Organizational politics and human resource management: A typology and the Israeli experience

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a critical examination of the meaning of organizational politics (OP) for human resource management (HRM). We develop our discussion in three main sections. First, we explain the commonly negative image of OP and argue that it also has some positive dimensions useful for understanding HRM. Based on this rationale and on previous writings we present a balanced and non-judgmental approach towards politics in HRM. We extend the discussion to suggest a specific typology and model that, in our view, better explains the meaning of OP for HRM than current definitions. The model includes aspects of positive/constructive HRM, negative/destructive HRM, ineffective HRM and virtual HRM. Finally, we examine the implications of the model in the context of the changing Israeli cultural environment. This historical–cultural analysis pertains to similar global shifts and points to future HRM challenges in Israel and around the world.

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1. Introduction

For over four decades, managerial theory and practice have been preoccupied with issues related to power, influence, and politics in organizations. The politics of management and the management of politics in the workplace have received a great deal of attention due to their image of pervasiveness, mystery, and the potential benefits for those who know how to use them in the struggle over resources. Politics in organizations is thus used to promote interests and gain advantages over competitors in a market-oriented environment but also in non-market arenas such as the non-profit sector and governmental agencies. Even today, after many years of study, organizational politics (OP) enjoys popularity in academic research as well as in the discourse on practical management. Its significance for human resource management (HRM) is one of its least studied aspects, and awaits further theoretical exploration and understanding. In one of the early writings on the OP-HRM nexus, Ferris and King (1991:70) concluded that "for managers the most appropriate perspective would seem to be to develop a better understanding of politics and how it affects human resources decisions so that its dysfunctional consequences can be prevented". It is our intention to respond to this challenge theoretically, practically, and with the addition of an Israeli culture perspective.

Therefore, the goals of this paper are threefold: (1) to provide an up-to-date balanced discussion of OP in light of the history of the concept; (2) to suggest a basic typology for the integration of OP and HRM that can be used in future studies (3) to examine the application of this typology to the case of Israeli society. This closing section of the paper will focus on a cultural perspective; we will argue that the OP-HRM relationship is largely culture dependent and must be analyzed and interpreted as such. This cultural analysis will serve to demonstrate the usefulness of the typology for both theoretical and practical thinking in HRM.

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2. The origins of organizational politics: tactics, perceptions, and skills

Vigoda (2003) describes organizational politics as the unique domain of interpersonal relations in the workplace. Its main characteristics are the readiness of people to use power in their efforts to influence others and secure personal or collective interests or, alternatively, to avoid negative outcomes within the organization (Bozeman, Perrewe, Kacmar, Hochwarter, & Brymer, 1996). The wide variety of definitions of organizational politics suggests that the concept is in transition and under continuous debate (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006).

As we noted in the preface to our volume Handbook of Organizational Politics (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; ix), this concept has been the subject of much academic writing and research for more than three decades. As of today, around 200 studies that explore the mystery of political actions in the workplace have been published in professional academic forums. The theoretical foundations of this phenomenon were set down by studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Mayes & Allen, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). As interest in organizational politics grew, so did the variety of approaches to its study (Vigoda, 2003). Today, there are several approaches from both the academic and practical points of view: (1) studies on influence tactics, conflict, and actual political behavior in organizations (e.g., Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1979; Brass, 1984; Burns, 1961; Cheng, 1983; Erez & Rim, 1982; Izraeli, 1975, 1987; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Mintzberg, 1983; Putnam, 1995); (2) studies on the perceptions of organization politics (e.g., Ferris, Fedor, & King, 1994; Ferris, Frink, Bhawuk, & Zhou, 1996; Ferris, Harrell-Cook, & Dulebohn, 1998; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Vigoda, 2000, 2001, 2002; Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005); and (3) studies on political skills and political capacities of the self within the workplace (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007). The third approach extends the view of the first approach by dealing with tactics as aggregated "skills" that can be improved over time, mainly with experience and training. It also fits a Machiavellian analysis of a "prince" who must demonstrate good political skills in order to implement rules and policies. Whereas the first two aspects are traditional and well documented in the literature, concern with and interest in political skills have only recently emerged as a worthy addition to knowledge to this field.

