

A Study of How Political Behaviors Influence Organizational Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT: This study focused mainly on the effects of political behaviors in an organization toward organizational effectiveness. The samples of the study were 114 police officers in Bangkok Metropolitan. The questionnaire was employed as a research tool to collect primary data. The researchers used a stepwise regression analysis method to analyze the data. The results indicated that image building and coalition building had a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. However, blaming and attacking others had a negative impact on organizational effectiveness. The findings also indicated that control of information, co-optation, ingratiation, intimidation and innuendoes, networking, inconsiderate, use of expertise, and using key players had no impact on organizational effectiveness. Recommendation and suggestions are discussed in this article.

Keywords: Political behavior, organizational effectiveness, organizational politics.

1 INTRODUCTION

The organization is a place for people of different backgrounds, knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, and interests (Prasad 1993). Nowadays, we are living in the globalization era that is a world of information and knowledge. The movement of skilled workers, therefore, is occurring in every corner of the world, causing various organizations to have more diverse personnel or members of the organization. Elderly workers, women laborers, and minority groups in society are increasing as well as having more roles in the organization than it is before (Ferris et al. 1996). Although such diversity is something that the organization can get the most benefits and able to create strengths for the organization, it also became one of the reasons leading to conflicts and political behavior in an organization (Lloyd 1996).

In general, whether that organization is a government organization or a private organization, politics in an organization is considered a fact in organizational life. It is a tissue that is hidden in all types of organizations (Ferris et al. 1996). Organizational politics is a process of action and behavior for the exercise of power (Hitchner 1992). Regardless of the organization structure or the business model of the

organization cannot eliminate "politics" from the organization (Martinelli & Waddell 2007). Organizational politics is the cause of problems both inside and outside the organization (Martin 2006). The "politics" is ingrained in all tissues of the organization, making it extremely critical and influencing employee behavior (Chivakidakarn 2000). If we do not play politics, politics can attack us. Therefore, for success and survival, most people need to play political games (Hodge 1992).

Politics in an organization affects its members and the overall effectiveness of the organization, both directly and indirectly. It affects employees, especially if employees recognize that politics is harmful to themselves; employees will find a solution for their safety by leaving the job or ignoring the work (Baum 1989). Ferris & Kacmar (1992) found that political perception is a factor that affects the job satisfaction of employees. This is consistent with the findings of Witt et al. (2000), who scrutinized politics in organizations that can cause employees to be less satisfied with the job. It is an essential factor that triggers job stress. The job stress can affect the decision of the employee to quit the job (Harris et al. 2005). In the end, it will affect the overall effectiveness of the organization itself. Organizational poli-

tics can be represented by the political behaviors of employees in organizations. People use several tactics in order to achieve their goals.

Political behavior in organizations is the behavior that individuals are trying to influence others to achieve specific goals, either at the individual or organizational level (Valle 2006). Previous studies identified various types of political behaviors, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Political Behaviors

Political behavior	Scholars	Meaning
Blaming and attacking others	Allen et al. (1979) Ferris et al. (2001) Krell et al. (1987) Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	To make others look at the opponent negatively including attacking the failures of others.
Coalition building	Allen et al. (1979) Ferris et al. (2001) Yukl et al. (1995)	The pursuit of friendliness and cooperation from other people or other groups.
Control of information	Allen et al. (1979) Ferris et al. (2001) Newman (1990) Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	Exploitation by distorting or concealing important information.
Co-optation	Buchanan (2008) Newman (1990) Selznick (1948) Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	Assimilating or collaborating with other groups or individuals in order to obtain a consistent opinion on various matters.
Image building	Allen et al. (1979) Ferris et al. (2001) Newman (1990) Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	Making yourself looks good in the eyes of others, especially the powerful one.
Ingratiation	Allen et al. (1979) Yukl et al. (1990)	Seeking influence with praise and showing friendliness to others.
Intimidation and innuendoes	Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	The use of words, situations, and indirect references in order to make others feel afraid of their influence.
Networking	Buchanan (2008) Newman (1990) Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	Seeking the advantage by getting involved with a group of experts or important people.
Inconsiderate	Krell et al. (1987)	Making yourself stands out from the crowd by not paying attention to whether that action will make others lose face.
Use of expertise	Zanzi & O’neill (2001)	Using knowledge, skills, and special skills to advance

Cont.

