

Identification of Factors Influencing the Design of a Structural Model for Employees' Unconventional Administrative Behaviors in Governmental Organizations Using Grounded Theory

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to identify the factors influencing the design of a structural model for employees' unconventional administrative behaviors in governmental organizations using grounded theory.

Methodology: The research methodology employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through interviews. The study population included experts, academics, and specialists in the research field, with no fixed limit, and 18 individuals were selected until theoretical saturation was reached. The sampling method was snowball sampling. Primary data were collected via interviews. In line with methodological procedures, during the three stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, relevant codes were extracted from a large volume of primary data. Subsequently, through the constant comparison method, a concept was extracted from several codes, and similarly, other codes were transformed into concepts, yielding a total of 93 concepts. In the next stage, several concepts were categorized into one theme, resulting in 20 themes for this study.

Findings: The study findings indicated that two themes emerged as central categories: legal and regulatory weaknesses and weaknesses in human resource management systems. Other themes were categorized into five groups for presentation in the model: causal conditions (4 themes), context (4 themes), intervening conditions (3 themes), strategies (3 themes), and outcomes (4 themes).

Conclusion: Managers in governmental organizations should make every effort to leverage effective human resources, policies, and programs, and develop content strategies with a particular focus on employees' unconventional administrative behaviors within organizational processes to achieve more effective outcomes.

Keywords: Model design, unconventional administrative behaviors, governmental organizations, grounded theory.

1 Introduction

All individuals experience stress and psychological pressure at different stages of life due to various occupational and social factors. However, when a person is exposed to these psychological pressures for a prolonged period, they may develop a condition known as occupational burnout syndrome (Emami et al., 2024; Taheri & Ataiee, 2022)(Heib & Habari-Kanosi, 2014). Occupational burnout is a form of psychological exhaustion accompanied by job-related stress and workplace pressure. Depersonalization and cynicism are responses to various job-related situations that generate a negative attitude towards others, a sense of inadequacy, and ultimately create a gap between the individual and their job (Nikolić, 2023; Pihlaja et al., 2022; Tomczak & Kulikowski, 2023; Witczak-Błoszyk et al., 2022).

On an individual level, burnout can also influence unconventional behaviors in the workplace; thus, reducing burnout among employees may increase their motivation and, in turn, reduce their deviant behaviors in the workplace (Mathisen & Bergh, 2016; Puteri, 2024; Rahgoi, 2024). Unconventional behaviors have become a notable aspect of organizational behavior in recent decades. A behavior is considered deviant when customs, policies, or internal regulations are violated by an individual or a group, potentially endangering the welfare of the organization and its employees (Moghaddam & Mahmoudi Meymand, 2018).

Behaviors considered deviant in the workplace are also unethical. Theoretically, predicting deviant behaviors through employees' collective perceptions in the areas of values and ethics within the workplace is logical. In fact, an ethical climate—a correct understanding of appropriate behavior in the organization—is fostered through ethical leadership, aiding employees in better decision-making (Wang et al., 2013). Another variable of interest in relation to deviant behaviors is job stress. Job stress is a psychological factor that has a significant impact on employees, potentially leading to multiple adverse health effects and workplace outcomes, including deviant behaviors (Annisa et al., 2024; Karami et al., 2017; Putra et al., 2024). Therefore, stress is a prominent topic within the study of management and organizational behavior. Organizations have incorporated the study, control, and reduction of workplace stress into their plans to reduce the costs of physical and psychological damage and to enhance employee productivity (Vosoughi Nairi et al., 2016).

Among the crucial factors influencing employees' deviant behaviors is the leadership style of organizational managers (Golparvar et al., 2012; Krasikova et al., 2013). Theoretically, the influence of leadership and managers on processes and tasks—as primary agents in planning, decision-making, and program guidance—affects the formation, reinforcement, and impact of organizational values on employee behaviors and attitudes, regardless of the specific behavioral or operational style adopted (Golparvar et al., 2012). In recent years, with increased research on negative behaviors in organizations, the exploration of a new leadership style known as destructive leadership has gradually become a focused topic. According to researchers, tyrannical leadership is characterized by self-centered behavior coupled with dominance and authoritarian behavior towards others. Tyrannical leaders are domineering, controlling, and vengeful, in contrast to ethical leaders, as they foster a gradual deterioration of employees' psychological and organizational well-being (Krasikova et al., 2013).