3. Organizational politics in human resource management: good or bad?

As noted by Bacharach (2005), politics is an essential skill in managers who wish to get things done. The art of how to get them on your side is crucial at any rank and has human resource implications. However, even today most of the studies that deal with organizational politics suggest that it is a predominantly negative phenomenon (Vigoda, 2003).

Block (1988:5) states that "If I told you you were a very political person, you would take it either as an insult or at best as a mixed blessing". Kanter (1979:166) argues that the terms "power", "force" and "politics" together create a whole whose general context is far from positive: "Its connotations tend to be more negative than positive, and it has multiple meanings." Similarly, organizational politics is often linked with terms such as cunning, manipulation, subversion, mutual degradation or the achievement of goals in improper ways (Drory & Beaty, 1991; Ferris & King, 1991; Moorhead & Griffin, 1989). Mintzberg (1989:238) stresses that organizational politics reflect illegitimate force-relations between the organization's members. He contrasts organizational politics with "authority," (Mintzberg, 1989) which implies a legitimate force. The negative connotations of force and politics are well noted in the literature. Various studies have examined the harmful effects of political behavior on employees' performance levels (e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Kumar & Ghadially, 1989; Vigoda, 2003; Ferris et al., 1996). This behavior has negative aspects such as ingratiatory conduct (Liden & Mitchell, 1988), which lead to a rise in stress and pressure at work (Ferris et al, 1996; Frost and Egri, 1991; Matuszek, Nelson, & Quick, 1995), unfairness in evaluating employees' performance (Tziner, Latham, Price, & Haccoun, 1996), and the formation of negative attitudes towards work among employees with different statuses (Drory, 1993). The image arising from these studies corresponds largely to the perceptions of the organizations' members with regard to this phenomenon. A study conducted by Gandz and Murray (1980) found that employees usually consider organizational politics to be an unfair, evil, irrational and unhealthy behavior but at the same time as a necessary skill for those who want to get ahead and be promoted in the workplace. These findings were later supported by Voyer's (1994) study. Regarding HRM, Ferris and King (1991) found that the use of influence in the organization is positively related to the managers' positive attitude toward his/her employees (i.e., the more an employee uses influence in the organization, the more his/her performance is appreciated). They suggest that in essence, OP introduces a serious bias into HRM functions and potentially damages the selection, evaluation, and promotion processes.

Nonetheless, organizational politics also has some meaningful positive outcomes. Based on Gandz and Murray (1980) and Bacharach (2005), many of the organizations' members also believe that political behavior is necessary in many cases, especially if someone has an interest in advancing in the organization (promotion) and being acknowledged by his co-workers and employers as a good employee or as a talented manager. In fact, some aspects of "good" politics in leaders' behavior, in general managerial decisions and in human resource processes may lead to constructive outcomes for the employer, the employees and the organization as a whole. For example, Dipboye (1995: 55) argues that at times, "decision makers resort to political behavior in which they deconstruct HRM procedures" (i.e., staffing, appraisal, compensation, training) "to provide support, justice, and empowerment".

Indeed, a careful examination of the term "organizational politics" reveals that this phenomenon has a multitude of meanings, and one cannot categorically state that it necessarily expresses negative or harmful behavior. Political behavior is a natural, human activity that, like other motivation-based behaviors, serves personal and social purposes. Whetton and Cameron (1991) argue, for example, that politics and force are marks of a personal ability to change and contribute to the environment by using a variety of assets aimed at improving products at work. People who have force, power and influence can shape their environment according to their own will, while those who do not make use of these assets remain unsatisfied and ungratified (Putnam, 1995). May (1972)

strengthens a classic argument arising from studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, which maintains that organizational conflicts that involve the forceful aspect of organizational politics sometimes have positive and functional influence on the organization. Conflicts and politics create a balance between those who have power and those who lack it, improve the organization's flexibility and ability to deal with a changing environment, prevent stagnation of the organizational units, sometimes promote growth and rejuvenation, prevent group-thinking and enrich decision-making processes (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Pfeffer, 1981). Therefore, knowledge about conflict in organizations can be useful for better understanding organizational politics. Organizational politics is used in cases of disagreement amongst individuals and frequently, but not always, takes the shape of conflict. Finally, organizational politics is sometimes perceived as a legitimate fight response in times of crisis or when conflicts arise in the organization. Such conditions are usually characterized by the centralization of essential information and by flexibility with regard to methods of action (Hirschman, 1970; Ryan, 1989).

