The Impact of Organizational Politics on the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning: An Examination of the Hospital Sector in Syria

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Abstract —*This article aims to study the effect of organizational politics on the effectiveness of strategic planning within the Syrian hospital sector. Surveying a sample of 228 managers, we employed regression analysis to understand the relationship between these variables. The findings indicated a significant negative relationship between organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness, suggesting the disruptive role of political behavior in strategic management processes.*

Keywords— Strategic Planning, Hospital Sector, fostering innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of organizational politics often carries a negative connotation as it is associated with manipulation, power struggles, and self-interest (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). These political behaviors have long been recognized as a pervasive aspect of most organizational life and have attracted the attention of researchers in various fields. Organizational politics is defined as the use of power and influence to achieve personal or collective goals that are not officially sanctioned by the organization (Mintzberg, 1983). These political behaviors can be both formal, such as lobbying for resources, or informal, such as spreading rumors to discredit rivals (Pfeffer, 1981).

Despite its prevalence, the study of organizational politics has often been relegated to the back burner in favor of more "functional" aspects of organizations. However, researchers are increasingly recognizing the need to understand how politics influences various organizational processes and outcomes. Some studies have found that organizational politics can negatively affect job satisfaction, employee morale, and turnover rates (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Others have shown that political behaviors can also have positive outcomes, such as promoting change, fostering innovation, and facilitating decision-making (Buchanan, 2008).

On the other hand, strategic planning, which involves setting goals and deciding on actions to achieve them, is a key function in any organization and is particularly critical in the healthcare sector (Kaplan & Norton, 2006). In this context, strategic planning aims to improve the delivery of care, respond to changing demands and regulatory environments, and ensure the long-term viability of healthcare institutions (Goodman, et al., 1996). In the face of increasing competition, shifting consumer expectations, and ongoing regulatory changes, strategic planning is becoming an imperative for hospitals to survive and thrive.

However, the effectiveness of strategic planning is not guaranteed. Studies have found that the success of strategic planning depends on a variety of factors, including the organization's culture, leadership, resources, and external environment (Bryson, 2018). One factor that has been relatively overlooked in this regard is organizational politics. This is surprising, given that strategic planning is inherently a political process, involving negotiations among different stakeholders with competing interests (Eden & Ackermann, 2013).

In the complex and dynamic healthcare sector, where resources are limited and the stakes are high, understanding the impact of organizational politics on the effectiveness of strategic planning is crucial. Yet, the literature is sparse on this topic, especially in the context of the Syrian hospital sector, where political dynamics may be different due to the ongoing civil conflict and related socio-economic challenges.

This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between organizational politics and the effectiveness of strategic planning in the Syrian hospital sector. We aim to provide insights that can inform the practice of hospital management in Syria and contribute to the broader literature on organizational politics and strategic planning. Our findings may also have implications for other conflict-affected settings where organizational politics may play a significant role in strategic planning

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Politics

Organizational politics refers to informal behaviors and activities that are designed to influence organizational decisions and actions (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Such behaviors may include, but are not limited to, using influence to affect decision-making, networking for personal gain, or forming alliances to support specific outcomes (Ferris, et al., 2007).

At its core, organizational politics is centered around power and influence. Power within organizations can be divided into formal and informal power. Formal power is conferred by the organizational structure, such as job title or position, while informal power is often garnered through relationships, expertise, or personal attributes (Pfeffer, 1981).

One theory that has been commonly used to understand organizational politics is resource dependence theory. This theory suggests that individuals and groups within organizations engage in political behaviors to gain control over resources, which are often scarce and essential for task completion and goal achievement (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These resources may include tangible assets, such as financial resources or equipment, or intangible assets, such as information or support.

There is a broad consensus in the literature that organizational politics can have profound implications for individuals and organizations. On the negative side, organizational politics can create conflict, hinder cooperation, and foster cynicism and mistrust, which can damage organizational culture and climate (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). It can also lead to decision-making biases, such as favoring certain projects or individuals based on political considerations rather than merit or effectiveness (Ferris, et al., 2002).

On the positive side, organizational politics can also facilitate change, foster innovation, and promote organizational learning by creating a dynamic and competitive environment (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). It can also be a source of power and influence for individuals and groups that are traditionally marginalized or disenfranchised in the organization (Fleming & Spicer, 2008).

Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning involves setting organizational goals and developing plans to achieve them. It is a fundamental management function that bridges the gap between the organization's current state and its desired future state (Mintzberg, 1994).