Considering the above, identifying and presenting a suitable model for unconventional administrative behaviors among governmental employees using grounded theory appears essential. One concept closely related to deviant behavior is unconventional behavior; however, unconventional behavior is defined in terms of cultural norms (Sa'adabadi & Qolipour, 2014). A behavior or action acceptable in one context may appear unacceptable in another (Ashna et al., 2019). Thus, this term is associated with counterproductive, non-normative, and deviant behaviors in the workplace, but unconventional behaviors are influenced by the culture and norms of each society, meaning a behavior may be acceptable in one setting and unacceptable and norm-violating in another. In our country, given the diverse cultures, organizational unconventional behaviors are frequently observed in organizations. Deviant behaviors in the workplace have reached alarming levels in other countries as well, costing organizations significantly and encompassing a broad range of behavioral patterns (Ghosh & Shum, 2019; Islam et al., 2020; Moghaddam & Mahmoudi Meymand, 2018).

In related domestic studies, Dadkhah and Gheitani (2021) found that job satisfaction and organizational satisfaction have an inverse effect on work alienation. Job satisfaction and organizational satisfaction have a direct effect on organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has an inverse effect on work alienation; however, organizational commitment does not influence the

likelihood of rule-breaking despite the inverse relationship. Work alienation is a predictor of employees' likelihood of rule-breaking and has a direct effect on it (Dadkhah & Qeitani, 2021). Additionally, Ashna et al. (2019) demonstrated that although both individual factors (delays in submitting audit reports, inappropriate behavior with colleagues, early resignation, attempts to undermine coworkers, inappropriate behavior with managers and employees in executive agencies) and organizational factors (unfair regulations, compensation/reward structure, organizational culture, negative and cynical attitudes toward the organization, ambiguity regarding job performance) influence deviant organizational behaviors, individual factors have a greater impact than organizational factors (Ashna et al., 2019).

In addition, in international studies, Islam et al. (2020) showed that principles of social bonding and involvement can be used to better understand the reported likelihood of employees' ethical rule-breaking. Recommendations are provided for applying the social bonding model to address ethical rule-breaking (Islam et al., 2020). Furthermore, Boyas and Wind (2016) found that chains of stressors in the workplace—such as limitations in authority, responsibilities, resources, conflict, and feelings of inefficacy in coping with challenges—lead to emotional exhaustion. This emotional exhaustion, manifested in negative emotions such as hopelessness, anxiety, and depression, inclines individuals toward deviant behaviors, such as underperformance (Boyas & Wind, 2016).

Given that organizations aim to enhance human resource productivity as a long-term objective, managers believe one way to improve human resource productivity is to focus on the attitudinal and behavioral factors influencing employees' work processes, which also impact organizational performance. In current circumstances, non-compliance with certain ethical and normative standards has created considerable concern in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. The decline in behavioral standards in the public sector has led researchers to seek theoretical foundations to pave the way for proper implementation. Therefore, a major concern for competent managers at various levels is to create an environment that enables employees in all professions to engage with full responsibility and commitment to their job while adhering to the governing principles of their profession. Accordingly, this study, using a grounded theory approach, aims to answer the research question: What are the unconventional administrative behaviors of governmental employees?

2 Methods and Materials

This research adopts an exploratory mixed-method approach (qualitative followed by quantitative) for data collection and analysis, as the researcher intends to utilize literature review, interviews with specific individuals about their experiences, focus groups, and case studies. In exploratory mixed-method designs, the researcher seeks to explore an "uncertain situation" by first gathering qualitative data, followed by a quantitative phase. Thus, the study is also classified as cross-sectional survey research due to its nature and study type.

