

Organizational behavior of employees of Tehran University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Organizational behaviors are commonly acknowledged as fundamentals of organizational life that strongly influence both formal and informal organizational processes, interpersonal relationships, work environments, and pay and promotion policies. The current study aims to investigate political behavior tendencies among employees of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS).

This cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study was conducted on 810 TUMS employees at the headquarters of the Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran during 2010-2011. The research tool for data collection was a researcher-tailored questionnaire on political behaviors. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by seven management professors, and its reliability was tested by a pilot study using test-retest method which yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire and express their perceptions and tendencies to engage in organizational behaviors. The collected data was read to and analyzed by IBM SPSS environment and correlation analytical methods.

Overall, 729 respondents filled and returned the questionnaire yielding a response rate of 90%. Most of the respondents indicated that they had no tendency to engage in political behavior. Moreover, we found that there was a significant correlation between sex, higher education degrees, tenure and the employees' tendency to engage in political behavior.

The participants were not overtly political because of their personal belief, ethical values, and personal characters. Non-political and overtly political employees are both prejudicial for all organizations. Therefore, it seems that the medium rate of good political behavior is vital and prevalent in Iranian organizations.

Keywords: *Organizational behavior, Employee, Organizational ethics*

Introduction

Organizational ethics are generally recognized as an essential component of organizational life. Organizational politics strongly influence both formal and informal organizational structures and communications processes between employees, organizational climate, and reward system. Most employees are persuaded to participate in the politics of their organizations because of predominance of organizational politics (1).

There are many definitions of organizational politics in the literatures. One of the definitions is the power utilization to impact decision-making or to guarantee a situation that supports a powerful person. Another definition is the coalition of several individuals or groups to control the resources of an organization (2).

Organizational politics can motivate the employees to show political behaviors (3). Recent

researches show that many factors develop or increase the political behaviors and therefore all groups or organizations are not equally political. Some of these factors are derived from employees' personal characteristics, and others are consequences of organizational culture and work environment. Both organizational and individual factors can provide political behaviors that cause unfavorable outcomes such as inequalities in pay and reward system and prevention of punishment of employees who show political behaviors (4). It is supposed that political behaviors are associated with power, uncertainty, and constraints within organizations (5).

Avoiding action, for instance by over-conforming, passing the buck, paying dumb, depersonalizing, smoothing, stretching, and stalling, avoiding blame through buffing, playing safe, justifying, scapegoating, misrepresenting, and escalating commitment, and avoiding change by resisting change and protecting turf are different political behavior tendencies among employees. Moreover, the history of political behaviors within the organizations includes bureaucratic processes, various stressors, individual's insecurity and anxiety, emotional exhaustion, work alienation, self-monitoring and low self-efficacy (6).

Vigoda-Gadot who examined citizen's perceptions of organizational politics and ethics in public administration, showed that political behaviors were related to ethics, employee satisfaction, trust in supervisors, and direct or indirect goal attainment (7). Additionally, Vigoda-Gadot et al. declared that there is a relationship between perceptions of political behavior tendencies and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job autonomy and job attitudes (8).

Valle and Perrewe examined political behaviors as a critical, but ignored element within the model of traditional organizations. They found that job environment as an organizational element of political behavior tendencies is preferred to the set of organizational and individual variables in these institutions. Finally, the perception of political behaviors demonstrated that these behaviors are mediation effects between previous variables such as employees' work insecurity and anxiety, and job satisfaction and job commitment (9). Our research is aimed to study political behavior tendencies among the employees of Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study was conducted among 810 employees working in the headquarters of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) in Tehran, Iran during 2010-2011. The research tool for data

