the message to the person,' meaning I assess which communication style works best with each employee and adjust my approach accordingly." (Interview 9, Senior Manager, Male, 37, Sales Manager)

For legitimate power, the identified sub-themes included giving feedback, frequent monitoring, and receiving top management support, indicating that formal authority continues to play a role in remote settings, albeit often supplemented by relational strategies.

4.2. Managerial Behaviors that Foster Subordinate Compliance

Another prominent theme was "Managerial Behaviors that Foster Subordinate Compliance." which focuses on behaviors perceived by managers as encouraging cooperation and acceptance among subordinates.

The identified sub-themes included providing explanations, choosing a leadership style, using moderate language, deliberately delaying responses, encouraging empathy, being consistent, and offering rewards. Among these, providing explanations emerged as the most frequently mentioned behavior, followed by using moderate language and choosing a leadership style.

A representative quote is presented below:

"It is crucial that employees understand why I need something urgently or why I request a particular document. If they know the purpose, for instance, that the Ministry called and there's an urgent meeting, they realize it's not just an arbitrary demand. When they understand the process and the rationale, their motivation and clarity increase." (Interview 1, Senior Manager, Male, 41, Software Group Manager)

4.3. Behaviors Leading to Resistance

In contrast, the theme Behaviors Leading to Resistance captures managerial actions that were perceived as triggering resistance among subordinates. Two sub-themes were identified: using harsh language and forcing employees out of their comfort zone, both of which appeared with equal frequency. Managers often reflected critically on these behaviors, particularly when describing earlier stages of their managerial careers.

Representative quotes for these sub-themes include:

"During my early managerial experiences, I felt the need to prove myself, or perhaps I didn't know how to act. As a younger manager, I sometimes adopted a harsher tone to ensure my instructions were followed. But I later realized this approach alienated people." (Interview 8, Senior Manager, Female, 39, HR Training Manager)

"Employees have comfort zones. For example, someone used to working alone in a large office might resist when told they must now share the workload with another person. Even after assessments showing that the work can indeed be handled by two people, such changes trigger resistance." (Interview 7, Senior Manager, Female, 36, Employee Experience and HR Manager)

4.4. Factors Influencing the Selection of Power Bases in Remote Work

The next theme identified was "Factors Influencing the Selection of Power Bases in Remote Work." It highlights the contextual and individual considerations shaping managerial influence strategies. The identified sub-themes were employee work style, employee personality, and applied leadership style, with employee work style emerging as the most frequently cited factor. Managers described adapting their approaches based on employees' experience levels, motivation, and self-regulation capacities.

A notable quote is below*:*

"Employee A is much older and very experienced, and intervening too much lowers their motivation. For them, I prefer a hands-off approach, offering help only when they ask for it. Employee B is highly confident and prone to taking unnecessary initiatives, so I frequently check in to understand their actions. Employee C is lazy and reluctant to work, so I call them every morning under various pretexts to ask about their plans for the day." (Interview 2, Senior Manager, Female, 31, Supply Chain Manager)

4.5. Differences in the Use of Power Bases in Remote Work

Another theme identified was Differences in the Use of Power Bases in Remote Work, which captures variations in communication practices across remote settings. Sub-themes

included casual conversations, using multiple communication channels, frequent meetings, task-tracking tools, variation and selection of communication tools, camera-on meetings, occasional in-person meetings, emojis, gifs or videos, keeping written records, sharing deadlines via online calendars, and sharing non-work content through informal channels.

Among these practices, casual conversations were mentioned most frequently, reflecting managers' efforts to maintain relational closeness and emotional awareness in virtual environments.

A related quote states:

"To understand whether someone has withdrawn or is feeling down, especially when meetings are rare, I initiate casual conversations or share humorous content like gifs and videos. It helps break the ice and keep the team connected." (Interview 2, Senior Manager, Female, 31, Supply Chain Manager)

In addition to interpersonal communication practices, managers described a range of ICT-enabled actions through which power was enacted and sustained in remote work settings. These actions illustrate how digital tools are mobilized to support coordination, visibility, and relational connection in the absence of physical proximity. Table 2 summarizes the ICT-enabled managerial actions identified across the interviews.

Table 2: ICT-enabled Managerial Actions

Managerial Actions in ICT-supported Work Environments
Engaging in casual conversations
Utilizing multiple communication channels
Holding frequent meetings
Using emojis and visual materials
Conducting camera-on meetings
Keeping written records
Sharing deadlines via online calendars

4.6. Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Power Use and Communication in Remote Work

The theme "Perceived Advantages of Power Use and Communication in Remote Work" included hiding negative emotions and effective time management, with effective time management emerging as the most prominent benefit.