The qualitative research population comprises employees of governmental organizations in Hormozgan Province in July 2021, who can provide detailed information relevant to this area. Purposeful sampling was conducted for interviews, utilizing maximum variation sampling. The quantitative research population includes all employees of governmental organizations in Hormozgan. A clustered and convenient sample was drawn from 20 governmental organizations, selecting five organizations: the Governorate (334 employees), Municipality (328 employees), Regional Water Company (152 employees), Tax Affairs (92 employees), and Department of Environment (132 employees). Using the Krejcie and Morgan formula, a sample size of 278 was estimated based on a total population of 1,038 employees.

Data collection methods and tools include library research to obtain general information on the research population, as well as other information on the literature, theoretical framework, and indicators. Field studies were also conducted, in which data were gathered based on theoretical studies and interviews with experts and specialists. Additionally, in the second phase, a questionnaire was used to collect data and test the model for analysis. Interviews and questionnaires were utilized to capture the perspectives of the research population. A five-point Likert scale was used to score the study's questionnaire. To ensure validity, the study employed face validity. The questionnaire was presented to specialists and experts, including the supervisor and advisor, for their input on each question and evaluation of the intended objectives. Minor revisions were made, and the questionnaire was approved.

Moreover, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the measurement tool. Based on feedback from 30 respondents and using SPSS software, the questionnaire's reliability was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. As this

estimate exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.7, it indicates that the questionnaires used possess high reliability.

3 Findings and Results

In this study, 18 experts, professors, and specialists whose opinions are credible for the research field were interviewed. After reviewing previous research related to the causal conditions of structural improvement, central category,

interactive strategies, contexts, intervening conditions, and outcomes of employees' unconventional administrative behaviors in governmental organizations, interview questions were developed. Following transcription of an interview, open coding began. The data from the interviews were carefully studied, reviewed, and analyzed. Similar data points were assigned relevant concepts, resulting in 20 categories and 93 concepts, as seen in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Extracted Concepts and Categories from Data Coding

Row	Category	Concept(s)
1	Job Attitudes	Job dissatisfaction, organizational despair, job mismatch, job stress, lack of organizational commitment, job insecurity, organizational indifference, negative managerial attitudes, burnout
2	Organizational Factors	Lack of transparency, organizational distrust, lack of internal relationships, organizational silence, organizational bullying, fear of organizational changes, perception of organizational politics
3	Individual Factors	Negative personal behaviors, negative interpersonal behaviors, negative managerial behaviors, job dynamics
4	Managerial Weakness	Authoritarian managers, lack of managerial competence, corrupt managerial behaviors, presence of incompetent managers
5	Legal and Regulatory Weakness	Company activity volume, company credibility, access to capital markets for resources, high company credibility with capital markets, lenders, investors
6	Weak HR Management Systems	Lack of compliance with rules, resistance to organizational norms, weak employee performance
7	Social Factors	Debt, employees' social class, demographic characteristics, cultural diversity
8	Cultural Factors	Organizational discrimination, religion, norm violations in culture, core organizational values
9	Political Factors	Legal and regulatory complexity, reliance on negative reference groups, lack of action against deviant behaviors
10	Weak Organizational Culture	Lack of employee participation, goal and value conflicts, risk aversion, lack of compassion in work
11	Changing Unconventional Behaviors	Enhancing organizational spirituality, strengthening religious culture, reinforcing ethical managerial behaviors, ensuring employee economic and social welfare, promoting creativity and innovation, fostering trust-based relationships
12	Controlling Unconventional Behaviors	Recruiting skilled individuals, organizational whistleblowing, organizational control, justice in law establishment and enforcement
13	Managing Unconventional Behaviors	Time management, organizational change management, job performance clarity, managing work-family conflicts, knowledge management
14	Personality Traits	Psychological disorders, adaptability, conscientiousness, narcissism, risk-taking, love of money
15	Self-Serving Behaviors	Managerial misconduct, pretending to be exemplary, disrespecting and demoralizing employees
16	Job Position	Job status, exclusivity of individual job duties
17	Increasing Personal Commitment	Strengthening employee motivation, importance of employee activities, increasing productivity, reinforcing ethical values, creating positive job and organizational attitudes, reducing burnout, improving citizenship behaviors
18	Improving Organizational Status	Reducing organizational silence, increasing information sharing and experience, enhancing organizational resilience, increasing organizational hope, increasing accountability
19	Social Outcomes	Increasing organizational trust, organizational reputation, employee alignment, enhancing social standing
20	Group Outcomes	Creating distrust and tension within the organization, weakening social capital, creating organizational disillusionment, fostering dysfunctional conflict, lowering employee morale