Using key players	Allen et al. (1979) Buchanan (2008)	oneself. Getting to know the powerful people both in the department and outside the department and using relationships to benefit oneself.
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According to the study of Ashforth and Lee (as cited in Schermerhorn et al. 2000), 53 percent of respondents agreed that organizational politics are a factor in promoting organizational success and survival. The perception of organizational politics of its members has a profound effect on both individuals and organizations (Linton 2003), causing the organization to lose enormous budgets and time to solve such problems (Phillips 2004). Zahra (1987) stated that organizational politics makes it more challenging to coordinate and communicate between departments within the organization and ultimately affect the overall work of the organization. The majority of previous studies focused mainly on the impact of organizational politics and only a few focused on political behaviors. Hence, the authors would like to investigate which political behaviors are the most influential factors on organizational effectiveness.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

The samples of this study were 114 police officers in Bangkok metropolitan. The number of samples was calculated using GPower software, a free, open-source program for power analysis and sample size calculations. In this calculation, the authors employed the probability of alpha errors at 0.05, and powers of 0.95 with 11 predictors. The majority of the participants were male, accounting for 83.3%, with an average age of 42 years old. About 43% and 41% of the participants were high school graduates and university graduates in that order. Most of them graduated from police institutions accounting for nearly 80%. Most of them were responsible for traffic tasks (31.6%), followed by general affairs (28.9%), and suppression (28.9%). The average tenure of the participants was 19 years.

Organizational effectiveness was measured by a fourteen items Likert scale survey question, which was anchored by strongly agree and strongly disagree. The measurement provided alpha reliability of .95. The sample items are “your organization is dedicated and socially responsible,” “your organization has a clear organizational goal, everyone within the organization recognizes and acknowledges the said goal in the same direction,” and “your organization

has sufficient budget, tools, materials, and equipment which can be procured immediately when needed.”

Political behaviors were measured by an eleven items Likert scale survey question, which was anchored by strongly agree and strongly disagree. The measurement provided alpha reliability of .86. Each item represented different political behavior. The sample items are “blaming or criticizing others is normal within your organization,” “you will seek cooperation from supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates to support your opinion,” and “sometimes concealing or distorting certain information is something that must be done to protect your rights and interests.”

The researchers employed a stepwise multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis. This technique is suitable for getting a regression model that has the fewest number of statistically significant independent variables. It is a modification of the forward selection so that after each step, in which a variable was added, all variables in the model were checked to see if their significance has been reduced below the specified tolerance level. If a non-significant variable is found, it is removed from the model. It also provides maximum predictive accuracy, according to Hair et al. (2010).

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate whether blaming and attacking others (BAO), image building, (IB), coalition building (CB), control of information (CI), co-optation (COOP), ingratiation (INGR), intimidation and innuendoes (INNU), networking (NETW), inconsiderate (INCON), use of expertise (UE), and using key players (UKP) scores were necessary to predict organizational effectiveness. The results of the analysis are shown in Tables 2-5.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.423 ^a	.179	.172	14.31090
2	.474 ^b	.224	.210	13.97146
3	.523 ^c	.274	.254	13.57890

- a. Predictors: (Constant), IB
- b. Predictors: (Constant), IB, BAO
- c. Predictors: (Constant), IB, BAO, CB

