



Original Article (Qualitative)

Presenting a model of political behavior based on the theory of shadow management in the public sector with a hybrid method

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Receive:

03 February 2024

Revise:

10 May 2024

Accept:

15 July 2024

Keywords:

Power,
Political Behavior,
Shadow
Management,
Political Knowledge,
Organizational
Support,
Political Skills

Abstract

The aim of this study is to present a political behavior model based on shadow management theory in the public sector with the metasynthesis method. This study is qualitative in terms of data collection, and metasynthetic in terms of research implementation. The statistical population of the study includes scientific articles, academic theses, and books; 167 sources were examined, and ultimately 51 sources identified through a purposeful method of metasynthesis, components related to power, politics, and political behavior based on shadow management, were finally approved for analysis. Components related to power and political behavior based on shadow management theory were identified and validated with the kappa coefficient. Based on the research findings, political behavior in the public sector has 72 components in three different dimensions: the white political behavior dimension with 28 components that has a practical function and is based on political behavior knowledge and helps achieve organizational goals; the black political behavior dimension with 26 components that are harmful and act in favor of groups under the supervision of shadow managers and prevent the achievement of the organization's goals; and the gray political behavior with 18 components that may be both beneficial and detrimental to the organization's goals. Managers should provide a capable organizational structure that provides freedom of expression, compliance with the law, and meritocracy in the organization, considering the factors identified in this study.

Please cite this article as (APA): Khazaei Pool, G., kiakojouri, D. and Tghipourian, M. J. (2025). Presenting a model of political behavior based on the theory of shadow management in the public sector with a hybrid method. *Management and Educational Perspective*, 6(4), 341-368.

Publisher: Research Center of Resources Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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<https://doi.org/10.22034/jmep.2024.428861.1292>



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Extended abstract

Introduction

Understanding political behavior in organizations is the result of the contribution of political science to organizational behavior. In today's world, organizations cannot be studied apart from the political behavior within them. The idea that individuals in an organization act only for the goals and objectives of the organization is too optimistic. Many acknowledge that organizations are inherently political arenas. Due to the existence of competing interest groups and scarce resources, utilizing political behavior is the best way to survive and succeed in these environments. Power and politics are inevitable phenomena in organizational life; today, the existence of political behaviors in organizations is an undeniable reality (Nurollahi & Ghanbari, 2021). Political behavior reflects the human need to control, accumulate power, and satisfy personal and organizational needs alongside others (Milon & Lishchinsky, 2021), which is closely related to power and affects efficiency and effectiveness at both the individual and organizational levels (Khazaei Poul, Kiakojouri, & Taghipourian, 2023). Phantoms are secret and covert individuals or organizations that infiltrate management areas and transform management into governance. The greed for management benefits and the motivation to escape responsibility have caused the institution of shadow management to emerge; in other words, individuals who are not qualified to achieve the benefits of management, knowingly or unknowingly, take on the risk of responsibility, and on the other hand, someone else takes control of the organization, which generally involves many problems and a high probability of failure (Razman et al, 2017). In this study, researchers are looking for the question: what is the appropriate model in the field of political behavior based on the theory of shadow management in the public sector using a meta-synthesis method?

Theoretical Framework

Political Behavior

Political behavior in organizations refers to a set of activities and actions taken to acquire, maintain, or increase power and influence in the organization (Denis & Martínez, 2019). Political behaviors in organizations include conscious actions taken by individuals or groups to influence in order to achieve or protect their interests when there are conflicting solutions. Some researchers refer to political behavior in organizations as activities that are not part of an individual's formal role, but are carried out to influence or attempt to influence the distribution of benefits in the organization (Ayat at al, 2020).

Shadow Management

Shadow management is a form of management in which the beneficiary, who is outside the organization or in one of the lower layers of the organizational hierarchy, is the real order-giver and does not have a physical presence, and they do this through a channel they have created. Shadow management always hides and moves behind the main management. Because this management has a shadowy appearance, it therefore seems bigger, more terrifying, and even more frightening. Shadow management creates an image of a thousand faces with the tools, facilities, and loyal forces it has accumulated over time (Hasheminya at al, 2020).

Izadi et al, (2024) studied the design and explanation of the political behavior model of managers in government organizations. The results of the findings showed that 11 main categories were identified in 6 levels. The findings also showed that at the sixth level, the socio-cultural gap and personality traits of individuals had the greatest impact compared to other factors; of course, cultural weakness was the most influential factor. Public belief is located at the fifth level of the model. At the fourth level, political will of individuals and management of organizational imagery and evaluation are located. At the third level,



individual power of individuals is located. At the second level, organizational processes and elections and appointments are located; and at the last level, the pattern of laws and regulations and the structure of government organizations are located. Khazaei Poul et al, (2023) studied the factors affecting political behavior in Iranian government organizations. This research, using the ISM method, has identified and analyzed six causal and strategic variables including individual, environmental and structural factors. The results showed that environmental factors are the basis of the model and affect other variables, while individual and structural factors also have important effects on freedom of expression, adherence to the law, and meritocracy. Researchers recommend that managers reduce the negative effects of political behavior and increase organizational efficiency by creating capable organizational structures and providing a suitable environment. This study contributes to a better understanding of political behavior in government organizations and the development of effective strategies for its management.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in terms of data collection, and meta-synthesis in terms of research implementation. The statistical population of the research includes scientific articles, academic theses, and books selected by examining 167 sources, and finally 51 sources identified using a purposeful method of meta-synthesis were approved for analysis.

Research findings

Data analysis was done using meta-synthesis method and components related to power, politics and political behavior based on shadow management were identified. Components related to power and political behavior based on shadow management theory were identified and validated with kappa coefficient. Based on the research findings, political behavior in the public sector has 72 components in three different dimensions: white political behavior dimension with 28 components that has a practical function and is based on political behavior knowledge and helps to achieve organizational goals; black political behavior dimension with 26 components that is harmful and acts in favor of groups under the supervision of shadow managers and prevents the achievement of organizational goals; and gray political behavior with 18 components that may be both beneficial and detrimental to the goals of the organization. Managers should provide a capable organizational structure that enables freedom of expression, adherence to the law, and meritocracy in the organization, considering the factors identified in this study.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to present a model of political behavior based on the theory of shadow management in the public sector using a meta-synthesis method. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Kimerling (2018), Denis & Martínez (2019), Kiesler & Miller (2020), Khazaei Poul, Kiakojouri & Taghipourian (2023), Alavi & Dosti (2022), and Anderson & Brown (2017). Khazaei Poul, Kiakojouri & Taghipourian (2023) showed that environmental factors are the basis of the model and affect other variables, while individual and structural factors also have important effects on freedom of expression, adherence to the law, and meritocracy. Researchers recommend that managers reduce the negative effects of political behavior and increase organizational efficiency by creating capable organizational structures and providing an appropriate environment. This study contributes to a better understanding of political behavior in government organizations and the development of effective strategies for its management.

Based on the results of the study, the following suggestion is made:



-Political behavior in organizations is inevitable and includes activities carried out in order to achieve specific goals, such as acquiring, developing, and exploiting power and other resources that lead to individual superiority. If these behaviors are carried out by shadow managers, they may have irreparable consequences for the organization; therefore, to properly manage political behavior in organizations, it is better for managers to provide conditions where members can express their opinions openly and explicitly by granting independence to subordinates, delegating responsibilities, and avoiding the use of force. These conditions cause members of the organization to avoid covert activities and affiliation with informal groups, and consider themselves committed to the organization.