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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Determining the Dimensions and Formative Factors of Organizational Bad Luck in Government Organizations: A Thematic Analysis Approach

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EXTENDED A B S T R A C T

Introduction

Organizational outcomes are not determined solely by structural, managerial, and environmental factors; they are also influenced by managers' subjective interpretations of uncertainty, random events, and attributional beliefs. Among these beliefs, organizational bad luck represents a collective perception through which organizational failures are attributed to uncontrollable external forces rather than managerial competence or organizational capabilities. Although Attribution Theory, Locus of Control Theory, and Learned Helplessness Theory provide partial explanations for attributional behavior, organizational bad luck has rarely been conceptualized as an independent organizational phenomenon, particularly within the context of public administration. Existing studies have primarily focused on individual-level beliefs about luck, while little attention has been devoted to understanding how such beliefs become institutionalized within organizations through cultural, managerial, structural, psychological, and political mechanisms. Addressing this theoretical gap, the present study aims to identify the dimensions and formative factors of organizational bad luck in Iranian government organizations and to develop an indigenous conceptual model explaining its emergence and persistence.

Methodology

This study adopted an applied qualitative research design using thematic analysis. Data were collected through fifteen semi-structured, in-depth interviews with university faculty members specializing in organizational behavior and public administration, senior and middle managers of government organizations, and experienced public administration consultants in Ilam Province. Participants were selected using purposive snowball sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved. Interview

questions focused on the conceptualization, causes, dimensions, and organizational consequences of organizational bad luck. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis procedure, including familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition. Constant comparative analysis was employed throughout the coding process. To ensure methodological rigor, member checking, peer review, parallel coding by independent researchers, Holsti's inter-coder agreement coefficient, and content validity assessments using CVR and CVI were conducted.

Findings

The thematic analysis initially generated thirty-five concepts, which were refined into twenty-one final concepts after eliminating overlaps and redundancies. These concepts were subsequently organized into eleven sub-themes and six overarching themes describing the multidimensional nature of organizational bad luck. The identified dimensions included: (1) cultural and organizational factors, characterized by negative organizational culture, managerial instability, and system blaming; (2) cognitive factors, including external attribution of failure, uncertainty about the future, and reduced perceived control; (3) functional factors reflected in poor organizational performance, weak innovation, and low decision quality; (4) supportive and managerial factors involving inadequate organizational support and ineffective leadership; (5) psychological factors encompassing pessimism, external locus of control, emotional distress, and reduced resilience; and (6) political factors associated with political interference, weakened meritocracy, and the influence of governors and parliamentary representatives on organizational decisions. The findings demonstrate that organizational bad luck emerges through the interaction of these six dimensions rather than from individual beliefs alone. Reliability and validity analyses confirmed the robustness of the coding process, with Holsti's coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.82 and all CVR and CVI values exceeding accepted thresholds.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate that organizational bad luck constitutes a multidimensional organizational phenomenon rooted in the interaction of cultural, cognitive, managerial, psychological, functional, and political factors rather than an individual cognitive bias. The study extends existing attributional and organizational behavior theories by conceptualizing organizational bad luck as an independent organizational construct shaped by institutional and contextual conditions. Unlike previous research focusing primarily on individual perceptions of luck, this study demonstrates that political interventions, organizational injustice, managerial instability, and dysfunctional organizational culture collectively reinforce fatalistic beliefs and weaken organizational learning, innovation, accountability, and performance. The proposed conceptual model contributes to public administration literature by providing a context-specific framework for understanding organizational bad luck in government organizations. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening meritocracy, improving organizational justice, promoting supportive

leadership, reducing political interference, and fostering learning-oriented organizational cultures can mitigate fatalistic organizational beliefs and facilitate the transition from organizational helplessness toward organizational responsibility, resilience, and continuous learning.

K E Y W O R D S
Organizational Bad Luck, Organizational Behavior, Theme Analysis, Government Organizations, Ilam Province Government Organizations.

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