A balanced, value-free approach towards organizational politics is exemplified by Kumar and Ghadially (1989) who argue that while politics can harm the organization, the organization may also profit from it. Among the negative impacts, they note the risk of losing power and status, hostility from others, an internal feeling of guilt, and reduced performance levels. Among the positive impacts of organizational politics they mention career advancement, recognition and respect from others, enhancement of personal power, realization of personal and organizational goals, a feeling of achievement, nurturing of the ego, self-control and self-realization. Randolph (1985) also supports the claim that organizational politics has many positive aspects. In his view, it is an additional mechanism that members of the organization can utilize in the workplace to promote a variety of goals.

Therefore, when approaching an analysis of the human resource system in organizations it is important to try to balance the negative and the positive dimensions of organizational politics. This line of thinking is supported by Pfeffer (1992), who maintained that although nuclear, medical, biological or genetic knowledge may be put to harmful use, the existence of such knowledge cannot be impeded. One simply needs to learn its characteristics so as to make intelligent use of it and educate others to use it with caution. Recent support for this view was suggested by Fedor et al. (2008), who demonstrate how positive and negative organizational politics represent separate dimensions, rather than two poles of the same continuum, and may occur at the individual, group, or organizational levels. The existence of organizational politics cannot be prevented, and there will surely be those who will make evil and harmful use of it. Therefore, studies in HRM should attempt to define those conditions where the influence of organizational politics on various human resource phases (selection, staffing, training, promotion, appraisal, and so on) is negative, or, alternatively, positive.

4. A model of OP and HRM: ambiguity, skills, and readiness to use politics

Ferris and King (1991) argue that many of the problems associated with the traditional functions of the human resource system relate to ambiguity in the process of matching a person to the work environment. The HRM system is largely responsible for this matching during recruitment, job analysis, performance evaluation, training and promotion. When standards are clear and uncompromising, the likelihood of the development of ambiguity is low and OP becomes less dominant and less negatively influential in the process of human resource decisions. However, when standards for staff selection, promotion, or any other change in human roles and tasks are vague, those with greater power and influential assets can increase their involvement in processes and affect them with unprofessional, parochial, sectoral, or personal considerations.

Although the connection between politics and human resource management seems obvious, there is a lack of empirical studies on its meaning and implications. As far as we know, Ferris and King (1991) are among the handful of scholars who have suggested a relationship between HRM and organizational politics. Their perspective is depicted in Fig. 1, where the use of influence behavior
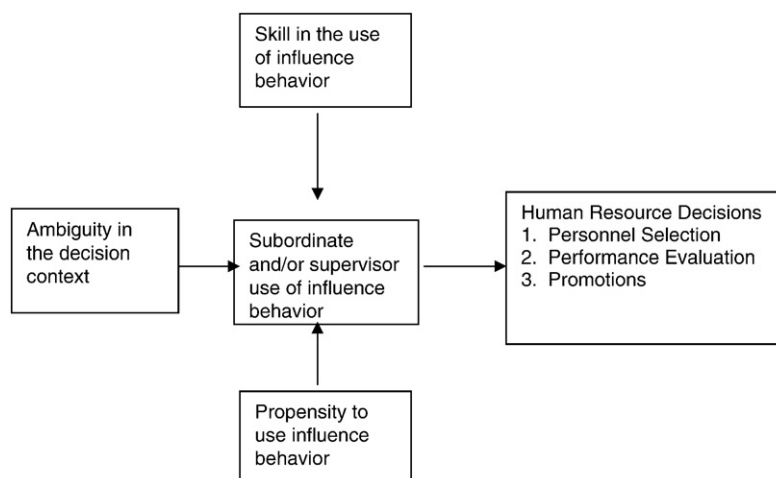
Fig. 1. Politics in human resources decisions.
Source: Ferris & King (1991; p.65).

