

Ranking and Comparison of Organizational Syndromes in Iranian Schools According to the Opinion of Principals, Deputies and Teachers

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Abstract

Purpose: Given the role of different organizational syndromes in the decline of school performance, the present study was conducted aimed to rank and compare organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers.

Methodology: This study was applied in terms of the objective and quantitative in terms of the method. The study population included the principals, deputies and teachers in Isfahan and Yasuj in the academic year 2019-2020. The research sample according to Krejcie and Morgan Table was $n = 375$ who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling method and considering the volume ratio of cities. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire of organizational syndromes in Iranian schools with 78 items. Its content validity was confirmed by experts, its construct validity was confirmed by exploratory factor analysis and its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. The data were by Friedman and independent t-tests using SPSS-25 software.

Findings: The results showed that the organizational syndromes of narcissism, lack of communication, discrimination and politicking, group thinking, structural alienation, tension and distress, structural mastery, caution, pressure, terrorism, neglect, immobility, explosiveness, incompatibility, non-commitment, impulse and silence had a higher rank in Iranian schools. Other results showed no significant difference between organizational syndromes and teachers in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: According to the results of the present study and the negative role of syndromes in the decline of school performance, it is necessary to design and implement programs to reduce syndromes by improving intra- and extra-organizational relationships and activities in Iranian schools.

Keywords: Organizational Syndromes, Schools, Principals, Deputies, Teachers

Introduction

Every society needs skilled, committed, knowledgeable and capable organization and human resources to achieve high levels of educational, cultural, social, political and economic growth and development (Mills, Weary & Von Keyserlingk, 2021). Therefore, the condition for the survival of any organization, including schools and education, is the necessary and adequate attention to the human resources in the organization and the effort to make their work valuable (Victor, 2017). Today, education is an essential element of the growth and prosperity of nations, and conditions should be provided for the comprehensive growth of individuals so that each person can move in the right direction according to their talents and abilities (Uysal & Caganaga, 2018). The school is one of the most important educational institutions and the first institution of formal education and the quality of its activities is the best index of the level of adequacy and effectiveness of all educational programs (Ezeugbor & Victor, 2018). Schools have a special place in society due to their role and importance in the growth and development of society and the realization of an ideal or desired society (Ilyasin, 2019).

Pathology is the knowledge of diseases, disorders, or diseased tissues in living organisms. Therefore, school pathology means understanding the factors affecting the problems, challenges, irregularities and adverse consequences in the school system (Andhika, 2017). Organizational pathology means that there are fundamental problems that constantly, frequently and comprehensively expose the organization to crisis and hinder the natural growth and development of the organization (Vidal, 2011). The damage in the organization is the process of using the concepts and methods of behavioral sciences to define and describe the current situation of the organization and find ways to improve the organization and increase its effectiveness. This process requires change, recognition of organizational problems, data collection and analysis, conclusion based on the results, and making necessary changes and possible corrections (Cyglar & Sroka, 2014). Pathology requires a systematic and regular approach to the whole organizational process, which, if done correctly and in a timely manner, allows principals to always be aware of the problems of the organization and prevent from getting worse (Blom, Borst & Voorn, 2020).

Syndromes are varied and diverse, affecting all levels of organizational objectives, behaviors, structures, and functions, and therefore should be investigated (Tarride, Villena & Gonzalez, 2020). Each organization in the process of achieving its objectives and plans for various reasons may suffer from disorders or syndromes that negatively affect organizational performance, culture and communication (Nicholson, 2008). Organizational syndromes are rooted in professional failures and professional frustrations and to deal with them, it is necessary to use strategic management (Yadollahi & Yadollahi, 2020). In general, there are seventeen organizational syndromes including narcissism, lack of communication, discrimination and politicking, group thinking, structural alienation, tension and distress, structural mastery, caution, pressure, terrorism, neglect, immobility, explosiveness, incompatibility, non-commitment, impulse and silence. Those with narcissism have self-centered attitudes and are usually calm and accountable in life and avoid any conflict that distracts them from self-interest. Lack of communication becomes apparent when the set principal intentionally or inadvertently separates team members and their functions, and those with this syndrome have little to do with others and often act individually. Discrimination and politicking are behaviors such as exploiting new members and intolerance of members of ethnic and sexual minorities. Group thinking is a type of thinking in which group members, under the group pressure, show unrealistic self-evaluations.

