THE IMPACT OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR ON ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AMONG MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN ORGANIC AND MECHANISTIC ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS OF PAKISTAN TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR

Saba Nayyar
Research Scholar
Foundation University, Islamabad

NainTara Raja
Corresponding Author
Foundation University, Islamabad

Abstract
The purpose of this research is to focus on the impact of impression management on level of organizational politics. The level of organizational politics and impression management changes with employees’ gender and the organizational system. A sample of 300 employees of Telecommunication Sector of Pakistan (150 each from both organic and mechanistic organizations) was taken; primary data through questionnaire of 29 items was scrutinized to know impact of impression management on level of organizational politics. By using regression and correlation analysis, it was found out that in mechanistic system, employees both male and female are more inclined towards impression management to manage their political behavior then in organic organizations. Results of our research can further help employers and managers to reduce negative aspect of organizational politics.

Keywords: Impact; Impression Management Behavior; Organizational Politics; Male and Female Employees; Organic; Mechanistic Organizational Systems; Pakistan Telecommunication Sector

1. Introduction

In today’s competitive business environment, organizations are cutting costs to sustain profits and investors’ interest. Most of the organizations adopted different strategies including downsizing, delayering and economizing. These in return have adverse effects on the surviving employees resulting in high level of turnover and low level of employee commitment. These situations of instability lead to immoral organizational politics. To improve this situation managers all around the world try to progress by using different management techniques, one of them is impression management.

When a person in an organization wishes to become a distinct part of a company maintaining a specific identity, he/she is using impression management (Bozeman and Kacmar, 1997). Specifically, it is a method which is abided by people to influence others by maintaining an image others have of them (Rosenfeld et al., 2002). Advocates of impression management achieve their goal of desired identity by intentionally displaying definite verbal and non-verbal behaviors (Bozeman and Kacmar, 1997).

Impression management is a vast field with mixed school of thoughts. There are two main approaches in impression management; universal approach and multiple contextual approach. The universal approach has been researched from decades and focuses on a person exhibiting to be an individual actor. It further includes detailed analysis, focusing on impression
management in a culture liberated environment. (Jones, 1964; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984; Schlenker, 1980; Vonk, 1999; Jones and Pittman, 1982).

On the contrary, multiple contextual approach discusses the forming of a particular impression with different contexts including general traditions and cultures (e.g. Pandey, 1986; Zaidman and Drory, 2001; Xin, 2004; Rosenfeld et al., 2002); group socio-economic and demographic distinctiveness and specific situations and conditions (e.g. Barnness et al., 2005; Bachman and O’Malley, 1984; Gardner and Martin, 1988; Pandey, 1986; Zaidman and Drory, 2001) and organizational individuality such as managerial roles and working categories and statuses (e.g. Foley, 2005; Rao et al., 1995; Leary and Kowalski, 1990).

Moreover researches by Leary and Kowalski in 1990, Roberts in 2005 and Rosenfeld et al. in 2002 argued that interpersonal interactions regulate impression management and most of the people are in continuous look out for signals which indicate how people recognize them. Moreover previous literature also indicates that impression management and organization have a relationship on the following basis; employee interviews and career applications (Ellis et al., 2002; Stevens and Kristof, 1995; Tsai et al. 2004; Varma et al., 2006), appraisal of performance (Wayne and Ferris, 1990), feedback and response (Ashford and Norcross, 1992), capability and ability demands (McFarland et al., 2005), future promotional opportunities and career development and advancement at occupation (Feldman and Klich, 1991; Gilmore et al., 1999; Gould and Plenley, 1984; Judge and Bretz, 1994; Kacmar et al. 1992; Zivnuska et al., 2004).

Moreover the change in way of doing business and managing it has led to strong work place politics, a reality of organizational life nowadays. It has become an option for all those in an organization who desire to have influence in most of the decision making (Prasad, 1993). Organizations where the workplace environment is under the impact of uncertainty and mistrust, employees are pushed to look for their own interests and in achieving so they engage in politicking.

Many researchers have proved organizational politics to be destructive leading to low efficiency and performance (Kacmar et al., 1999). Researchers have shown that organizational politics point to poor communication among employees (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) and reduces job attitude and doubles employee turnover. To sum up when employees want to involve in the decision making they try to influence their subordinates. One major way of doing that is through impression management.

There has been significant difference in how impression management affects organizational politics in mechanistic and organic organizations. In 1961, Burns and Stalker explained that organizations are bodies occupying separate positions along a mechanistic/organic system. The mechanistic system is decidedly centralized with strong hierarchical structure authority and communication. Whereas in case of organic organizations, they mainly focuses on lateral duties rather than narrow occupational definitions, and the swap of information rather than directly providing guidelines (Burnsand Stalker, 1961).

