

# Chapter 13


## The Digital Panopticon at Work: Authority and Influence in Remote Organizations

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### ABSTRACT

*The pandemic has reshaped organizational practices by accelerating digital transformation and embedding remote work into everyday operations. This chapter examines how influence tactics and organizational authority are redefined under these conditions, where traditional face-to-face control is replaced by digital visibility. Drawing on maximum diversity sampling, interviews with 12 participants from different sectors and levels were analyzed with MAXQDA 2024. Findings indicate that remote work challenges authority structures, compelling subordinates to adapt their strategies. A notable trend is the increased reliance on rational and communication-based tactics, while subordinates strengthen their social presence in digital environments to shape decisions. At the same time, the absence of non-verbal cues limits the expression of authority and influence. Interpreted through digital panopticism, these dynamics highlight how remote work transforms power: authority and influence are mediated and disciplined by constant online monitoring.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The selection and utilization of influence tactics by leaders, managers, and subordinates are associated with a wide range of organizational outcomes, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational justice, absenteeism, burnout, self-efficacy, productivity, and efficiency (Elias, 2008). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that organizational power bases and influence tactics play a central role in shaping these outcomes (Meydan et al., 2018; Bocchiario & Zamperini, 2012; Guérin et al., 2013; Bélanger, 2016). Collectively, this body of research indicates that influence tactics are not peripheral managerial practices but constitute a critical domain with direct implications for multiple dimensions of organizational life.

From a sociological perspective, Giddens (1979) argues that when individuals act collectively within organizations, they actively produce meaning, power, and norms, which form the core elements of social interaction (Melin & Axelsson, 2005). Accordingly, power and influence remain persistent and relevant organizational phenomena, regardless of changing work conditions. Building on this view, French and Raven (1959) conceptualize power and influence around two fundamental questions: what determines the behavior of the actor exercising power, and what shapes the response of the individual subject to that influence.

While power and influence have been extensively examined in traditional organizational settings, research focusing on remote work contexts remains comparatively limited and is predominantly quantitative in nature (Panteli & Tucker, 2009; Steizel & Rimbau-Gilabert, 2013; Wadsworth & Blanchard, 2015). As a result, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding of how influence processes are experienced, interpreted, and enacted in digitally mediated work environments. Adopting an exploratory qualitative approach, this study seeks to address this gap by providing a more nuanced examination of influence dynamics in remote work.

To achieve this aim, the chapter examines changing influence processes in remote work environments through the lens of digital panopticism. Drawing on Foucault's metaphor of the Panopticon (Foucault, 1977), digital panopticism highlights how visibility functions as a disciplinary mechanism. In contemporary remote work settings, constant visibility is produced through digital tools such as cameras, online meetings, shared calendars, status indicators, and routine reporting practices. These mechanisms not only enable managerial oversight but also foster self-regulation among employees.

Within this context, both managers and employees adapt their influence tactics to the logic of remote work. Authority is increasingly exercised through rational, communicative, and evidence-based strategies, while employees develop social presence cues to maintain visibility and agency. The absence of traditional social

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