



Power Distance in Healthcare: Learning from Aviation to Decrease Power Distance and Improve Healthcare Professions Culture

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Objectives

- ▶ Describe Power Distance concept.
- ▶ Compare outcomes in Aviation versus Health Care related to Power Distance.
- ▶ Discuss Human Factors, Culture, and Crew (Team) Resource Management.
- ▶ Address methods to mitigate Power Distance.

Power Distance

- ▶ Power distance (PD) refers to a cultural/professional inequality to include the relationship with authority (or perceived authority).
- ▶ Hierarchical order limits an individual who feels “less powerful” to speak out against the perceived “more powerful” individual (Halo Effect).
- ▶ A high PD ranking indicates the level of inequality and hierarchy.
- ▶ PD is well defined and one’s “place in society” is known and accepted.

Aviation and Health Care

- ▶ What can health care learn from aviation's' recognition of PD, safety, and professional culture?
- ▶ Air travel is the safest mode of travel.
- ▶ 2016 there were 15,630,000 flights with 412 deaths (Federal Aviation Administration, 2017).
- ▶ 2018 medical error was reported as third leading cause of death with 250,000 deaths per year (National Patient Safety Foundation, 2018).
- ▶ Aviation employees generally report increased sense of accountability, job satisfaction, and perceived safety related to change in professional culture.

Aviation and Health Care

- ▶ Historically team members in aviation and health care were taught not to question orders.
- ▶ PD was high between pilots and crew members.
- ▶ Currently, PD remains high between physicians and other team members in many places.
- ▶ Professional cultures with high PD can negatively affect professional environment, safety, team members well being, and may lead to poor outcomes.

Aviation and Health Care

- ▶ Aviation experienced several preventable crashes and hundreds of fatalities.
- ▶ Many of these accidents were attributed to pilot error.
- ▶ This began the process of changing the culture of a high PD to one of collaboration and safety.



Factors Affecting Power Distance

- ▶ Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.
1. National
 2. Institutional
 3. Organizational
 4. Professional



Factors Affecting Power Distance

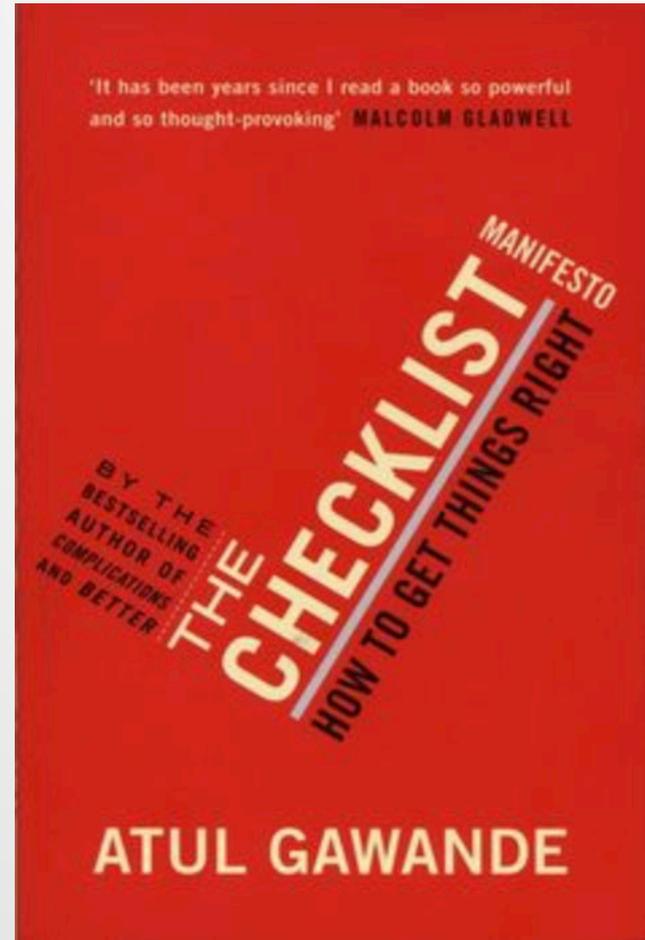
- ▶ **Human Factors:** Applied science of people working together with devices (Kanki, Helmreich, & Anca, 2010).
- ▶ Systems discipline and profession, applying a system philosophy and systems approach to solving complex issues (Wilson, 2013).
- ▶ Systems focus
- ▶ Context
- ▶ Interactions
- ▶ Holism
- ▶ Emergence
- ▶ Embedding

Factors Affecting Power Distance

- ▶ **Crew Resource Management:**
Procedures and guidelines a crew utilizes to ensure the flight is managed holistically.
- ▶ 6th generation currently being taught and evaluated in aviation.
- ▶ Rarely is an accident or incident attributed to a single individual, but rather a breakdown of the team.
- ▶ The After Action Review (AAR) critique of crew performance is crucial.