Work flows in organic firms require recurrent contact across vertical levels (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Hage, 1988). Such constant communication in and of itself generates closer social connections (Homans, 1950; Newcomb, 1961). Thus, vertical associations in organic organizations tend to be characterized by closer “social distance” and low down “power
distance” (Morand, 1996). So all these characteristics affect how employees perceive impression management and how they involve in organizational politics.

1.1 Knowledge Gap

There are few researchers in Pakistan who focused on these variables within organic and mechanistic systems. This research will definitely help in fulfilling the gap in the body of knowledge.

1.2 Problem Statement

The level of organizational politics and impression management changes with employees’ gender and the organizational system. Hence we want to know impact of impression management on level of organizational politics.

1.3 Objective of the study

The purpose of this research is to look closely into the role of impression management in the perspective of organization as whole and its relationship with organizational politics.

1.4 Practical Implications

This research will help the managers to evaluate and assess their employee’s performance, creating an environment of constructive politics for improved performance. Last but not the least this study will result in helping perspective employees in determining precise steps towards their future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perceptions of Impression Management

Employees globally use different impression management techniques to build a specific image in front of others. Although different researches have come up with different approaches, in most of the cases employees exercise impression management when seeking favors from others especially when there are advantageous outcomes for them (Sussman et al., 2002).

In 1959 Goffman explained that people are actors and their behavior is performance. This performance is situational and people strive to control their images in front of others. The level of control is subject to desired goals which may be social, psychological or material (Leary and Kowalski, 1990).

2.2 Perceptions of Organizational Politics

Pfeffer in 1981 said, “Politics is the study of supremacy in act” Witt et al. in 2000 furthermore said that “it is a phenomena in which members of the organization attempt either directly or indirectly, in order to manipulate the behavior of other members by means of not sanctioned prescribed standard operating procedures or informal standards, mostly in an attempt to achieve objectives of individual or group”.
Drory and Romm in 1990 explained that organizational politics can increase dissonance and disagreement in workplaces because political behavior mainly focuses on self-centeredness, which can be of an individual or an explicit group.

### 2.3 Impression Management and Organizational Politics

Prasad in 1993 proved that managers indulge in politicking to influence others in decisions. One way is by using different impression management techniques to govern decisions. So there is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics, especially in environments which are characterized by insecurity, inadequate resources and dearth of reliance. Moreover whether organizational politics are positive or negative, it is always found to be it restricts productivity of the organization (Kacmar et al., 1999).

Furthermore many researchers found that politics in organizations are related mainly to social context variables including impression management, with major impact on performance of the organization. There is also a significant relationship between organizational politics leading to pessimistic individual outcomes including higher level of job mobility, nervousness and strain among employees, low level of organizational loyalty, employee efficiency and citizenship. (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Harris et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2003; Poon, 2004; and Witt, 1998).

In 1979, Allen et al. found out that one of the main influential tactics used by managers in organization to manage their political behavior in front of employees is through impression management techniques. In a research by Ferris and Kacmar in 1992, impression management was used as influence tactics for conceptual analysis of organizational politics, highlighting it to be sub part of politics.

Zivnuska, Kaemar, Witt, Carlson and Bratton in 2004 explained that the relationship between organizational politics and impression management impacts in evaluating the performance of the employee. Karanthanos et al., in 1994 proved that individuals in an organization adjust themselves according to the expectations of others i.e. managers are continuously regulating their impression management attributes, reacting to different situations accordingly.

According to expectancy theory, it has been proved that there has been a negative relationship between organizational politics and performance of the organization but it is modified by the degree of individual’s interference in the impression management practices. If employees think their organization is indulged in high level of politics, people will stop working since the will perceive that no matter what they do their performance will remain constant.

By analyzing the literature available, it is proved that the impact of impression management behavior on organizational politics has mixed results, so it needs more research. Moreover, Following hypothesis can be generated for testing by looking at the literature;

H1: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among female employees in mechanistic organizations.

H2: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among male employees in mechanistic organizations.
H3: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among female employees in organic organizations.

H4: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among male employees in organic organizations.

Thus by all the literature available and mixed results by different researches, following theoretical framework may be inferred

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and Procedure
This study was conducted on Telecommunication sector of Pakistan. Questionnaires were distributed to 300 full-time employees at different levels and in different departments of these enterprises by the heads of their respective human resources departments. Participation was voluntary and employees were asked to complete the survey anonymously and return it to the human resource departments. Six companies were taken from telecommunication sector of Pakistan. Data of 150 employees was taken from PTCL (mechanistic organization) and 150 employees from private sector companies including Mobilink, Zong, Telenor, Warid and Ufone (organic companies).

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Impression Management
Researcher measured impression management with 18-item scale. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale dictating the extent to which they agree with each statement as it reflected their present work environment (1 = almost never, 5 = almost always).