Axial coding categorized the codes from open coding into six groups, including central category, causal conditions,

intervening conditions, contexts, strategies (actions and reactions), and outcomes:

Table 2

The Results of Axial Codes

Axial Code	Category	Concept(s)
Causal Conditions	Job Attitudes	Job dissatisfaction, organizational despair, job mismatch, job stress, lack of organizational commitment, job insecurity, organizational indifference, negative managerial attitudes, burnout
	Organizational Factors	Lack of transparency, organizational distrust, lack of internal relationships, organizational silence, bullying, fear of change, perception of politics
	Individual Factors	Negative personal behaviors, interpersonal negative behaviors, managerial negative behaviors, job dynamics
Central Category	Managerial Weakness	Authoritarian managers, lack of competence, corrupt managerial behaviors, incompetent managers
	Legal and Regulatory Weakness	Company activity volume, credibility, capital market access, high credibility with capital markets, lenders, investors
	Weak HR Management Systems	Lack of compliance, resistance to norms, weak employee performance
Contexts	Social Factors	Debt, social class, demographic characteristics, cultural diversity
	Cultural Factors	Discrimination, religion, norm violations, core values
	Political Factors	Legal complexity, reliance on negative reference groups, inaction against deviant behaviors
	Weak Organizational Culture	Lack of participation, goal conflicts, risk aversion, lack of compassion
Strategies	Changing Unconventional Behaviors	Enhancing spirituality, strengthening religious culture, promoting ethical leadership, ensuring employee welfare, promoting creativity, trust-based relationships
	Controlling Unconventional Behaviors	Recruiting skilled individuals, organizational whistleblowing, control, justice in rule establishment
	Managing Unconventional Behaviors	Time management, change management, job performance clarity, managing work-family conflicts, knowledge management
Intervening Conditions	Personality Traits	Psychological disorders, adaptability, conscientiousness, narcissism, risk-taking, love of money
	Self-Serving Behaviors	Managerial misconduct, pretension, disrespect, demoralizing employees
	Job Position	Job status, exclusivity of duties
Outcomes	Increasing Personal Commitment	Strengthening motivation, significance of employee activities, increasing productivity, ethical values, positive attitudes, reducing burnout, citizenship behavior improvement
	Improving Organizational Status	Reducing silence, increasing information sharing, resilience, hope, accountability
	Social Outcomes	Increasing trust, reputation, employee alignment, social standing
	Group Outcomes	Creating distrust, tension, weakening social capital, disillusionment, dysfunctional conflict, lowering morale

The research findings, organized through axial coding, categorize factors influencing unconventional administrative behaviors in governmental organizations. Causal conditions encompass factors such as job attitudes (including job dissatisfaction, organizational despair, and burnout), organizational factors (like lack of transparency and organizational distrust), individual factors (negative personal and interpersonal behaviors), and managerial weaknesses (authoritarianism and lack of competence among managers). The central category highlights two main areas: legal and regulatory weaknesses, and inadequacies within human resource management systems, such as non-compliance with rules and poor employee performance.