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4998.967	1	4998.967	24.409	.000 ^b
1 Residual	22937.814	112	204.802		
1 Total	27936.781	113			
2 Regression	6269.379	2	3134.689	16.059	.000 ^c
2 Residual	21667.402	111	195.202		
2 Total	27936.781	113			
3 Regression	7654.253	3	2551.418	13.837	.000 ^d
3 Residual	20282.527	110	184.387		
3 Total	27936.781	113			

- a. Dependent Variable: OE
- b. Predictors: (Constant), IB
- c. Predictors: (Constant), IB, BAO
- d. Predictors: (Constant), IB, BAO, CB

Table 4. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	44.914	4.401		10.206	.000
	IB	4.380	.887	.423	4.941	.000
2	(Constant)	50.309	4.789		10.506	.000
	IB	4.944	.893	.477	5.535	.000
3	BAO	-1.872	.734	-.220	-2.551	.012
	(Constant)	45.770	4.940		9.265	.000
3	IB	4.260	.903	.411	4.715	.000
	BAO	-2.326	.732	-.273	-3.177	.002
	CB	2.306	.841	.242	2.741	.007

- a. Dependent Variable: OE

Table 5. Excluded Variables

Model	Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics			
					Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance	
1	BAO	-.220 ^b	-2.551	.012	-.235	.939	1.065	.939
	CB	.179 ^b	1.996	.048	-.186	.893	1.120	.893
	CI	-.184 ^b	-1.992	.049	-.186	.837	1.195	.837
	COOP	-.145 ^b	-1.369	.174	-.129	.645	1.551	.645
	INGR	-.001 ^b	-.005	.996	-.001	.841	1.188	.841
	INNU	.023 ^b	.250	.803	.024	.870	1.149	.870
	NETW	.187 ^b	1.923	.057	.180	.759	1.318	.759
	INCON	-.027 ^b	-.294	.769	-.028	.902	1.109	.902
	UE	.142 ^b	1.473	.144	.138	.776	1.289	.776
	UKP	-.080 ^b	-.897	.372	-.085	.933	1.072	.933
	CB	.242 ^c	2.741	.007	.253	.847	1.181	.847
	CI	-.107 ^c	-1.064	.290	-.101	.697	1.435	.697
	COOP	-.054 ^c	-.475	.636	-.045	.554	1.804	.554
	INGR	.023 ^c	.246	.806	.023	.833	1.200	.810
2	INNU	.074 ^c	.801	.425	.076	.833	1.200	.833
	NETW	.177 ^c	1.866	.065	.175	.757	1.320	.717
	INCON	.005 ^c	.054	.957	.005	.884	1.131	.867
	UE	.148 ^c	1.574	.118	.148	.775	1.290	.742
3	UKP	-.048 ^c	-.541	.590	-.052	.912	1.097	.893
	CI	-.130 ^d	-1.340	.183	-.127	.692	1.446	.692

COOP	-.146 ^d	-1.290	.200	-.123	.513	1.948	.513
INGR	.003 ^d	.038	.970	.004	.828	1.208	.767
INNU	.055 ^d	.619	.537	.059	.828	1.207	.797
NETW	.131 ^d	1.377	.171	.131	.726	1.377	.700
INCON	-.051 ^d	-.575	.566	-.055	.839	1.192	.804
UE	.093 ^d	.983	.328	.094	.731	1.368	.725
UKP	-.068 ^d	-.790	.431	-.075	.905	1.104	.836

- a. Dependent Variable: OE
- b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), IB
- c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), IB, BAO
- d. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), IB, BAO, CB

At step 1 of the analysis, image building was entered into the regression equation and significantly related to organizational effectiveness ($F=24.409$, $p < .001$). The multiple correlation coefficient was .42, indicating approximately 17.9% of the variance of the organizational effectiveness could be accounted for by image building scores. Blaming and attacking others ($t=-2.551$, $p < .05$), coalition building ($t=1.996$, $p < .05$), control of information ($t=-1.992$, $p < .05$), co-optation ($t=-1.369$, $p > .05$), ingratiation ($t=-.005$, $p > .05$), intimidation and innuendoes ($t=.250$, $p > .05$), networking ($t=1.923$, $p > .05$), inconsiderate ($t=-.294$, $p > .05$), use of expertise ($t=-1.473$, $p > .05$), and using key players ($t=-.897$, $p > .05$) scores did not enter into the equation at step 2 of the analysis.