3.2.2 Perceptions of Organizational Politics
Researcher measured perceptions of organizational politics with 11-item scale on 5-point Likert-type scale dictating the extent to which they agree with each statement as it reflected their present work environment (1 = almost never, 5 = almost always).

3.3 Data Collection
Primary data through questionnaire of 29 items out of which 18 items were related to impression management and 11 items were related to organization politics.
4. FINDINGS

4.1 Regression Analysis

4.1.1 Response of Females in Organic Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>26.958</td>
<td>5.602</td>
<td>4.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The B value of impression management is 0.060 showing it has 6% impact on organizational politics. On the same side t value also showed result of 0.603, which shows an insignificant impact on organizational politics.

4.1.2 Response of Males in Organic Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>24.280</td>
<td>4.138</td>
<td>5.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>1.516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The B value of impression management is 0.164 showing it has 16% impact on organizational politics. On the same side t value also showed result of 1.516, which shows a significant impact on organizational politics.

4.1.3 Response of Females in Mechanistic Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-34.429</td>
<td>7.150</td>
<td>-4.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>1.007</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>9.578</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The B value of impression management is 0.791 showing it has 79% impact on organizational politics. On the same side t value also showed result of 9.578, which shows a significant impact on organizational politics.
4.1.4 Response of Males in Mechanistic Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>49.857</td>
<td>3.344</td>
<td>14.911</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.576</td>
<td>6.723</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The B value of impression management is 0.576 showing it has 57% impact on organizational politics. On the same side t value also showed result of 6.723, which shows a significant impact on organizational politics.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanistic Organization</th>
<th>Impression Management</th>
<th>Organizational Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic Organization</th>
<th>Impression Management</th>
<th>Organizational Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that the relationship between impression management and organizational politics is stronger both in male and female respondents (0.576 and 0.791) in mechanistic organizations then in organic organizations (0.164 and 0.076) in Pakistan.

5. DISCUSSION

By reviewing the results of regression and correlation analysis, following hypothesis are confirmed or nullified;

H1: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among female employees in mechanistic organizations.

H1 was confirmed from results that female employees in Telecom sector of Pakistan use influential tactics in mechanistic organizations to manage their political behavior in front of other employees through using impression management techniques. The reason of strong relationship is due to employee dependence on their superiors in quite high (even more in case of female gender). Moreover organizational loyalty and superior obedience are considered basics to organizational long term membership. This is the reason why there is more politics and impression management in mechanistic organization.

H2: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among male employees in mechanistic organizations.

H2 was also proved to be true from above results that male employees in Telecom sector of Pakistan also use persuasive strategies in mechanistic organizations to manage their political
comportment by proper impression management practices. The reason of strong relationship is because employees are dependent on their managers. Organizational loyalty and submission to superiors is necessary. Managers frequently use impression management techniques to control politics.

**H3: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among female employees in organic organizations.**

H3 was nullified from above results that female employees in Telecom sector of Pakistan do not use impression management to alter their political behavior in organic organization. The main reason is that overall there is less political environment in organic companies. Employee dependence is low and the hierarchy is horizontal. Female employees feel free of any forced structure and this leads to low level of impression management and organizational politics.

**H4: There is a strong relationship between impression management and organizational politics among male employees in organic organizations.**

H4 was also nullified from above results that male employees in Telecom sector of Pakistan do not use impression management to alter their political behavior in organic organization. The relationship was although stronger than the female employees, but it was not strong. The main reason is that most of the employees have lateral communication with seniors which are friendlier then in mechanistic organizations. Employees feel free to share their ideas and have more involvement in decision making. Responsibilities are shared and the dependence on peers is higher than on supervisors.

6. **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Hence it can be concluded that in mechanistic system, employees both male and female are more inclined towards impression management to manage their political behavior then in organic organizations.

Although organizations inherently have political environment following steps should be taken by management to reduce politics for negative outcomes;

- Managers in the organization should make sure that communication channels are stream lined, focusing on employee participation, linking compensation with performance; ensuring just decision-making procedures are in place.
- Managers should identify unconstructive political behavior, making sure that they are better prepared to distinguish assertive impression management tactics with an employee who vigorously engages in such activities.
- Moreover managers should use those techniques which can help in motivating employees to enhance performance of the organization.
7. **FUTURE RESEARCH**

- Even though the findings have predicted the relationship between the variables, future researchers may also want to attempt the same research with different operationalization of impression management and organizational politics.

- Impression management can include both the defensive and assertive techniques, so further research is needed to predict the impact of different techniques in impression management and organizational politics.

- Moreover impression management is a continuous process by employees, so longitudinal studies are needed so that its advantages can be completely understood.

- Last but not the least, future researchers should expand the span of their empirical research in order to compare the consequences of political responsiveness and following impression management behavior in diverse traditions and cultures.
References