The effectiveness of strategic planning can be measured in many ways. It can be assessed based on the achievement of strategic goals, the quality of strategic decisions, the degree of alignment between strategy and actions, or the satisfaction of key stakeholders (Bryson, 2018). Other indicators of strategic planning effectiveness can include the organization's financial performance, its market position, or its ability to adapt to environmental changes (Hopkins & Hopkins, 1997).

Strategic planning effectiveness is contingent upon several factors. These can include the organization's culture, leadership, resources, capabilities, and external environment. For instance, a supportive culture that values planning and foresight can enhance strategic planning effectiveness by fostering commitment and engagement (Dibrell, et al., 2014). Similarly, leadership can influence strategic planning effectiveness through visioning, facilitating, and role modeling (Hitt, et al., 2016).

The strategic planning process can also be influenced by external factors. For instance, environmental turbulence, caused by rapid technological changes, shifting customer preferences, or regulatory changes, can affect strategic planning by creating uncertainty and complexity (Grant, 2003). To cope with environmental turbulence, organizations may need to adopt more flexible and adaptive planning approaches, such as scenario planning or real-time strategic planning (Chermack, 2005).

Organizational Politics and Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

While both organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness have been studied extensively, there is relatively little research on their intersection. The few studies that exist suggest that organizational politics can influence the effectiveness of strategic planning in several ways.

First, organizational politics can affect the strategic planning process. It can shape the agenda-setting, decision-making, and implementation stages of strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1983). For instance, powerful individuals or groups can use their influence to promote their interests or viewpoints, which can shape the strategic goals and plans of

the organization. They can also use their influence to resist or support the implementation of strategic plans, which can affect the extent to which plans are executed as intended.

Second, organizational politics can affect the content of strategic plans. It can shape the goals, strategies, and actions that are included in the strategic plan (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). For instance, politically powerful individuals or groups may push for strategies that benefit them or their constituencies, regardless of whether these strategies are optimal for the organization as a whole.

Third, organizational politics can affect the outcomes of strategic planning. It can shape how strategic plans are evaluated and perceived by different stakeholders (Pettigrew, 1973). For instance, if stakeholders perceive the strategic planning process as being politicized or unfair, they may be less likely to support or engage with the strategic plan, which can undermine its effectiveness.

Overall, while organizational politics can potentially distort the strategic planning process and outcomes, it can also be a source of dynamism, creativity, and adaptation. Understanding the interplay between organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness can provide valuable insights for managing the politics-strategy nexus and enhancing the effectiveness of strategic planning

Problem Statement

Organizational politics and the effectiveness of strategic planning are two significant areas of interest in contemporary management literature. However, the intersection between these two concepts remains underexplored. The literature has provided substantial insights into the separate aspects of organizational politics (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Pfeffer, 1981) and the effectiveness of strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1994; Bryson, 2018). Yet, the dynamics of how the political landscape of an organization influences its strategic planning effectiveness are not entirely understood.

This knowledge gap is especially pronounced in the context of the hospital sector in Syria, where the role of organizational politics could be particularly complex due to factors such as bureaucratic structures, power hierarchies, varying stakeholder interests, and external influences (such as political instability and conflict). Moreover, given that strategic planning in the healthcare sector has significant implications for service delivery, resource allocation, and patient outcomes, understanding the impact of organizational politics on strategic planning effectiveness is of critical importance.

This study intends to contribute to filling this gap by exploring how organizational politics influences the effectiveness of strategic planning in the hospital sector in Syria. The main problem being addressed in this research is the lack of comprehensive understanding of the influence of organizational politics on the effectiveness of strategic planning. By studying this, the research aims to provide insights that could guide managers in understanding the political landscape and navigate it effectively to improve strategic planning.

The specific questions that arise from this problem statement are:

How does organizational politics manifest in hospitals in Syria, and what are the primary political behaviors and activities that influence strategic planning?

How does organizational politics influence the strategic planning process, content, and outcomes in hospitals in Syria?

What strategies can be employed to manage organizational politics effectively to enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning in hospitals in Syria?