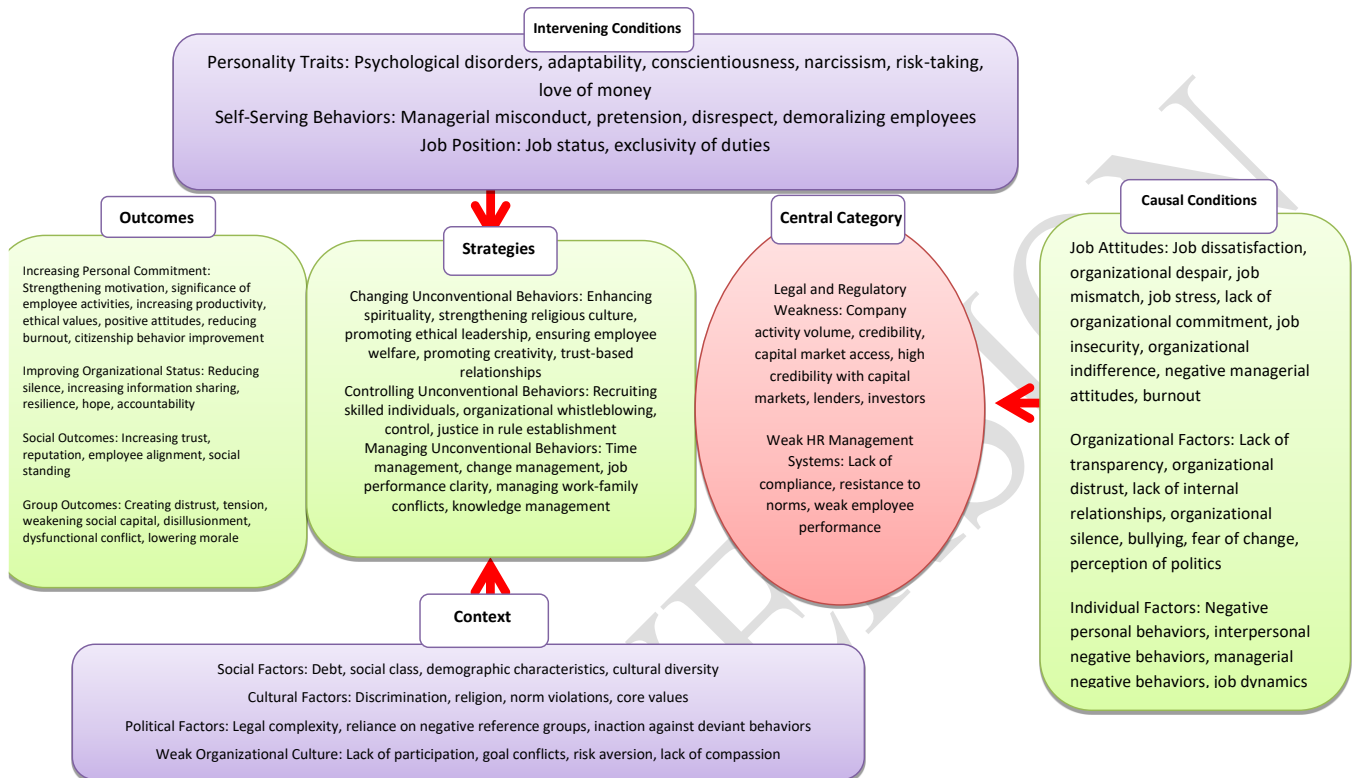
Contextual factors include social factors (debt and demographic characteristics), cultural factors (discrimination and core values), political factors (regulatory complexity and negative reference group reliance), and a weak organizational culture marked by low participation and

risk aversion. Strategic factors suggest three approaches for addressing these behaviors: changing unconventional behaviors by enhancing organizational spirituality and promoting ethical leadership; controlling these behaviors through fair recruitment, whistleblowing, and enforcement of justice; and managing them via time management, conflict resolution, and knowledge management.

Intervening conditions focus on personality traits (such as adaptability and narcissism), self-serving behaviors (managerial misconduct and disrespect toward employees), and job position factors. Lastly, outcome-related conditions describe potential positive results, like increased personal commitment (boosting motivation and reducing burnout), improved organizational status (enhancing resilience and accountability), social outcomes (growing organizational trust and social standing), and group outcomes, though the latter also includes negative possibilities like distrust and lowered morale.