Structural alienation is rooted in the disorders of modern life and hierarchical structures and bureaucracies, and such people emphasize the negative aspects of a structure instead of the positive ones. Tension and distress are the result of living in the modern age and high uncertainty of the environment in which the organization should regularly adapt to structures and strategies to maintain a competitive position. Structural mastery is a kind of social system in organizational structures in which individuals cannot reach a higher rank and position. Caution reflects a conservative, cryptic, protected and cautious style, and such people are always waiting for worse situations and preparing others for them. Pressure indicates the risk of making mistakes, poor judgment, and vulnerability to control, leading to withdrawal from organizational objectives and plans. Terrorism exists in hierarchical organizations, and in such a situation some employees try to make other

employees look bad in order to maintain or improve their position with the principal. Neglect means that in cases of emergency, crisis, and organizational ambiguity, people do nothing temporarily; as if nothing had happened. Immobility indicates a situation in which the employees of the organization do not show activities that lead to the improvement of the performance and effectiveness of the organization. Explosiveness is seen in employees who make and implement decisions quickly and hastily. Incompatibility means the individual does not fit in with other employees and organizational conditions. Non-commitment means that employees do not feel obligated to achieve organizational objectives, values, and plans. Impulse means that although the appearance of work reflects the work and activity of employees, in fact they do not do any useful work and activity in the organization. Silence means not intentionally or inadvertently providing useful and practical knowledge and information to other employees to improve the performance of the organization (HabibiDost, Fadavi & Farhadi, 2021).

Few studies have been conducted on organizational syndromes, the most important results of which are reported below. Yadollahi and Yadollahi (2020) in a study concluded that the most important organizational syndromes included organizational silence, organizational anemia, organizational forgetfulness, survival, organizational depression, organizational terrorism, wastefulness, and organizational indifference. The study results of Amin Beidokhti, Najafi & Shariati (2019) showed that the pathology components of skills training in the Technical and Vocational Organization of Kurdistan Province included process factors (barriers related to educational needs assessment, planning and design of training courses, training implementation and educational evaluation), structural factors (lack of an integrated skills management system, existence of a centralized and inefficient organizational structure in educational, administrative and financial sectors and lack of appropriate executive mechanisms to maximize the potential of the private sector for providing skills training) and environmental factors (cultural and economic barriers). Sarchahani, Zare, Ghanbari and Gholtash (2018) in a study concluded that the pathology of school principals' performance appraisal system includes two individual (reduction in motivation and change in position, burnout, non-disclosure of strengths and weaknesses, low job performance, low job satisfaction and commitment and low personal and professional development) and organizational (stagnation in the process of teaching and learning, low productivity, increased distrust, inability to provide an effective system of encouragement and punishment, inability to identify hardworking employees, growth of organizational silence, organizational injustice, growth of organizational hypocrisy and the growth of organizational pessimism) parts. In another study, Noori, Shafi Abadi, Delavar and Farah Bakhsh (2018) reported that organizational injuries included eight factors of leadership and management, motivation and purposefulness, evaluation and appointment, job satisfaction, professional and personal training and development, job security and selection. Also, the study results of Barani, Faghihi and Najaf Beigi (2017) showed that there are 29 damages of organizational culture in five dimensions including learner, flexibility, participatory, mission-oriented and bureaucratic culture. A significant difference was between the current situation and the desired situation of each of 5 dimensions. Keshavarz, Hamidi, Goudarzi and Alidoust Ghahfarrokhi (2014) in a study concluded that successful and unsuccessful organizations were significantly different in terms of organizational pathology components of reward system, organizational communication and organizational structure, but in terms of tendency to change, useful mechanisms, organizational leadership and understanding of organizational objectives were not significantly different. In another study, Mohseni Tabrizi, Abbasi Ghadi and Amiri (2010) investigated administrative pathology and organizational culture of employees, including role ambiguity, feelings of abnormality, distrust, role overload, alienation from work, disrespect for clients and role conflict. Newman (2012), while reviewing a book, introduced eight syndromes including self-determination, passive or domineering, narcissism, non-commitment, frequent change, division, political interests, and lack of proper communication for management.