A quote reflecting effective time management states:

"I think remote work helps me manage my time better. In the office, people constantly approach with questions, and being physically present triggers interruptions. Online, they have to check my availability first. This helps me focus and plan better." (Interview 2, Senior Manager, Female, 31, Supply Chain Manager)

Conversely, the theme "Perceived Disadvantages of Power Use and Communication in Remote Work" encompassed lack of social context cues, difficulty in observation and supervision, shorter communication duration, lower employee motivation, and difficulty in reaching employees. Among these, lack of social context cues was cited most frequently.

An illustrative quote:

"In face-to-face communication, you can read emotions much better. Online, especially in camera-off meetings, you miss out on facial expressions and gestures, making it harder to understand feelings. This is one of the biggest disadvantages of remote work." (Interview 4, Senior Manager, Male, 54, Spatial Intelligence Unit Manager)

4.7. Conceptualization of Power

Finally, the theme "Conceptualization of Power" reflects how participants themselves defined power. Identified sub-themes included expert power, legitimate power, gaining trust, effective communication, influencing others, making the right decisions, building a positive image, being hardworking, and establishing dominance. Among these, expert power and legitimate power appeared most frequently.

A representative quote highlights the emphasis placed on expertise:

"Some managers rely solely on their title for power, but I believe knowledge is power. If I know what my employees do, I won't fear losing control. Even if they leave, I can step in and do their job if necessary." (Interview 8, Senior Manager, Female, 39, HR Training Manager).

4.8. Managerial Level Differences in Compliance Strategies

When examining reasons for subordinate compliance by managerial level, differences emerged between middle and senior managers. For middle managers, the most frequently referenced sub-themes were providing explanations and using moderate language (see Table 3). For senior managers, providing explanations again appeared most frequently, followed by offering rewards and situational leadership approaches, which can be associated with legitimate power.

The greater reliance of middle managers on explanations and moderate language suggests that they tend to employ softer, more persuasive influence strategies when seeking compliance, whereas senior managers draw on a broader range of power bases.

Table 3: Findings on Reasons for Subordinate Compliance in Relation to Power Bases by Managerial Level

Compliance–Power Dynamics	**Lower Level**	**Middle Level**	**Upper Level**	**Total**
Empathy Enablement for Employees	0	1	0	**1**
Employee Distraction	0	**2**	0	**2**
Being Consistent	0	1	0	**1**
Using Moderate Language	0	**4**	1	**5**
Providing Explanations	0	**6**	**3**	**9**
Using Rewards	0	0	1	**1**

Using Situational Leadership Approaches	1	**2**	1	**4**
SUM	**1**	**16**	**6**	**23**
N = Documents	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)	**13 (100%)**

When examining the findings related to gender-based differences in the use of power bases, distinct patterns emerged in communication practices (see Table 3). Among female participants, the most frequently reported practices were engaging in casual conversations, followed by holding frequent meetings and reaching out through multiple communication channels. Male participants most frequently referred to reaching out through multiple communication channels, using task-tracking applications, and holding frequent meetings.

Taken together, these patterns suggest variation in how power is enacted through communication rather than fixed gender-based differences. While female participants more frequently emphasized informal interaction and relational communication practices, male participants more often highlighted tools and practices oriented toward task coordination and monitoring. Although these patterns may reflect gendered dynamics, they may also be shaped by contextual and organizational conditions, and therefore cannot be generalized beyond the specific settings examined in this study.

Table 4: Findings on Gender-Based Differences in the Use of Power Bases

Differences in the Use of Power Sources	**Femal e**	**Male**	**Total**
Sharing Non-Work Content on Various Channels	1	0	**1**
Hosting Meetings with the Camera On	1	1	**2**
Organizing Face-to-Face Meetings	1	1	**2**
Publishing Due Dates in Their Calendars	1	1	**2**
Engaging in Casual Conversations	**5**	1	**6**
Maintaining Written Records	0	1	**1**
Differentiation and Selection of Communication Tools	1	1	**2**
Using Task-Tracking Applications	0	**2**	**3**
Using Emojis, GIFs, or Videos	1	0	**1**
Holding Frequent Meetings	**3**	**2**	**5**
Reaching Out Through Multiple Communication Channels	**2**	**5**	**7**
SUM	**17**	**14**	**31**
N = Documents	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)	**13 (100%)**

When examining differences in the use of power bases across managerial levels, distinct patterns emerged in communication practices (see Table 5). Middle managers most frequently reported engaging in casual conversations, holding frequent meetings, and reaching out through multiple communication channels.