Figure 1

Final Paradigm Model



4 Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the researcher aimed to design a comprehensive, localized model of "appropriate modeling of unconventional administrative behaviors among employees in governmental organizations" using grounded theory. Initially, the researcher identified the current issues within the target community, articulating the main problem scientifically. To provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, an extensive review of the literature, past research, and theoretical foundations was conducted, resulting in the extraction of relevant indicators and categories. Through coding techniques, 20 categories were ultimately identified.

The primary goal of this research was to present an appropriate model of unconventional administrative behaviors among governmental employees based on grounded theory (using Strauss and Corbin's systemic

approach) and a mixed-method approach (qualitative-quantitative). The study was conducted in two phases: model design and testing of the proposed model. The two categories of "legal and regulatory weaknesses" and "weakness in human resource management systems" were considered the central categories. Legal and regulatory weaknesses included factors such as the volume of company activity, corporate credibility, capital market access, and increased reliance on credit and loans. Weaknesses in human resource management systems included a lack of rule compliance, resistance to organizational norms, and poor employee performance.

Among other categories, four categories—"job attitudes, organizational factors, individual factors, and managerial weaknesses"—were identified as causal conditions. Job attitudes included job dissatisfaction, organizational despair, job mismatch, job stress, lack of organizational commitment, job insecurity, organizational indifference, negative managerial attitudes, and burnout. Organizational

factors included lack of transparency, distrust, weak internal relationships, organizational silence, bullying, fear of change, and perceptions of organizational politics. Individual factors included negative personal and interpersonal behaviors and negative managerial behaviors. Managerial weaknesses included authoritarianism, lack of managerial competence, corrupt behavior, and incompetence.

Additionally, three categories—“changing unconventional behaviors, controlling unconventional behaviors, and managing unconventional behaviors”—were identified as strategies, as these represent intentional actions and reactions leading to a structured model for unconventional administrative behaviors. Changing unconventional behaviors involved concepts such as enhancing organizational spirituality, strengthening religious culture, promoting ethical managerial behaviors, ensuring employee economic and social welfare, fostering creativity and innovation, and building trust-based relationships. Controlling unconventional behaviors included attracting and recruiting skilled individuals, organizational whistleblowing, organizational control, and justice in law enforcement. Managing unconventional behaviors involved time management, organizational change management, job performance clarity, managing work-family conflicts, and knowledge management.

Four categories—“social factors, cultural factors, political factors, and weak organizational culture”—were identified as contexts. Social factors included debt, employee social class, demographic characteristics, and cultural diversity. Cultural factors involved organizational discrimination, religion, norm violations, and core organizational values. Political factors included regulatory complexity, reliance on negative reference groups, and lack of action against deviant behaviors. Weak organizational culture involved a lack of employee participation, conflicts in goals and values, risk aversion, and lack of compassion in work.

Three categories—“personality traits, self-serving behaviors, and job position”—were identified as intervening conditions. Personality traits included psychological disorders, adaptability and incompatibility, conscientiousness, narcissism, risk-taking, and love of money. Self-serving behaviors included managerial misconduct, pretension, disrespect towards employees, and demoralization. Job position involved job status and the exclusivity of individual job duties.

Finally, four categories—“increased individual commitment, organizational improvement, social outcomes, and group outcomes”—were identified as outcomes resulting from the proposed structural model of unconventional administrative behaviors in governmental organizations. Increased individual commitment included strengthening employee motivation, increasing the importance of employee activities, enhancing productivity, reinforcing ethical values, creating positive job and organizational attitudes, reducing burnout, and improving citizenship behaviors. Organizational improvement included reducing organizational silence, increasing information flow, enhancing organizational resilience, increasing organizational hope, and improving accountability. Social outcomes included increased organizational trust, organizational reputation, employee alignment, and enhanced social standing. Group outcomes included creating distrust and tension within the organization, weakening social capital, fostering organizational disillusionment, promoting dysfunctional conflict, and reducing employee morale.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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