Organizational syndromes in any organization, including schools and education, are necessary to prevent the negative role. For this purpose, it is necessary to pay attention to both internal and external syndromes in order to be able to investigate the rank of syndromes with a comprehensive view and seek to reduce them in an orderly manner using appropriate and effective strategies. Another important point is that few studies have been conducted on organizational syndromes in general and this study in the organization is empty,

and conducting it in the education organization can help better understand this organization to professionals and planners at the macro level. Studies indicate many weaknesses and shortcomings in different parts of the education system. Investigation of syndromes and their ranking and the opinion of principals and teachers about them can play an important role in reducing syndromes and thus improving the performance and effectiveness of schools in particular and the education system in general. According to the above, the present study was conducted aimed to rank and compare organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers.

Methodology

This study was applied in terms of the objective and descriptive in terms of the method. The study population included the principals, deputies and teachers in Isfahan and Yasuj in the academic year 2019-2020. The research sample according to Krejcie and Morgan Table was $n = 375$ who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling method with city volume ratio. For sampling, first the statistics of principals, deputies and teachers in both Isfahan and Yasuj were prepared, its ratio was calculated and then the cities were sampled in the same proportion. Sampling from each city was done in such a way that first each city was divided into three north, south and central parts, and two parts were randomly selected. Then, from each part a number of schools and all principals, deputies and teachers were randomly selected as a sample. The inclusion criteria included willingness to participate in this study, no drug addiction, non-use of psychiatric drugs, receiving no psychological services in the last three months, no reprimand in the administrative file and no stressful events such as divorce and death of loved ones three months ago. The exclusion criteria included refraining from completing the research tool and not responding to more than 10% of the items.

The procedure was such that after explaining research objective and significance and coordination with the education officials in Isfahan and Yasuj, the list and statistics of principals, deputies and teachers were prepared and sampling was performed. After explaining research objective and significance to the samples, they were reassured about the observance of ethical considerations and their consent was obtained to conduct this study. Then, the samples were asked to respond to the research tool and after that, the questionnaire was reviewed in terms of complete response and in case of complete response the samples were appreciated. It should be noted that the samples were asked to respond honestly to the tool and were told that there is no right or wrong response and the best answer is the one that reflects their real situation and the organization.

The tool used in this study for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire of organizational syndromes in Iranian schools with 78 items and 17 dimensions including structural alienation (3 items), discrimination and politicking (7 items), immobility (10 items), incompatibility (6 items), pressure (4 items), structural mastery (3 items), explosiveness (3 items), tension and distress (3 items), narcissism (6 items), caution (3 items), impulse (3 items), non-commitment (5 items), neglect (5 items), terrorism (3 items), group thinking (4 items), lack of communication (7 items) and silence (3 items). The items were scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = have no opinion, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree) and score of the tool was calculated with the total score of all items (minimum score 78 and maximum score 390) and the score of each dimension was calculated with the total score of the items of that dimension and the higher score indicated that the organizational syndrome was higher in schools. Also, the reliability calculated by Cronbach's alpha for the tool was 0.93, 0.84 for structural alienation, 0.83 for discrimination and politicking, 0.75 for immobility, 0.76 for incompatibility, 0.77 for pressure, 0.85 for structural mastery, 0.83 for explosiveness, 0.84 for tension and distress, 0.81 for narcissism, 0.82 for caution, 0.85 for impulse, 0.76 for non-commitment, 0.82 for neglect, 0.87 for terrorism, 0.80 for group thinking, 0.89 for lack of communication and 0.78 for silence.