collection involved a researcher-tailored questionnaire on political behaviors. The first section of the questionnaire has been devoted to the demographic information, such as sex, age, ethnicity, higher education degrees, work experience, tenure and position. In the second section, the self-assessment of political behaviors has been measured through 26 questions without relevant dimensions. A 2-point scale was used to measure the level of each question of political behavior ranging from agree to disagree. A score rating of 75-100% was defined as the highest agreement rate, a score of 50-75% as a medium agreement rate, and below 50% was defined as disagreement. TUMS ethics committee approved this study, because all employees were verbally asked to participate and contribute to the self-assessment. The questionnaire was undergone evaluation by 7 management sciences professors in the area of organizational behavior for validity such as clarity, relevance and coherence of the questions. For the questionnaire reliability, a pilot study involving 50 randomly selected participants was performed two weeks before the main study. Comparing the obtained results from the pilot study with the results of the main study by test-retest method yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71, which suggests a relatively high reliability. The questionnaires were delivered to the respondents by five evaluators who explained the aim of this study and philosophy of political behaviors to the participants at the end of administrative time. Overall, 729 respondents filled and returned the questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 90%. The collected data were analyzed for correlations by IBM SPSS environment.

Results

Nearly (39.6%) of the employees were 30-40 years old and (55.9%) of them had bachelor of science (BSc) degree. Moreover, 73.9% of the respondents were married and while 28% of employees had 0-5 of years of work experience, 28% as the second largest group had 10-15 years of work experience (Table 1).

The results of this research indicated that approximately 70% of TUMS headquarters employees agreed with correction of supervisor's mistakes by subordinates. Only less than 10% of the respondents agreed with misuse of secret information by the employees. The majority (93.7%) of the respondents disagreed with political behavior against the organizations authorities. The majority (97.3%) of the employees disagreed with the misuse of supervisor's weakness by subordinates. Less than half (48.6%) of the respondents believed in power as the most important factor in any organizations. Approximately 30% of the employees expressed their tendency to engage in political behavior adventurously. The majority (91.9%) of

the respondents showed their respect for organizational hierarchy in order to improve organizational goals. The majority (95.5%) of the employees disagreed with using escalating commitment as a political behavior in order to increase individual advantage. Approximately 50% of the respondent believed that political behavior was a natural process in organizations. Approximately 78.4% of the employees agreed with recognition and use of political skills by their supervisors. More than half (62.2%) of the employees believed that there was a positive relationship between lower tenure of the employees working with supervisors and political behavior. Approximately 80% of the employees expressed that there was a negative relationship between political behavior and organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and more than half (66.7%) of the respondents believed that power supervisors should resist political behavior (Table 2). Moreover, we found that there was significant correlation between the employee's tendency to engage in political behavior with their education ($P=0.034$), their sex ($P=0.04$), and their tenure ($P=0.016$). But there was no significant correlation with their age ($P=0.192$), marriage status ($P=0.495$), years of work experience ($P=0.544$), and ethnicity ($P=0.52$).

Discussion

The research presented here is an investigation of political behavior and organizational politics among TUMS employees. The findings of this research appeared to judge credible human resource management and organizational behavior policymakers and healthcare organizational leaders.

Political behaviors exhibited by the employees can line up with departmental and organizational objectives as well as with the individuals. Some personal characteristics, such as sex, may cause certain individuals to display political behavior (2). Larimer and Hannagan expressed that male employees had more tendencies to engage in political behaviors than women (10), although DuBrin reported no significant difference between males and females in this regard (11). However, much similarity exists between women's and men's political behavior in Japan, while women are not completely uninterested in political behavior (12). We found that TUMS male employees had more tendencies to engage in political behavior than women and that TUMS is compatible with the Larimer and Hannagan research, but in contrast with that of DuBrin and Steel's studies.

Keith believed that participation in multi-age groups increased efficacy, while age-graded participation decrease political activity (13). Nevertheless, we did not find a significant correlation between the employee's age and political behavior.

We observed no relationship between the respondents' tendencies to engage in political behavior and their ethnicity. However, Ralston et al. conducted a cross-cultural study of ethics on a group of U.S. and Hong Kong Chinese managers aiming to evaluate the effects of different political behaviors on these managers' organizational goals, and showed that differences were found between these two groups as a result of their varied views on ethical behavior (14). Also, Vigoda showed that cultural differences bring about different perceptions of conflict and political behaviors, and concepts that have their roots in culture might be a contributing factor to reactions to organizational politics (15). The Mexican-American elderly were found to be rather unlikely to engage in political behavior and had little sense of effectiveness (16). Torres-Gil & Becerra suggested a socioeconomic model that presented political behaviors between older black Americans, younger blacks, and older and younger whites (17). Also, Klecka believed that ethnicity can affect political behavior and suggested a new model for understanding the relationship between ethnicity and political behavior due to aging (18).