(i.e., OP) is affected by three major factors: (1) skills in the use of influence behavior, (2) ambiguity in the decision context, and (3) propensity to use influence behavior. The major outcomes of the use of OP in human resource management should be considered in light of the trio of HRM functions: personnel selection, performance evaluation, and promotions.

Two major components of the Ferris and King (1991) model are political skills and use of influence behavior. Bacharach distinguishes between two types of political skills (elsewhere defined as tactics; e.g., Kipnis et al., 1980; Erez & Rim, 1982) that help individuals build coalitions and maintain them in the long run. Among the "positive" political skills are persuasion, rationality, exchange, and even assertiveness, ingratiation and impression management. The "negative" political skills include sanctions, cohesiveness, manipulations, and the use of upward appeals. In his view, positive politics appears where people know how to use positive influence behaviors and tactics, and try to avoid negative behaviors. Developing a set of positive political skills is crucial to creating an effective political environment and an organizational sphere that does not suffer from the harmful aftermaths of negative political tactics (i.e., injustice, unfairness, or inequity). Hence, it is possible that one of the major aspects of a useful HRM system is the high frequency of more "positive" political skills at the expense of the "negative" skills. An HRM system whose members use political skills that are legitimate and accepted by others may be superior in all respects (i.e., feeling of equity, fairness, willingness to invest effort and be involved in decisions, willingness to contribute time, energy and knowledge to individuals and to the organization as a whole) to other HRM systems whose culture is dominated by less accepted political skills.

Finally, the readiness (or propensity) of employees to use politics is another factor that may affect human resource decisions and HRM. Studies have suggested that the willingness to use politics in organizations results from personal, situational, and social constructs (see for example the various approaches presented in Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). People with certain personality types are more likely to use politics in the workplace. For example, those with Machiavellian orientations, those with a great need for power, or those who are highly competitive or motivated for success are more likely to be involved in organizational politics. Among the situational variables it was found that hierarchical level, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and participation in decision making are related to workplace politics. In addition, social factors also affect individuals' readiness to become involved in workplace politics. Such factors include the level of mutual trust and social support in the organization and the acceptance of politics as a legitimate way to get things done.

Based on the literature and rationality suggested thus far, we propose the following typology of HRM and politics in organizations. This typology classifies HRM profiles based on the political environment in the workplace and is very much in line with the framework suggested by Ferris and King (1991), with one addition: the inclusion of the type of interest that motivates the actor to be engaged in organizational politics.

The four types of HRM associated with the political sphere in organizations are: (1) positive/constructive HRM; (2) negative/destructive HRM; (3) ineffective HRM; and (4) virtual HRM (Fig. 2). They are a result of two factors: the level of organizational politics (high OP or low OP, as determined by skills, behaviors, propensity and ambiguity) and the actor's type of interest (organizational interest or self interest).

Positive/constructive HRM develops when decision makers focus on organizational interests and when organizational politics orientations are high. Perceptions of organizational politics (POPs) are at mid-level, as conflicts may arise due to disagreement on
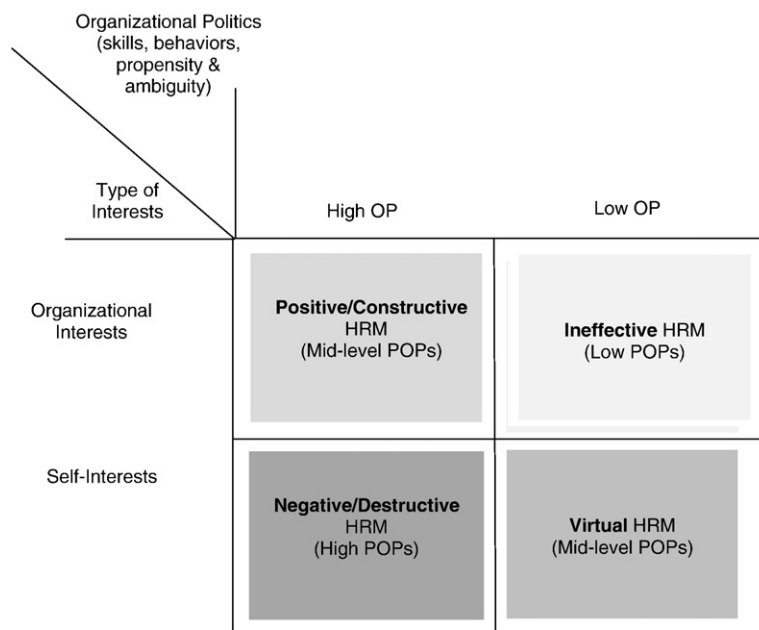