The data were analyzed using a researcher-made questionnaire on organizational syndromes in Iranian schools by Friedman and independent t-tests using SPSS-25 software.

Findings

The samples of the present study were $n = 375$ whose frequency and percentage of demographic information including position, gender, education and work experience were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of frequency of demographic information of research samples

demographic information	position	F	(%)
position	principals and deputies	99	26/40
	teachers	276	73/60
gender	male	183	48/80
	female	192	51/20
level of education	Diploma	17	4/53
	Associate degree	49	13/07
	B.A	163	43/47
	M.A	114	30/40
	Ph.D.	32	8/53
work experience (y)	1-5	39	10/40
	6-10	97	25/87
	11-15	141	37/60
	16-20	67	17/87
	more than 20	31	8/27

The results showed that most of the samples in the present study were teachers (73.60%), women (51.20%) with bachelor's degree (43.47%) and work experience of 11-15 years (37.60%) (Table 1). Before data analysis, Friedman and independent t-tests tested the normality and homogeneity of variance. The results showed that the normality of the syndromes was confirmed due to the values of skewness and kurtosis in the range of -1 to +1. Also, the homogeneity of variance of syndromes in the two groups of principals, deputies and teachers was confirmed due to the significant level of $0.05 <$. The results of Friedman test for ranking organizational syndromes in Iranian schools are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Friedman test for ranking organizational syndromes in Iranian schools

syndrome	mean rank	priority	Friedman test	degree of freedom	significance
narcissism	11/32	1			
lack of communication	11/22	2			
discrimination and politicking	10/77	3			
group thinking	10/10	4			
structural alienation	9/86	5			
tension and distress	9/85	6			
structural mastery	9/78	7			
caution	9/75	8	389/71	16	0/001
pressure	9/13	9			
terrorism	8/84	10			
neglect	8/65	11			

immobility	8/40	12
explosiveness	7/97	13
incompatibility	7/30	14
non-commitment	7/16	15
impulse	6/47	16
silence	6/42	17

The results of the present study showed that the organizational syndromes of narcissism, lack of communication, discrimination and politicking, group thinking, structural alienation, tension and distress, structural mastery, caution, pressure, terrorism, neglect, immobility, explosiveness, incompatibility, non-commitment, impulse, and silence was ranked higher in Iranian schools, respectively (Table 2). The results of independent t-test to compare organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of independent t-test to compare organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers

syndrome	position	M	SD	t-statistic	significance
narcissism	principals and deputies	9/51	3/35	1/472	0/143
	teachers	8/94	2/96		
lack of communication	principals and deputies	7/12	2/17	1/365	0/174
	teachers	6/76	2/42		
discrimination and politicking	principals and deputies	21/84	5/98	1/479	0/140
	teachers	20/82	5/79		
group thinking	principals and deputies	5/80	2/18	1/914	0/056
	teachers	5/32	2/08		
structural alienation	principals and deputies	8/75	2/82	0/146	0/884
	teachers	8/70	2/87		
tension and distress	principals and deputies	14/89	4/68	0/850	0/396
	teachers	14/42	4/62		
structural mastery	principals and deputies	9/58	3/13	-0/254	0/800
	teachers	9/68	3/57		
caution	principals and deputies	9/11	3/37	-0/410	0/682
	teachers	9/26	3/12		
pressure	principals and deputies	5/02	1/98	-1/687	0/093
	teachers	5/45	2/55		
terrorism	principals and deputies	5/15	2/01	-1/821	0/069

	teachers	5/60	2/11		
neglect	principals and deputies	14/30	4/42	0/301	0/764
	teachers	14/13	5/04		
immobility	principals and deputies	17/46	5/24	-0/843	0/400
	teachers	17/05	6/20		
explosiveness	principals and deputies	14/15	3/86	-0/062	0/950
	teachers	14/18	3/63		
incompatibility	principals and deputies	10/38	4/29	-1/243	0/215
	teachers	11/06	4/75		
non-commitment	principals and deputies	13/60	5/34	0/632	0/528
	teachers	13/21	5/21		
impulse	principals and deputies	7/46	3/02	0/052	0/959
	teachers	7/44	2/66		
silence	principals and deputies	5/33	2/41	-0/860	0/390
	teachers	5/56	2/22		

The results of the present study showed no significant difference between organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers due to the significant level of $0.05 <$ (Table 3).