Senior managers most frequently referred to reaching out through multiple communication channels, holding frequent meetings, and engaging in casual conversations, alongside the use of task-tracking applications and the variation and selection of communication tools.

These findings indicate that senior managers tend to prefer more rational and evidence-based methods, focusing on maintaining documentation and record-keeping, whereas middle managers appear to rely more heavily on direct communication and relationship-building strategies when utilizing power bases in remote work settings. Thus, differences in power enactment across managerial levels are theoretically expected given variations in authority, responsibility, and accountability, and the patterns observed here point to the need for more in-depth qualitative research to further examine how these differences unfold across contexts.

Table 5: Findings on Differences in the Use of Power Bases by Managerial Level

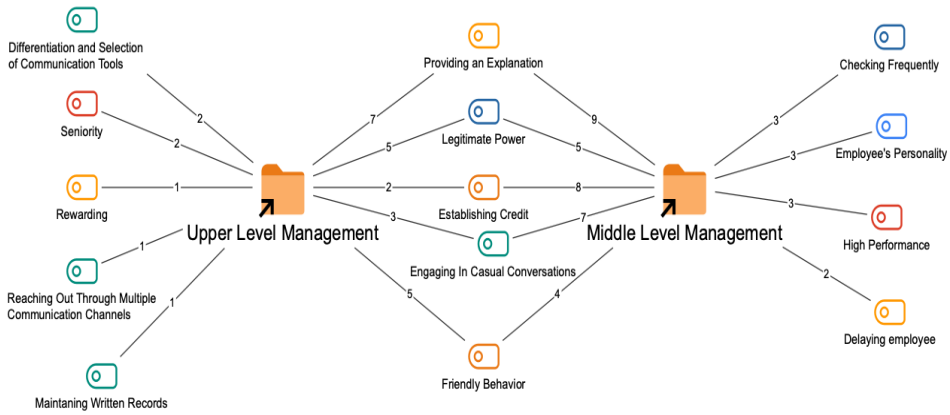
Differences in the Use of Power Sources	**Lower Level**	**Middle Level**	**Upper Level**	**Total**
Sharing Non-Work Content on Various Channels	0	0	1	**1**
Hosting Meetings with the Camera On	0	1	1	**2**
Organizing Face-to-Face Meetings	0	1	1	**2**
Publishing Due Dates in Their Calendars	0	1	0	**1**
Engaging in Casual Conversations	0	**4**	**2**	**6**
Maintaining Written Records	0	0	1	**1**
Differentiation and Selection of Communication Tools	0	0	**2**	**2**
Using Task-Tracking Applications	0	0	**2**	**3**
Using Emojis, GIFs, or Videos	0	1	0	**1**
Holding Frequent Meetings	1	**3**	**2**	**5**
Reaching Out Through Multiple Communication Channels	0	**3**	**4**	**7**
SUM	**1**	**15**	**16**	**31**
N = Documents	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)	**13 (100%)**

The document sets subject to analysis for the purpose of developing the Two-Case Model were compared. As part of this process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 managers. Among these, 5 participants were senior managers, 7 participants were middle managers, and 1 participant was a lower-level manager. However, since including the

lower-level manager would not yield analytically meaningful results, this participant was excluded from the Two-Case Model, which was therefore constructed by including only senior and middle managers (See: Figure 1).

To facilitate analysis by managerial level, the relevant documents were clustered for examination.

Figure 1: Two-Case Model for Middle and Senior Managers



The model reveals that middle managers place greater emphasis on building credit and engaging in casual conversations compared to senior managers. Both groups referenced legitimate power at similar levels. Additionally, both senior and middle managers frequently resort to providing explanations and acting in a friendly manner to secure compliance.

However, senior managers were found to place greater emphasis on seniority, while middle managers placed more importance on employee personality and high performance.

In terms of using power, senior managers, compared to middle managers, demonstrated a greater tendency to:

- Diversify communication channels,
- Use rewards,
- Engage in non-work-related sharing through multiple channels, and
- Document interactions for record-keeping purposes.

