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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Model of Political Behavior of the Mafia in the Management of Organizations: Analysis of the Content of the Book and the Movie The Godfather Trilogy

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EXTENDED A B S T R A C T

Introduction

In the complex and dynamic landscape of contemporary organizations, understanding political behavior is pivotal for organizational success or failure. Political behavior encompasses actions and reactions undertaken by individuals or groups to acquire, maintain, or enhance power and influence within organizational settings. Such behaviors may yield positive outcomes, such as conflict resolution and the pursuit of organizational goals, or negative consequences, including deception, secrecy, and self-interest prioritization (Maher et al., 2020). In public organizations, characterized by hierarchical structures and internal competition, political behaviors can undermine productivity, foster administrative discord, and weaken overall performance. For instance, research indicates that power-seeking managerial behaviors can disrupt organizational communication and impede progress (Azad et al., 2024), while paternalistic employee behaviors may diminish organizational citizenship and performance (Abdi et al., 2024). Furthermore, cognitive biases in public decision-making exacerbate negative political behaviors (Vaezi & Hosseini, 2024).

A prominent cultural representation of political behavior is the concept of the "Godfather," derived from Mario Puzo's novel The Godfather (1969) and Francis Ford Coppola's cinematic trilogy (1972). These works portray the Corleone family as a mafia archetype, where power, loyalty, strategic influence, and familial bonds play central roles. The mafia, as a hierarchical criminal organization, exemplifies sophisticated communication skills, power management, and group cohesion (Feyz et al., 2020). However, the challenge lies in extracting positive managerial insights from mafia-like political behaviors, often associated with negative attributes such as violence and corruption, to prevent the formation of mafia-like dynamics in organizations.

The necessity of this research stems from the pervasive challenges of deviant political behaviors in public organizations globally and in Iran, which can reduce productivity (Taheri & Ataei, 2021; Khazaei Poul et al., 2023). The Godfather offers rich cultural insights into power dynamics and loyalty that can inform organizational management. For example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that safety, belonging, and self-actualization drive the Corleone family's behaviors (Kahine, 2023). Moreover, power, as the capacity to control resources, can facilitate organizational objectives (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). However, negative

political behaviors, such as reduced information sharing, heightened tension, and perceived injustice, pose significant challenges (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Maher et al., 2020).

A research gap exists in applying The Godfather's insights to organizational contexts. Previous studies, such as Beliotti (2024), focused on cultural value conflicts in The Godfather, Hagberg (2024) explored leadership ethics. Kahine (2023) provided psychological and sociological analyses, but practical applications in public organizations remain underexplored. In Iran, studies like Soltani Fath et al. (2022) proposed models for managerial political behavior but did not specifically analyze The Godfather to derive strategies for fostering positive organizational political behavior. This gap underscores the need for research identifying components and strategies of mafia-like political behavior to provide actionable managerial recommendations. The primary research question is: "What are the components and strategies of organizational Godfather-like political behavior based on the content analysis of The Godfather book and film trilogy, and how can these insights be leveraged to enhance managers' political behavior for achieving organizational goals"?

This study aims to derive lessons from The Godfather to strengthen positive political behaviors, such as win-win conflict resolution, while mitigating negative aspects like deception. Its significance lies in enabling managers to prevent mafia-like dynamics in organizations and promote constructive political behaviors to advance organizational objectives.

Mothodology

This research adopted a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach to develop a conceptual model of mafia-like political behavior in organizations. In the qualitative phase, content analysis was employed to examine Mario Puzo's The Godfather (1969) and Francis Ford Coppola's film trilogy (1972). This method facilitated the identification of themes, patterns, and latent concepts within dialogues and narratives. Data were collected through structured observation of the films (viewed multiple times) and extensive note-taking from the book. Purposive sampling focused on dialogues and text segments related to power, influence, and political behavior.

To ensure reliability, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated, yielding a value of 0.796 (above 0.6, indicating high inter-rater agreement between two independent evaluators). From this analysis, 64 initial open codes were extracted. For validation, a qualitative-quantitative Delphi method was utilized. The expert panel consisted of seven university professors in public administration with doctoral degrees, over 20 years of experience, publications on political behavior, familiarity with The Godfather, and managerial experience. Experts were selected purposively.

The Delphi questionnaire was conducted in three rounds. In each round, components were evaluated on a 10-point scale, with open-ended responses used to refine or add components. The reliability of the Delphi process was assessed using Kendall's coefficient of concordance, with values above 0.3 and significance levels below 0.05 in all rounds. The process continued until full consensus was achieved, with no components eliminated or modified in the final round. Axial and selective coding categorized the components into a conceptual model. This mixed, exploratory, and consensus-based approach was deemed suitable due to the lack of a comprehensive theory on mafia-like political behavior in organizations, grounded in organizational behavior and political theories.

Findings

Content analysis of the book and film dialogues yielded initial open codes. After reliability assessment with Cohen's Kappa, the Delphi process began with 64 components. In the first round, components such as "compassion in behavior," "ruthlessness," and "Godfather's personal experience" were removed, while others, like "caution in confronting enemies" and "strategy and foresight," were merged into "enemy foresight." In the second round, new components, including

"maintaining power through threats," "building strong relationships," "relationships over rules," and "respect for loyalists," were added. The third round achieved consensus without further changes.

The reliability of the Delphi process was confirmed using Kendall's coefficient of concordance. Axial coding grouped components into broader categories: power and influence (e.g., decisive decision-making, informational influence), leadership and relationships (e.g., loyalty, communication management), personal characteristics (e.g., courage, wisdom), and image management (e.g., reputation cleansing). Selective coding transformed these categories into a final model, with power and influence as the core, emphasizing short-term strategies for dominance; leadership and relationships focusing on strong networks and loyalty; personal characteristics highlighting traits like decisiveness; and image management addressing public reputation through affiliations with institutions like religious organizations. The findings indicate that Godfathers employ a blend of soft and hard power, strategic relationships, and image management for effective organization.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study developed a conceptual model of mafia-like political behavior in organizations, comprising four main categories: power and influence, leadership and relationships, personal characteristics, and image management. The model suggests that managers can adopt positive lessons, such as loyalty, relationship management, and influence strategies, to enhance constructive political behavior while avoiding negative aspects like threats and deception. Compared to prior studies, this research advances by offering a practical framework for organizations, though it requires ethical scrutiny.

To counter mafia-like dynamics in Iranian organizations, managers should prioritize transparency and accountability at all levels to reduce the influence of Godfather-like figures and informal networks. Establishing robust, independent monitoring systems, encouraging transparent reporting, and fostering open communication channels between employees and management can significantly mitigate corruption and unethical behavior. Additionally, promoting an organizational culture rooted in ethical values and fairness, coupled with managers modeling ethical behavior and implementing equitable promotion and reward policies, builds employee trust and prevents favoritism-based relationships. Developing merit-based performance management systems, training employees on professional ethics, and encouraging collective participation in decision-making further prevent power concentration among a few individuals, creating a safe environment for voicing opinions and critiques.

Future research should explore comparative analyses of mafia-like political behavior in legal and illegal organizations, delving into psychological and sociological dimensions, such as Maslow's theory or the role of cultural diversity. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impacts of these behaviors on organizational performance and employee mental health can provide practical, ethical managerial frameworks. By leveraging The Godfather's positive strategies without replicating its ethical and legal shortcomings, managers can enhance their influence and authority, fostering organizational performance and ethical governance.

K E Y W O R D S

Political Behavior, Content Analysis, Godfather, Mafia, Film Analysis, Book Analysis.

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