Fig. 2. Organizational politics, employees' interests, perceptions of politics, and HRM.

organizational interests. Some may see it as a legitimate conflict, while others may see it as less legitimate and more controversial. Moreover, this type of HRM is the result of the constructive use of power and influence in the human resource system. If "positive" political skills are used, the legitimacy of political behaviors increases even further, which again results in positive/constructive HRM. The goals are collective and viewed from the perspective of the common good for all organizational members as well as other organizational stakeholders. An example of positive/constructive HRM can be found in strategic HRM decisions (e.g., staffing positions or making a new benefit plan) where all parties are committed to securing organizational interests and goals. The final decision will be the one promoted by those parties who convince others better and support their ideas with strong arguments. The process of positive politics relies on the ability to rationalize and to build coalitions around ideas and alternatives that work for the common good, not for the personal interests of a few individuals.

Negative/destructive HRM develops when decision makers focus on self-interests and when organizational politics orientations are high. POPs are at a high level, as most employees will identify high organizational politics as serving the interests of only a few individuals while contradicting the general goals of the organization. If "negative" political skills are used, the legitimacy of political behaviors decreases even further, which again results in negative/destructive HRM. An example of negative/destructive HRM can be found when parties have high political capacities but use them to advance narrow individual interests. Such cases may include inadequate promotion strategies or biased performance appraisals that work in favor of only a few individuals instead of working for the interest of the entire organization.

Ineffective HRM develops when decision makers focus on organizational interests, but organizational politics orientations are low and disrupt the goal achievement process. POPs are at a low level, as politics is low and interests are organizational, and not self-focused. In this case, the significance of "negative" or "positive" political skills is irrelevant due to the low level of general OP. For example, when a senior HR manager is politically unskilled, any (good) decision that he/she makes will be irrelevant when competing with decisions made by other managers in the organization. This political "impotence" makes the entire HRM function negligent as regards overall organizational strategy. That is, staffing, training, and performance appraising mechanisms will have lower priorities for the organization and the potential influence of the HR manager will be minimized or diminished. However if, some political power can be acquired by these managers, positive/constructive HRM can be developed that promote the entire organization.

Virtual HRM develops when decision makers focus on self-interests and when organizational politics orientations are low and do not allow these interests to materialize. POPs are at mid-level as self-interests are involved and may produce an impression of unfairness or inequity. However, the actual level of organizational politics is low, which somewhat counterbalances these impressions. Again, the meaning of "negative" or "positive" political skills is irrelevant due to the low level of general OP. An example of virtual HRM can be found in cases where HR managers are focused on personal gains rather than on organizational achievement (e.g., promoting or insuring the welfare and prosperity of only a few others) but are politically unskilled in achieving these goals. If these individuals do acquire some political power negative/destructive HRM can be developed and damage the entire organization.

However, the implications of the above model cannot be fully examined without considering the cultural context within which the organization operates. We believe, therefore, that our typology of the OP-HRM relationship is not culture-free. It should be examined in a specific normative, symbolic, and cultural context since power, influence and politics in organizations are largely culture dependent. Thus, the third section of this paper presents a cultural-dependent analysis of the meaning of organizational politics for HRM in organizations, based on the Israeli case. As will be demonstrated, the Israeli case provides some insight into both negative and positive OP in HRM with some meaningful historical and economic implications that deserve careful consideration.

5. The contextual analysis: organizational politics and HRM in Israel

Vigoda (2003) provides a lengthy discussion of the relevance of cultural characteristics to the perception and practice of OP. Zaidman and Drory (2001) demonstrate how impression management behavior, one of the key tactics of OP, is affected by cultural differences. The cultural context of impression management was also discussed by Bond (1991), Pandey (1986), Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, Edwards, and Alderton (1994), and Aune and Aune (1994).