On the other hand, middle managers exhibited a stronger tendency to:

- Frequently monitor employees, and
- Employ deliberate stalling techniques to manage situations.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined how managerial power is enacted, interpreted, and reconfigured in remote work settings, with particular attention to communication practices and relational dynamics. The findings indicate that power in digitally mediated environments is exercised less through hierarchical authority or coercive mechanisms and more through communication-centered and relational processes.

Across managerial levels, providing explanations emerged as the most effective behavior in fostering subordinate compliance. Managers consistently reported that employees were more willing to comply when the rationale behind tasks and decisions was clearly communicated. This finding highlights explanatory influence as a central mechanism of power in remote work contexts. Rather than relying on sanctions or positional authority, managers sought to create shared understanding through meaning-making. When resistance occurred, they tended to increase explanatory efforts or adopt alternative communication strategies, reinforcing the view that power operates as a continuously negotiated interactional process rather than a fixed resource.

In addition to explanatory influence, other communication-oriented behaviors, such as using moderate language, demonstrating empathy, selecting an appropriate leadership style, maintaining consistency, offering rewards, and, in some cases, employing intentional delays, also contributed to compliance. By contrast, harsh language and forcing employees out of their comfort zones were more likely to provoke resistance. These patterns suggest that voluntary conformity in remote work is increasingly achieved through relational congruence and communicative competence, rather than through coercion.

The selection of power bases was shaped primarily by employee work style, with managers adapting their influence strategies based on whether employees were proactive, questioning, experienced, or disengaged. While employee personality and leadership style also played a role, individual characteristics appeared to be more influential than organizational structures. This finding aligns with process-oriented perspectives that conceptualize power as situational, relational, and context-dependent. Managers reported adopting more explanatory and communication-focused approaches when interacting with assertive or questioning employees, indicating that power use in remote work is highly adaptive rather than standardized.

Digital communication technologies played an ambivalent role in these dynamics. As summarized in Table 2, managers relied on a range of ICT-enabled actions, such as casual conversations, frequent meetings, multiple communication channels, written records, camera-on meetings, and calendar-based coordination, to enact and sustain power in the absence of physical proximity. At the same time, managers emphasized that digital communication has not fully replicated the richness of face-to-face interaction. As a result, managerial authority could no longer be assumed to derive from physical presence but instead had to be continuously reconstructed through communication. Overall, the findings indicate that remote work has reshaped power dynamics by foregrounding communication-centered leadership.

6. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study contributes to the literature on organizational power by advancing a process-oriented and communication-centric perspective on power in remote work contexts. Responding to calls for greater attention to digitally mediated interaction, the findings demonstrate that power is enacted through ongoing communicative practices rather than solely through formal authority structures.

A key theoretical contribution lies in the identification of “effective relationship management” power as a prominent power base. While this concept shares similarities with relational and referent power discussed in prior research (e.g., Zhao et al., 2016), it extends existing frameworks by highlighting deliberate communication practices

Specifically, “effective relationship management” is not limited to emotional intimacy or personal identification; it encompasses conscious communication practices such as trust building, transparency, and open and informative interaction. The study highlights that managers prioritize establishing strong communication with employees, building trust, and occasionally responding positively to employee requests. In this context, “soft power” approaches were observed to be more frequently employed. These findings suggest that, in the context of remote work, power is increasingly generated through communicative competence rather than positional responsibilities.

The findings also reaffirm the relevance of classical power bases identified by French and Raven (1959), while illustrating how they are reconfigured under remote working conditions. Although legitimate, expert, referent, reward, and coercive power remain available to managers, coercive approaches appear less effective and less frequently employed. Instead, managers favor soft power strategies centered on explanation, trust, and relationship building, indicating that traditional power bases are transformed rather than replaced in digitally mediated environments.

7. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that digitalization is shifting managerial power away from authoritarian models toward forms of influence grounded in communication and competence. Organizations should therefore reconsider leadership approaches that rely primarily on formal authority, particularly in remote and hybrid work settings.

Managers benefit from developing adaptive communication skills that allow them to tailor power use to individual employee work styles and situational demands. Training programs emphasizing explanatory communication, relational awareness, and trust building may enhance voluntary compliance and collaboration in remote contexts.

At the same time, organizations should recognize the limitations of digital communication. While online cues such as emojis, visual content, and informal messaging can support connection, their effectiveness varies across contexts and cultures. Ultimately, communication style emerges as the most critical determinant of power effectiveness in remote work, underscoring the need for leadership practices that balance technological coordination with relational sensitivity.