Conclusion

Organizational syndromes in schools play a negative role in the performance and effectiveness of schools and therefore the present study was conducted aimed to rank and compare organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers.

The study results showed that the organizational syndromes of narcissism, lack of communication, discrimination and politicking, group thinking, structural alienation, tension and distress, structural mastery, caution, pressure, terrorism, neglect, immobility, explosiveness, incompatibility, non-commitment, impulse and silence had a higher rank in Iranian schools. These results are consistent with the study results of Yadollahi and Yadollahi (2020), Amin Beidokhti et al. (2019), Sarchahani et al. (2018), Noori et al. (2018), Barani et al. (2017), Mohseni Tabrizi et al. (2010) and Newman (2012).

For explaining the first five syndromes including narcissism, lack of communication, discrimination and politicking, group thinking and structural alienation, it can be said that it is difficult to recognize those with narcissism syndrome. Because they hide behind superficial jokes and arrogant stories that adorn its image. Narcissists are calm and accountable in life and avoid any conflict in social requirements that diverts them from self-interest. Narcissists may want to quietly and calmly value teamwork, collaboration, and strategic management processes, but in fact they seek to meet their needs by focusing on self-aggrandizement. They are intensely self-interested and competitive and tend to see others as tools and exploit them. Lack of communication syndrome is defined when a person intentionally or inadvertently separates team members or their functions, and in this syndrome, the process of socialization and communication is associated with serious problems. In the syndrome of lack of communication, people in an organization do not have much contact with each other and monotony is one of its obvious characteristics. In such a school, the principal

does not see the need to talk to others about decisions, or even vice versa, the management is not very aware of the continuation of the work process, and the reason is that there is not adequate communication between the employees of a school. In the syndrome of discrimination and politicking, behaviors such as exploiting new members and intolerance of members of ethnic and sexual minorities are very common. In this syndrome, principals or other team members indulge to build relationships with clients, external stakeholders, and / or even competitors, ignoring internal relationships. In such an organization, the lack of justice causes people to not support the organization and politicking. In schools with this syndrome, there are groups or people who pursue their own interests exclusively, and those with different orientations may even work with them to secure the malicious interests of the organization. Group thinking, as another syndrome, is a way of thinking in which group members, under group pressure, become so oblivious that they refrain from realistic evaluations and believe in only one solution that the group wants, although it may be not be logical. Since there is no realistic evaluation of solutions in this school, a collective agreement without logic is enough. Structural alienation syndrome is rooted in many disorders of modern life, hierarchical structures and bureaucracy that have long been features of human society, especially organizations. Classical bureaucracy is a multi-layered hierarchy that is organized in order to divide the hard work and is governed by complex systems of rules and procedures. Sociology and industrial psychology focus on the inefficient consequences of bureaucracy rather than on its benefits, arguing that these processes separate people from the objectives of the organization, make social relations difficult and separate people, and have effects such as disruption in health, life satisfaction, life expectancy and human relationships and causes inconsistencies and abnormalities.