The proposed typology of OP-HRM relationship highlights two key factors that differentiate positive OP from negative OP. One factor is the level of political skills, and the other is whether such behavior is aimed to serve self-interests or organizational interests. While level of political skill is primarily an individual quality, the inclination to serve individual/personal versus collective/organizational interests may depend on social and cultural factors. Naturally, an individual will attempt to protect and further his or her self-interests. At the same time, socialization processes, social norms and expectations, as well as social and legal sanctions may play an important role in molding one's behavioral standards and practices. Such socio-cultural characteristics could lead to a strong identification with organizational goals and create an inclination to adopt the organizational interest perspective in a wide variety of situations.

More specifically, such an organizational orientation may be the result of at least two distinct sources. The first source is a sense of collective duty. This may be the case when societal values are strongly collectivistic and when there is a good measure of faith in institutions in general and in one's employer in particular. In such cases, there will be a strong predisposition on the part of the individual to identify with the needs and interests of the organization. In this situation, the organization's interests and one's self-interests often become similar or even indistinguishable. The second source is a self-centered long-term strategy based on the premise that working to promote the organizational interests will, in the long run, result in fulfilling one's self-interests. The logic

behind this strategy is that organizations tend to recognize and reward their members when they further the interests of the organization. Such rewards may take the form of promotion, salary increases and increased appreciation and esteem by peers and superiors. Obviously, this approach is only applicable when the psychological contract at work emphasizes long-term commitment on the part of both the employee and employer.

Hence, what are the key elements, at the national level, which could affect the nature of the organizational political culture? An examination of the Israeli case over time may offer some interesting insights into this question.

5.1. Organizational politics and the Israeli case: potential cultural, historical and economic moderators

Israeli society is unique in many respects. At the time of the country's birth in 1948, there were only 600,000 Jews living in Israel. Now, sixty years later, the Jewish population is nearly 5.5 million, representing 76% of the total population. Israel is essentially an immigrant society, the majority of whose population consists of first or second-generation immigrants representing almost every nation in the world. The major minority groups are Muslims 16%, Arab Christians 1.7%, other Christians 0.4%, Druze 1.6%, and unspecified 3.9%.

In this society, collectivism has always played an important role for several reasons, the first of which being the historical background of the Jewish heritage. As the only Jewish state, Israel is characterized by a society in which collectivism is a driving force. The forces promoting collectivism and long-term commitment to other Jews are rooted in ancient religious elements and in nearly 2000 years of life in the Diaspora. Jews have lived as an often-persecuted minority among other nations for more than two millennia. The existential risk posed by this situation has created a strong sense of shared identity and mutual responsibility among Jews. Jewish immigrants to Israel brought this long tradition of collectivism and strong commitment to their heritage as a people with them, and this has had a profound impact on their basic value system.

In addition to this ancient tradition of mutual responsibility, the development of Zionism and Israeli collectivism in the modern age greatly influenced the formation of Israeli society. The Zionist movement that led to the creation of the State of Israel was ideologically based on collectivistic ideas and strongly influenced by socialist, communist, and Marxist movements in Europe and Russia at the turn of the 20th century. Its ideology was highly collectivistic both philosophically and practically. The Kibbutz Movement, which spearheaded much of the early Jewish settlement in Israel, exemplified this collectivistic approach by practicing a form of total communal life. The pioneering spirit of this movement affected later developments in the young nation under construction. The first generation of immigrants, who, at the turn of the 20th century essentially laid the groundwork for the creation of the State of Israel, consisted of pioneers who put the interests of the collective ahead of their own and whose long-term vision encouraged them to dedicate their efforts to benefit future generations. This adherence to a long-term perspective was transmitted to the next generation and was prevalent at least until the mid 1970s. In the first generation of its existence as an independent state, Israel was ruled by an old-left/socialistic government, which continued to promote a highly collectivistic ideology through its regulatory and educational systems.