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Extended Summary

Managerial Power in Remote Work: The Role of ICT-Mediated Communication

The rapid expansion of remote work has increased organizations' reliance on digitally mediated information and communication systems, reshaping how managerial power is exercised in contemporary organizational contexts. Positioned at the intersection of organizational studies, information science, and computer-mediated communication, this study examines how remote work reconfigures managerial power relations, with particular

attention to communication as a key mechanism through which power is enacted. Grounded in French and Raven's bases of social power and informed by research on computer-mediated organizational interaction, the study adopts a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 managers from diverse sectors and hierarchical levels who had experience managing teams through digital communication platforms in remote work settings.

The findings show that in digitally mediated work environments, power no longer relies primarily on hierarchy, direct supervision, or coercion. Instead, managerial influence increasingly depends on communication-centered and relational processes that develop through ongoing interaction.

One of the most important findings is the central role of explanation in securing employee compliance. Managers at different hierarchical levels emphasized that employees were more willing to cooperate when they understood the reasons behind tasks, decisions, and expectations. Clear explanations helped create shared meaning and reduced resistance. Rather than relying on formal authority or punitive measures, managers focused on helping employees make sense of expectations. When resistance occurred, managers rarely escalated control. Instead, they increased explanatory efforts or adjusted communication, reinforcing the idea that power in remote work is negotiated through interaction rather than imposed through position.

In addition to explanatory communication, other communication-based behaviors supported employee compliance. These included using moderate language, showing empathy, adapting leadership styles, remaining consistent, offering rewards, and occasionally delaying responses strategically. By contrast, harsh language and pushing employees outside their comfort zones often led to resistance. These patterns suggest that in remote work environments, compliance is more likely to emerge voluntarily when managers align communication with employees' needs and expectations. Power therefore becomes less about control and more about relational fit and communicative skill.

The study also shows that managers do not apply power uniformly. Instead, influence strategies depend largely on employees' work styles. Managers adjusted their approaches based on whether employees were proactive, questioning, experienced, or disengaged. While organizational rules and leadership styles still mattered, individual employee characteristics were more influential in shaping how power was exercised. This finding supports process-oriented views of power as situational and context-dependent. Managers were especially likely to use explanation and dialogue when working with assertive or questioning employees, highlighting how adaptive power use becomes in remote settings.

Digital communication technologies play a complex role in these dynamics. Managers relied on various ICT-based practices, including informal conversations, frequent online meetings, multiple communication channels, written documentation, camera-on meetings, and calendar-based coordination. These tools helped maintain coordination and relationships despite physical distance, while allowing greater control over timing, emotional expression, and information flow. At the same time, digital communication cannot fully replace face-to-face interaction. The absence of nonverbal cues such as body language and facial expressions made communication less rich and increased misunderstandings. As a result, managerial authority could no longer be taken for granted based on physical presence and instead had to be continuously rebuilt through communication.

Managers' definitions of power further reflect this shift. Power was most often associated with expertise, legitimacy, trust, effective communication, sound decision-making, professional image, and diligence. Few managers equated power with authoritarian behavior or strict control. Instead, being powerful meant being credible, knowledgeable, trustworthy, and able to communicate clearly. This reflects a move away from command-and-control leadership toward influence grounded in competence and relationships.

Differences between managerial levels also emerged. While legitimate power remained important for both middle and senior managers, middle managers relied more on relational and communication-based practices in daily interactions. Senior managers emphasized coordination tools, documentation, and strategic oversight. These differences reflect variations in responsibility rather than rigid distinctions, suggesting that power in remote work takes different forms depending on organizational role.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to a communication-centered and process-oriented understanding of power in remote work contexts. Power emerges through everyday communicative practices rather than formal authority. A key contribution is the identification of effective relationship management as an important source of power. While related to relational and referent power, this concept emphasizes transparency, trust building, and open dialogue, representing a form of soft power that becomes influential in remote work environments.

Practically, the findings suggest that organizations need to rethink traditional leadership models in remote and hybrid work. As digitalization weakens authority associated with physical presence, managers must rely more on communication skills, adaptability, and relational awareness. Training programs focused on explanation, trust building, and flexible communication are likely to improve collaboration and voluntary compliance. Ultimately, effective digital leadership depends not only on managing tasks and technologies, but also on cultivating meaningful and trust-based relationships through communication.