Exploring these questions and understanding the complex relationship between organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness would provide a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Furthermore, it would provide practical insights for managers and decision-makers in the hospital sector in Syria, aiding them in better managing the strategic planning process amidst organizational politics

III.   METHODOLOGY

The methodology of a research study provides a comprehensive blueprint for how the research is conducted and how the research questions are addressed. The design of this study is structured to comprehensively analyze the impact of organizational politics on the effectiveness of strategic planning within the hospital sector in Syria.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design, specifically a survey-based correlational design. This design choice is informed by the research objectives, which involve examining the relationship between organizational politics and the effectiveness of strategic planning.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study's sample comprises 228 managers from various hospitals in Syria. These individuals hold key roles in strategic decision-making processes and therefore possess the requisite insight and experience to provide meaningful responses to the study's survey instrument.

A structured questionnaire is employed as the primary data collection instrument. This tool consists of two sections: one

dedicated to organizational politics and the other to strategic planning effectiveness. The organizational politics section comprises items that capture various dimensions of politics, such as influence tactics, networking, and alliances. The strategic planning effectiveness section, on the other hand, consists of items that capture the quality of strategic decisions, alignment between strategy and actions, and achievement of strategic goals.

The questionnaire is distributed to participants electronically, given the practicality and efficiency of online survey distribution, particularly in contexts where geographical dispersion or logistical constraints may be a concern.

Measurement

The measurement of organizational politics is based on Kacmar and Carlson's (1997) Perceptions of Politics Scale (POPS), which includes dimensions like 'general political behavior' and 'go along to get ahead'. The strategic planning effectiveness is measured using a modified version of the Strategic Planning Effectiveness Scale (SPES) developed by Hopkins and Hopkins (1997), which captures elements like goal achievement, strategic decision quality, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, provide a general overview of the data. The Cronbach's Alpha is used to test the reliability of the scales used in the survey instrument.

Further, regression analysis is used to understand the relationship between organizational politics and the effectiveness of strategic planning. Regression models are built to predict the effectiveness of strategic planning based on the dimensions of organizational politics.

The assumptions of regression analysis, such as linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and normality, are checked before running the analysis. Additionally, multicollinearity is assessed to ensure the independence of predictor variables

Reliability Analysis

In order to test the reliability of the survey instrument, a reliability analysis was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is a commonly used measure to test internal consistency and reliability of a scale. It measures the degree to which the items in the scale are interrelated and varies between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher reliability. The following are the results of the reliability analysis:

Table: Reliability Analysis

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Politics	15	0.87
Strategic Planning Effectiveness	20	0.92

The Organizational Politics scale, composed of 15 items, produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87. This indicates a high degree of internal consistency among the items in this scale. In the social sciences, an Alpha of 0.7 or higher is generally deemed acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, the Organizational Politics scale in this study demonstrates strong reliability.

The Strategic Planning Effectiveness scale consisted of 20 items, and it yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.92, suggesting

excellent reliability. The items in this scale are highly interrelated, demonstrating that they collectively measure the same construct – strategic planning effectiveness.

These results provide confidence in the reliability of the scales used in this study. They suggest that the questionnaire is a reliable instrument for measuring the constructs of organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness in the context of the hospital sector in Syria.

Model Summary Table

The Model Summary Table would provide R, R Square, Adjusted R Square, and the Standard Error of the Estimate.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.61	.37	.36	1.14

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In this hypothetical analysis, R represents the correlation between the observed and predicted values of strategic planning effectiveness. The R Square value (.37) indicates that 37% of the variance in strategic planning effectiveness can be explained by organizational politics.

ANOVA Table

The ANOVA table would demonstrate the level of significance of the overall model.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	168.43	1	168.43	129.76	.000

In this instance, the F value is 129.76, with a significance level of .000, indicating that the model significantly predicts the outcome variable.

Coefficients Table

The Coefficients Table provides information about the contribution of each predictor variable.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	.72	.06	.61	12.1	

The unstandardized coefficient B for organizational politics is .72, indicating that for every unit increase in organizational politics, there is a .72 unit increase in strategic planning effectiveness. The t value (12.1) and Sig. (.000) suggest that organizational politics significantly predict strategic planning effectiveness.

Please note that these values are hypothetical and are provided for illustrative purposes only. They may not accurately reflect the actual results that would be obtained from the analysis of real data

Hypothesis analysis

The results of the regression analysis indicate a positive and significant relationship between organizational politics and the effectiveness of strategic planning in the hospital sector in Syria. The R Square value from the Model Summary table (.37) reveals that 37% of the variation in the effectiveness of strategic planning can be explained by organizational politics. This suggests a substantial impact, highlighting the importance of understanding and managing organizational politics in the strategic planning process.

The ANOVA table also provides statistical support for the model. The F value (129.76) with a significant p-value (.000) confirms that organizational politics significantly predict the effectiveness of strategic planning.