Another factor contributing to Israelis society's strong sense of collective responsibility is the Middle East conflict. The continuous threat to the welfare and even the existence of the state has also contributed to a strong sense of common destiny and collective responsibility. The centrality of collectivism as a national value is strongly supported by research. According to Hofstede (1991), in terms of work-related values, which have long become the standard for measuring collectivism versus individualism, Israel ranks high in collectivism (19th out of 49 countries). Other studies (e.g., Birenbaum-Carmeli, 2001; Earley, 1993; Porat, 2002; Sagy, Orr & Bar-On, 1999) further demonstrate this tendency, and support the notion that even in the current neo-individualistic global environment, strong elements of collectivism characterize Israeli society.

5.2. Recent changes in Israeli society and economy and their relation to OP

A full understanding of the changes in Israeli society and their potential effects on OP and HRM in this context should attend to major developments that have taken place in recent decades. Over the past three decades, Israel has undergone significant economic, industrial and cultural transformations. These developments have shifted public values considerably and may indirectly affect OP and HR practices. For example, Sagie and Weisberg (2001) maintain that in recent years, Israeli society has gone from being ascetic, collectivistic, closed, and relatively homogeneous, to being more materialistic, individualistic, open, and pluralistic. The impact of this trend on workplace practice is substantial. Instead of considering one's work as an obligation toward one's family or a contribution to society, it is widely perceived today as a means toward individual self-satisfaction and achievement of personal goals (Elizur & Sagie, 1999; Harpaz, 1999). Workers now place greater emphasis than they did in the past on values such as employee empowerment, participation in decision-making, job enrichment, and career development. In addition, Israeli work culture is witnessing a shift towards short-term orientations favoring immediate gratification and a lack of long-term organizational commitment. Several major factors have contributed to this shift:

(1) *A shift towards an open market economy*: The Israeli economy, in the first decades of its existence, was heavily controlled by the government and by the central labor union organization (the Histadrut) which owned nearly one third of Israel's industrial and financial institutions. In the last 25 years, in a gradual progression unrelated to ideological affiliations, successive governments have implemented important structural reforms that have sharpened market competition, dismantled monopolies and cartels, increased efficiency, and benefited the consumer. A great deal of entrepreneurial energy has been generated and high profits made in the business sector. Yet, at the same time, the gaps in Israeli society have widened; polarities have increased, communities and

whole social sectors have been neglected and left behind. Naturally, while the gross domestic product per capita and the standard of living have risen considerably, the value of collective social responsibility seems to have declined sharply.

One of the ways in which this decreased significance of collectivistic values can best be seen is in the decline in popularity of the kibbutz (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000). Kibbutz ideology requires the sharing of income roughly equally among members; managers' roles are rotated among members and key work decisions are made by the kibbutz's community-wide general assembly (Strauss, 1990). During the last three decades, however, there has been an erosion of the kibbutz's participative ideals. This transformation has led to privatization of shared facilities, and the introduction of a differential wage system instead of sharing of services. In some cases, professional managers and boards of directors have replaced the kibbutz members in making decisions (Topel, 1995).

(2) *The decline of the socialist ideology* that previously led the government to an over-involvement in the Israeli market has been replaced in the last two decades by a more dynamic and competitive market economy approach. As part of this trend, some state-owned and Histadrut-owned companies have been privatized. Concurrently, the decline of collectivism in Israel has had a decisive (negative) influence on the tendency of workers to join trade unions or to communicate with management through unions (Caspi, Weisberg, & Ben-Hador, 2000). A much sharper decrease in the unionization rate has occurred in the private sector than in the public sector. Most employees in public sector organizations are trade union members, compared to a minority of private sector employees. Thus, employees in the private sector are inclined today to adopt free market competition norms, including employment contracts with little protection from the trade unions. Thus the cultural atmosphere of individualism and privatization is apparently no less important than economic problems as a catalyst for the transformation of the kibbutz (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000).