Factors Affecting Power Distance

- ▶ “The Checklist Manifesto” describes checklist being implemented and the reduction of post procedure complications.
- ▶ Recognized as a method for improving Crew or Team Resource Management.
- ▶ Many health care facilities have implemented this process.



Focus on Power Distance

- ▶ The focus on PD, professional culture, human factors, and crew resource management in health care is fairly new and in many places is yet to be fully accepted.
- ▶ Addressing these concepts has been cited as contributing factors in reducing errors and and improving safety (passengers and patients outcomes).

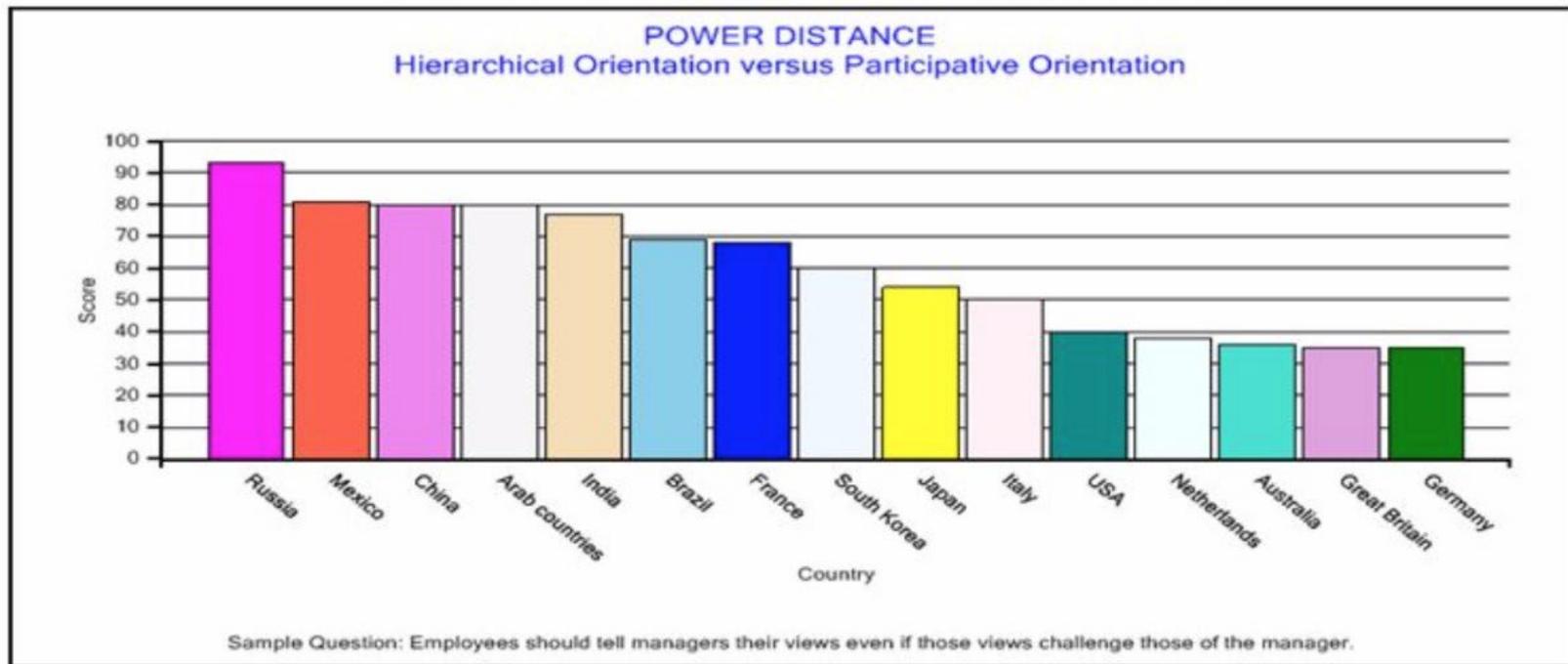
Summary

- ▶ Power Distance is both a cultural, national, and professional issue.
- ▶ High PD can be overcome with education, training, evaluation, practice, and effective critique.
- ▶ Aviation learned the hard way regarding high PD.
- ▶ Decreasing a high PD reduces errors, stress, and improves outcome.
- ▶ The goal is to improve professional environment, safety, team members well being, and decrease or eliminate errors and poor outcomes.



Power Distance by Country

Hofstede: Power Distance Index Values



Questions



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