For explaining the second five syndromes, including tension and distress, structural mastery, caution, pressure and terrorism, it can be said that tension and distress syndrome is the result of the new age. What exists now is growing uncertainty in an environment in which organizations are constantly forced to adapt their structures and strategies to maintain their competitive position while reducing the social support resulting from the separation of people. Since organizations frequently change priorities, employees feel threatened in their job security, skills, and roles, and as a result, this erodes the strength of lasting relationships between employees. In the old industrial culture, working conditions may have been difficult, but they were united, and their stable intra-organizational working relationships led to lasting social relationships. But, today organizations strive to adapt to rapid and increasing change and stress of changes directly enter the school and negatively affect not only the principals but also other employees and increase their psychological pressure. Structural mastery syndrome of the class system is a kind of social system that is seen in organizational structures and in this system people cannot be promoted to other and higher ranks and benefits are distributed based on assigned maps. Some organizations also have an informal structure and system that is based on specific aspects of a person's social position or profession, and most people are aware of it but refuse to discuss it. This structural mastery is never reflected in the formal structure and school, but the collective behavior of the organization is often dominated by it, creating informal and invisible boundaries, raising hypocrisy and factionalism, and costing the organization its personal, social and political needs, in general, and lower-level employees, partially. Another syndrome is caution, which leads to a conservative, cryptic, protected and cautious style. Conservative principals are always waiting for worse situations and preparing people for these situations by focusing on the hidden message. They are defensive and can be oppositional at the same time. Principals do not have much trust in employees and teachers and believe that even confident words can cause danger and trouble. Their suspicious style allows employees to be closely monitored, and they have a closed style that restricts or prevents interactions. In this syndrome, information is managed centrally and selectively and accurately transmitted, which is detrimental to the long-term growth, innovation and prosperity of the school. Such principals are distrustful of creativity and innovation. They are more inclined to be familiar with things and fill their surroundings with yes-speakers who give them good news and reassure them that the situation is ideal. In the situation, pressure syndrome exists, the risk of misjudgment and poor judgment reaches its highest point when decision makers are more vulnerable to the illusion of control. Organizations whose complexity and pressure suppress oversight and uncontrolled biases distort the decision-making process are under pressure syndrome. The existence of a

general authoritarian ideology by the upper classes causes people to select the policy of resignation instead of pursuing objectives. In a school where such conditions exist, irrational pressures, prejudices and insurances are the cause of making inappropriate decisions. In the syndrome of terrorism, people try to achieve their objectives by exercising power and based on fear, psycho-social exclusion of others, spreading rumors and slander. Organizational terrorism requires the exercise of power, but at the same time has low self-esteem and technical knowledge and does not adhere to moral principles. These people can sometimes infect other members of the organization like a speckled apple, and in such schools, employees mistreat others in front of the school principal for position or job promotion.

Other results of this study showed no significant difference between organizational syndromes in Iranian schools according to the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers. These results were consistent with the results of Keshavarz et al. (2014). For explaining these results, it can be said that when investigating the opinion of principals, deputies and teachers about the shortcomings and weaknesses of the organization (the school), they had almost the same opinion, and perhaps if the opinion of these two groups was about the characteristics of one group, such as principals and deputies or teachers it may show differences. But, when investigating the characteristics of the organization in which they work, there is no difference between their perceptions of the various aspects of the syndromes. Because both groups have the necessary health, experience and expertise and a relatively high level of understanding, they understand the shortcomings and weaknesses as they really are. Therefore, it is logical that no significant difference was between the opinions of school principals, deputies and teachers of the same schools in organizational syndromes.

The most important limitation of this study was the limitation of the research population to principals, deputies and teachers in Isfahan and Yasuj, which makes it difficult to generalize the results to other cities. Another limitation was the lack of theoretical and research background on organizational syndromes and the lack of research on the education system or schools. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct this study from the perspective of parents and students, and repeat this study on other cities and compare the results with the results of the present study. Also, conducting further studies on organizational syndromes in Iranian schools and investigating this phenomenon from various angles, such as strategies to reduce syndromes can be a good research proposal for researchers in the future. According to the results of the present study and the negative role of syndromes in the decline of school performance, it is necessary to design and implement programs to reduce syndromes by improving intra-organizational and extra-organizational relationships and activities in Iranian schools. Therefore, officials and planners of the education system can take measures to reduce organizational syndromes in schools to improve the performance and effectiveness of schools and reduce syndromes. For this purpose, trained and experienced counselors and psychologists can be hired to reduce syndromes in the school, and in-service syndromology courses can be held for principals, deputies and teachers to deal with syndromes.

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