(3) *The rise of the high-tech industry*: Another very significant development in Israel that has had an impact on work-related values is the rapid development of the Israeli high-tech industry. Over the last 20 years, Israel has become a world leader in developing and selling high technology. Today it is considered one of the most entrepreneurial countries in the world. It has the third largest concentration of start-ups in the world after the Silicon Valley and the Boston area and is ranked second to the US and first relative to its population. So far, however, Israel has not managed to establish any major hi-tech manufacturing corporations, and the nature of the industry is based on relatively early selling of IPs. Yet, about 75% of the growth of the Israeli GNP in recent years has come from the hi-tech industry. This development does not only represent an industrial success. It has been associated with a considerable cultural shift and changing work values. The start-up industry is by nature short-term oriented, emphasizing cutting-edge and rapidly changing technologies, short product life cycles and high employee turnover. In addition, there are often shortages of highly skilled employees, and companies find it necessary to offer excessive salaries and benefits to attract the necessary employees. This unique situation has created a culture emphasizing immediate gratification and a prevailing psychological contract assuming short-term and very restricted mutual commitment between the employee and the employer. The rise of this work-related culture coincided with similar global trends resulting from technological revolutions in electronic communications and the rapid growth of the internet, and is contributing to a growing short-term value orientation in the Israeli workforce. In such an environment, a short-term perspective and a drive for immediate gratification, both of which are highly typical of individualistic societies, are prevalent.

5.3. The implications of the Israeli case for OP and HRM

The model presented earlier suggests that OP can be either positive or negative, depending on whether the actor attempts to serve the organization or his own personal interest. As we have tried to demonstrate, historical and cultural processes may have a significant impact on the individual's predisposition towards the organization and eventually affect OP behavior. Our analysis of the Israeli case suggests that historically, social norms have tended strongly towards collectivistic attitudes and a long-term perspective of goal attainment. We therefore propose that during the first three decades of the State's existence, organizations experienced a relatively constructive political climate in which organizational political decisions were in line with collective organizational interests. More recently, however, as societal norms have become more individually oriented and focused on short-term gratification, we believe that many political behaviors in organizations will increasingly be aimed at maximizing short-term personal benefits rather than the good of the organization.

Although to date no strong empirical data are available to support this claim, some indirect indications suggest that this shift in norms is associated with negative organizational and political behavior. More specifically, there is some evidence of a decline in public trust and satisfaction with political and public institutions. During the last two decades, Israel has experienced some disconcerting signs of an increasing rate of political and public corruption and a concomitant strong public dissatisfaction with its institutions. Israel was recently ranked 33rd in the Transparency International 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index, lagging behind almost all major developed Western countries. A 2008 national survey published by the Israel Democracy Institute revealed a growing public mistrust in government institutions and strong anti-political feelings. Vigoda-Gadot and Mizrahi (2007), who have been following public attitudes towards public institutions in Israel since the early 2000s, further support this suggestion in their yearly surveys. In their 2007 survey they found continuing low public satisfaction and trust in government services and offices (Vigoda-Gadot & Mizrahi, 2007, 2008).

It must be noted, however, that some of these historical shifts in cultural values are not unique to the Israeli case. In our global world, they represent common trends experienced in many societies. Such trends pose new challenges to HR scholars and practitioners. As Sagie and Weisberg (2001) suggest, HR practitioners are now expected to assume new roles, adopt modern work values, and find more appropriate HRM strategies. In the management of organizational politics, the key challenge is how to

establish new links between the needs and desires of the individual and those of the organization in a culture that increasingly promotes individual self-gratification.

6. Summary

We believe that our typology of OP and HRM and analysis of the Israeli case and context can be useful in furthering an understanding of the link between intra-organizational dynamics and more general national and cultural developments. While OP has traditionally been perceived as a necessary evil in organizations, it is obvious that its full-scale development and understanding requires a much wider and more balanced perspective than has so far been put forward. As was suggested in the first two sections of this paper, organizational politics can be negative or positive, bad or good for organizations. In line with the third section, however, national culture, history, norms and values may have a strong influence on them. We believe that the culture-based analysis provides an opportunity to consider some of the relevant cultural, political and social influences that may determine the nature of OP in a particular culture and society. The proposed analysis via a collectivistic/individualistic lens and in light of the Israeli case exemplifies why politics in organizations is by no means one-dimensional. Scholars and practitioners should consider this point when developing new strategies of HRM and OP. Such an unconventional, open and ground-breaking way of thinking is the only way to ensure the safe navigation of modern organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, in turbulent times of world economic crises and in the rapid global transformations of cultures, nations, and businesses.

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