At step 2 of the analysis, image building and blaming and attacking others were entered into the regression equation and significantly related to organizational effectiveness ($F=16.059$, $p < .001$). The multiple correlation coefficient was .47, indicating approximately 22.4% of the variance of the organizational effectiveness could be accounted for by image building and blaming and attacking others scores. Coalition building ($t=2.741$, $p < .05$), control of information ($t=-1.064$, $p > .05$), co-optation ($t=-.475$, $p > .05$), ingratiation ($t=-.246$, $p > .05$), intimidation and innuendoes ($t=.801$, $p > .05$), networking ($t=1.866$, $p > .05$), inconsiderate ($t=.054$, $p > .05$), use of expertise ($t=1.574$, $p > .05$), and using key players ($t=-.541$, $p > .05$) scores did not enter into the equation.

At step 3 of the analysis, image building, blaming and attacking others, and coalition building were entered into the regression equation and significantly related to organizational effectiveness ($F=13.837$, $p < .001$). The multiple correlation coefficient was .27, indicating approximately 25.4% of the variance of the organizational effectiveness could be accounted for by image building, blaming and attacking others, and coalition building scores. Control of information ($t=-1.340$, $p > .05$), co-optation ($t=-1.290$, $p > .05$), ingratiation ($t=.038$, $p > .05$), intimidation and innuendoes ($t=.619$, $p > .05$), networking ($t=1.377$, $p > .05$), inconsiderate ($t=-.575$, $p > .05$), use of expertise

($t=.983$, $p > .05$), and using key players ($t=-.790$, $p > .05$) scores did not enter into the equation. Thus, the regression equation for predicting organizational effectiveness was:

$$OE = 45.770 + 4.260IB - 2.326BAO + 2.306CB \quad (1)$$

The study results showed that image building is the most influential factor in organizational effectiveness. It has a positive effect on organizational effectiveness. Self-image is critical since it affects one's self-esteem and confidence (Nair 2016). Whenever a person has self-confidence, he will naturally work well in his duties. Hence, political behaviors in the organization that the employees expressed not only affect the organization but also make the organization more productive. Coalition building is another vital factor leading to organizational accomplishment. This is consistent with the idea of Cohen (2002), who suggested that "coalitions are useful for accomplishing a broad range of goals that reach beyond the capacity of any individual member organization. Blaming and attacking others is another influential factor in organizational effectiveness. However, it has a negative impact on organizational performance. Harris, Harris, and Harvey (2007) confirmed that organizational politics were statistically significantly correlated with employees' job satisfaction, satisfaction with the wage system, job stress, role conflict, and intention to quit. Therefore, people in the organization are less dedicated to their work affecting the overall business performance of the organization as a whole. This study also found no influence of some behaviors, namely control of information, co-optation, ingratiation, intimidation and innuendoes, networking, inconsiderate, use of expertise, and using key players.

4 CONCLUSION

Organizational politics is inevitable. Every individual in an organization plays a political role regardless of one form or another. Political behaviors that employees have shown are both good and bad for the effectiveness of the organization. Positive political behavior in an organization should be encouraged and supported by management. Image building and coalition building, therefore, should be promoted. On the other hand, any political behavior that results in disunity, conflicts, and problems within the organization should be opposed or punished, especially blaming and attacking others. In addition, organizations in both the public and private sectors should pay more attention to the issues of political behavior in organizations in order to understand the source of

the behavior. The organization, therefore, can find appropriate ways to promote positive behaviors and prevent further negative ones. Finally, an in-depth study on the linkage between political behaviors and organizational effectiveness in different types of organizations should be conducted.

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