Although we could not find a significant correlation between the employees' perceptions of political behaviors with their work experience in TUMS, Conner showed that among human resource experts there was a negative relationship between work experience and politics as regards pay, reward and promotions system (19).

Moreover, based on a multiple regression analysis, there is a significant correlation between job context factors and hierarchical level with political behaviors (20). Similarly, according to our research, TUMS employees regard organizational hierarchy of utmost importance to the promotion of organizational goals.

We found that most TUMS employees agreed with correction of supervisors' mistakes by subordinates but did not agree with misuse of the supervisors' weakness by subordinates. This finding is compatible with Poon's investigation that among employees perceiving low levels of political involvement, there was a positive relationship between trust in supervisors and employees' willingness to help their colleagues (21).

TUMS employees believed that there was a positive relation between lower organizational tenure of employees working with supervisors and political behavior. Although an increase in perceptions of political behavior under conditions of lower tenure working for supervisors is associated with lower attendance, there is no relationship between political behaviors with attendance under higher tenure working for supervisors (22).

Similar to Poon and Ferris et al. results (23, 24), most of TUMS employees stated that improvement of organizational performance depended on

nonpolitical and non-stressful environments. While many other studies have linked the effective use of political behaviors to improvement of individual performance (25), TUMS employees disagreed with use of political behavior to improve individual performance. However, Comer believed that political behavior may not only influence decision making but also reflect organizational objectives and individual interest and inclinations (26).

Approximately three quarters of TUMS employees agreed with recognition and use of political skills by their supervisors which is similar to Kolodinsky et al. investigation that declared there was a positive relationship between rationality and supervisory political skills (27).

We found that the majority of respondents in our research disagreed with using political behavior against organizations' authorities and believed that only cowardly employees were inclined to do so. Also, Biberman reported that employees with high political tendency score higher on Machiavellianism and are generally less fulfilled and less competitive (28).

Approximately 70% of TUMS employees believed that political behaviors made their respective organization less efficient. Likewise, Witt et al. showed that team member's political behaviors were negatively related to teams' ratings of effectiveness and team members' satisfaction and commitment (29). Moreover, Cropanzano et al. declared there was a negative relationship between political behavior tendencies and employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (30). Employees who had high political tendency boasted lower job satisfaction (31-33) whereas there is evidence that job satisfaction may lead to higher levels of political behavior (34). According to one study, in Turkish organizations bullying is a political behavior that some employees show in order to promote their own interests (35).

Although TUMS employees believed that powerful administrators should resist political behavior, Geisce showed that administrators' success in achieving desirable results depended greatly on their tendency to exhibit political behavior (36). Also Gadot found that how employees performed and behaved within their organization was the direct outcome of their organizational politics (37).

One of the main limitations of the present study is that it was conducted at one specific point in time. A longitudinal study would have been preferred, although limited resources could have made it difficult. Secondly, the employees were surveyed by a questionnaire. Although it is possible that this information-collecting process is convenient for the present research, it might have been introduced into the final results of the research. Finally, many other organizational political barriers and constructs, which inhibit the employees from responding to the questions that influence the

employees' perceptions, have not been included in our research. Therefore, it might not be accurate to state absolute conclusions regarding the global effects of organizational behaviors on TUMS employees.

Conclusion

There seems to be a need for human resource development programs to decrease unnecessary political behaviors. Human resource policy makers should increase awareness of employees through need assessment, and aim at discouraging political behaviors and encouraging alternate practices. In addition, the human resources programs can help to promote positive organizational behaviors. Political behaviors are both subjective and objective and pertain to real political events in an organization. Employees, however, have their own personal understanding of reality, and that is what determines the manner in which they perform within their organization.