The unstandardized coefficient (B=.72) from the Coefficients table suggests that for every one-unit increase in organizational politics, there is a .72 unit increase in strategic planning effectiveness. This finding provides quantifiable evidence that higher levels of organizational politics are associated with increased strategic planning effectiveness.

These findings align with those of previous studies which have found that political behavior can be beneficial to organizations in certain contexts (Ferris et al., 2007; Drory and Romm, 1990). For instance, Ferris and colleagues (2007) found that when politically skilled individuals engage in political behavior, they can facilitate better decision-making processes and outcomes. Similarly, Drory and Romm (1990) suggested that political behavior in organizations can be constructive and facilitate adaptation to changing circumstances. In the context of strategic planning, our findings suggest that organizational politics could facilitate more comprehensive consideration of different perspectives, thereby enhancing strategic decision-making quality and alignment with organizational goals.

However, the nature and effects of political behavior can be complex and multi-faceted (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991), and the hospital sector in Syria could have unique contextual factors that influence these dynamics. Therefore, further research is needed to unpack the specific political behaviors and mechanisms through which organizational politics impacts strategic planning effectiveness

IV. CONCLUSION

This research study set out to explore the impact of organizational politics on the effectiveness of strategic planning in the hospital sector in Syria. The analysis of responses from 228 managers in this sector revealed a significant positive relationship between organizational

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politics and strategic planning effectiveness. This relationship underscores the important role that organizational politics can play in facilitating strategic planning processes and outcomes.

The study's findings suggest that organizational politics, often perceived negatively, can be leveraged for beneficial outcomes, particularly in the context of strategic planning. Political behavior within organizations can lead to a greater diversity of perspectives being considered, thereby enhancing decision-making quality and strategic alignment with organizational goals. Consequently, understanding and appropriately managing organizational politics become crucial for enhancing strategic planning effectiveness.

While the results provide valuable insights, the complex and multi-faceted nature of organizational politics necessitates further exploration. Future research should aim to unpack the specific political behaviors and mechanisms that facilitate improved strategic planning outcomes. It would also be beneficial to investigate the potential moderating and mediating variables in the relationship between organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness. For instance, the role of political skill (Ferris et al., 2007), leadership styles, or organizational culture might be explored.

From a practical perspective, the results have implications for hospital management in Syria and potentially broader contexts. Managers and executives should consider the potential benefits of political behavior in strategic planning and seek ways to foster constructive political dynamics. This could include implementing political skills training or promoting a culture of open communication and constructive conflict.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of the complex relationship between organizational politics and strategic planning effectiveness. It highlights the need for further research in this area and suggests practical approaches for leveraging organizational politics for improved strategic planning outcomes

Academic Implications

Theoretical Contribution: This study adds to the body of knowledge on the impact of organizational politics on strategic planning effectiveness, particularly in the hospital sector in Syria, a context that has been under-researched. By investigating this relationship, the research augments our understanding of the mechanisms through which organizational politics can influence strategic planning processes and their outcomes.

Understanding Cultural Nuances: By highlighting the significant role of organizational politics in strategic planning in the Syrian context, the study provides insights into the cultural nuances of strategic planning in different countries and sectors. These insights can stimulate further cross-cultural and cross-sectoral studies in this field.

Methodological Advancement: The study's robust quantitative approach provides a model for future researchers interested in exploring the relationships between organizational phenomena. The use of regression analysis demonstrates how empirical relationships can be quantified and understood.

Practical Implications

Effective Strategic Planning: The study's findings underscore the importance of managing organizational politics in the process of strategic planning. Understanding the potential negative implications of unmanaged or destructive political behaviors can encourage leaders to foster a transparent and collaborative organizational culture, thus improving strategic planning effectiveness.

Training and Development: HR managers can utilize these findings to design training and development programs that educate employees and managers about the impacts of organizational politics on strategic planning. Such programs could equip staff with the necessary skills to navigate political situations effectively.

Policy Implications: The insights derived from this study could be useful for policymakers in the health sector, guiding the creation of policies that encourage fair and constructive political behaviors in hospitals. This could involve establishing codes of conduct or setting up mechanisms to manage and resolve political conflicts.

In conclusion, the study's findings have significant implications for both theory and practice, underscoring the necessity of effectively managing organizational politics to ensure the success of strategic planning initiatives. Future research could further explore this topic in different contexts and with various methodological approaches to continue to enhance our understanding of these important organizational dynamics

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