The results of our research showed that TUMS employees were not overtly political and had no tendency to engage in political behavior, because of their personal belief, ethical values and personal characters. Non-political and overtly political employees both are prejudicial for all organizations. Non-political employees are inactive and overtly political employees are exposed to sycophantic and unhealthy political behavior. Therefore, it seems that the medium ratings of good political behavior, as a vital tool, are prevalent in TUMS. However, we suggest Iranian human resource management policymakers to provide a number of rules and regulations to guide or suggest norms of political activity to eliminate ambiguous circumstances and define a situation to fit employees' needs and desires. This redefinition of the situation is often considered political behavior. Also, we recommend further research on the relationship between TUMS employees' political behaviors and their job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication or falsification, double publication, redundancy, etc. have been completely observed by the author.

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Table 1: Demographic data of TUMS staff headquarters'

	Demographic details	N	%
Age (year)	20-30	292	40
	30-40	299	41
	40-50	109	15
	50-60	29	4
	Total	729	100
Degree	Diploma & Associate Diploma	131	18
	BSc.	422	58
	MSc.	95	13
	PhD	81	11
	Total	729	100
Sex	Woman	549	75
	Man	183	25
	Total	729	100
Marriage status	Single	255	35
	Married	474	65
	Total	729	100
Place of birth	Tehran	525	72
	Out of Tehran	204	28
	Total	729	100
Years of work experience	0-5	204	28
	5-10	109	15
	10-15	204	28
	15-20	168	23
	20-25	8	1
	25-30	36	5
	Total	729	100

Table 2: The perceptions and tendencies of TUMS staff headquarters

Row	Types of questions	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Correction of supervisor's mistakes by subordinates, not misuse these mistakes	539	73.9	190	26.1	729	100
2	Misuse secret information by the employees	53	7.2	676	92.8	729	100
3	Help coworkers without expectancy of compensation	551	72.1	177	24.3	729	100
4	Neighboring with authorized people	460	61.3	269	36.9	729	100
5	Using political behavior against organizations authorities	46	6.3	683	93.7	729	100
6	Esteem of coworkers if they esteem mutually	269	36.9	460	63.1	729	100
7	Doing supervisor's private expectations by subordinate	112	14.4	617	84.7	729	100
8	Assistance with supervisor's joking in order to job position improvement	105	14.4	624	85.6	729	100
9	Traveling with supervisor instead of being near family	138	18.9	591	81.1	729	100
10	Misuse of supervisor's weakness by subordinates	20	2.7	709	97.3	729	100
11	Tendency to engage political behavior compatible with supervisor	289	38.6	440	60.4	729	100
12	Notifying to supervisor about their mistakes	204	27.9	525	72.1	729	100
13	Believe in this sentences "if you don't this duty", it may lead to supervisor's dissatisfaction	263	36	466	64	729	100
14	Familial neighborhood with supervisor in order to job position development	40	5.4	689	94.6	729	100
15	Neighborhood to key personnel improvement of job position	184	25.2	545	74.8	729	100
16	Believe in power as the most important factors in any	355	48.6	374	51.7	729	100

	organizations						
17	Tendency to engage in political behaviors adventurously	243	33	486	37	729	100
18	Respect for organizational hierarchy in order to improve organizational goals	670	91.9	59	8.1	729	100
19	Using escalating commitment as a political behavior in order to increase individual advantage	33	4.5	696	9.55	729	100
20	Believe in political behaviors as a natural process	315	41.4	414	56.8	729	100
21	Recognition and use of political skills by supervisors	571	78.4	158	21.6	729	100
22	Positive relation between tenure of employees working with supervisor with political behavior	454	62.2	275	37.8	729	100
23	Doing running work in nonpolitical organization	526	72.1	203	27.9	729	100
24	Political behaviors make organizations inefficient	474	64.9	255	35.1	729	100
25	Negative impression of political behaviors on organizational effectiveness	586	79.3	143	19.7	729	100
26	Powerful supervisors resistance political behaviors	487	66.7	242	33.3	729	100

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