



ORIGINAL PAPER

A Phenomenology of Showcase Performance in Iranian Public Organizations

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Abstract:

Nowadays, more than presenting real performance, managers in public organizations are minding pretentious and demonstrative behaviors the continuity and prevalence of which lead to long-term irreparable damages. In management research and literature, such an issue is called “showcase performance” which is scientifically a new phenomenon about which there is a lack of understanding regarding its concept and dimensions. Therefore, the present study aims to conduct a phenomenology study about showcase performance in Iranian public organizations and to identify its dimensions. In terms of the purpose, the study is of applied-developmental type, and is mixed exploratory in design. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with elites were used, and theme analysis technique was applied, and confirmatory factor analysis was used in quantitative phase. In qualitative phase, 27 elite participants were selected through purposive sampling technique, and then interviewed until the theoretical saturation. Based on the results, for showcase performance, three dimensions of cognitive, communicative, and behavioral were established, and seven components were identified as well. In quantitative phase, a questionnaire was distributed among 108 participants including managers and elites in Iranian Ministry of Energy in order to test the research model. The data were then analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and Smart PLS. The results confirmed the identified dimensions and variables. Ultimately, the results of the study indicated that showcase performance in public organizations is a multifaceted and complicated phenomenon, and

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in order to manage it, cognitive, behavioral, and communicative aspects must be taken into account simultaneously.

Keywords: *showcase performance, phenomenology, public organizations, theme analysis.*

Introduction

Nowadays, performance of organizations, as a critical index in their survival, has been under discussions and investigations (Mohammadi&Sharifzadeh, 2017). Changes in work environment of organizations have a profound effect on the organization and its performance, and the organization ought to adapt and develop its mechanisms to survive (Caniels&Hatak, 2022). In Iranian public organizations, severe inefficiency is noticed in the field of organizational performance management policies (Mansoori, 2020), and despite the efforts that have been made, there hasn't been significant improvement in performance, responsiveness, transparency, and quality of services favorably (Aghapirooz, 2019). Moreover, a significant part of policies in public organizations aims at maximizing superficial aspects of the performance which may not help organizations reach sustainability in performance. In public sections, a large range of such policies is seen which is mainly dealing with execution of commands and exoneration of responsibility, and is less concentrated on the real performance aiming at satisfaction of stakeholders (Ghaderifar et al., 2021).

In the past few decades, the concept of performance has been put at the top of the public administration agenda, and has turned into a key goal. The most frequent and important changes in the last years have been concentrated on the concept of organizational performance and efficiency, where improvement of public section performance has been stated as the main goal (Rahnamud et al., 2016). On the other hand, high organizational performance is among the most remarkable components for managers and is defined as the ultimate goal of the organization (Garengo&Sardi, 2021). Unfortunately, hypocritical behaviors have expanded in organizational environments (Ağalday, 2022). In some public organizations, deviational demonstrative and showcase behaviors are increasing due to different reasons (Ashgarf& Amiri, 2018). Furthermore, lack of reliable and sufficient information, which results in digression in performance evaluation process, is one of the most distorting factors in performance evaluation and management in public organizations (Seidi&Sohrabi, 2015). At the present time, performance weakness of managers in public organizations is tangible, and has resulted in myriad of problems insofar as several managers are annually dismissed or castigated through hierarchies or customers (Khodavandpoor et al., 2020). Disqualification, incompetence, and immoral behaviors have spread among managers (Jafari et al., 2022).

One of the most crucial managerial damages is the emergent showcase management style. Showcase managers are those mainly following demonstrative behaviors and accordingly casting disruptive, negative, long-term effects over the people, organization, and society. The reason for such misbehaviors is the social and economic costs imposed on the organization (Salahipour&Ziaodini, 2022). Demonstration of showcase performance is introduced to be equal with deviated political behaviors such as hypocrisy, discord, pretending, flattery, exaggerating behaviors, and subservience (Ebrahimpour Ahandani et al, 2019). Discord of a manager mainly resembles the disagreement in his words and deeds (Ilsev& Aydin, 2021). Consequences of such deviant behaviors include organizational science, replication of hypocritical behaviors, increase in tendency to resignation, decrease in intrinsic motivation, lack of productivity, decline

of job satisfaction, cognitive heterogeneity, and increase in mental pressure for honest people (Hadavinezhad et al., 2013). However, if, in presentation of performance, the statistics are pretentious and demonstrative, negative effects will undoubtedly cast upon the aforementioned items, and inattention to presentation of performance results in demotivation (Ghorbani, 2018).

Moreover, with respect to the realization of defined goals in higher documents such as “the document of the Islamic-Iranian Model of Progress”, “principles of resistant economy”, “transformation of administrative system”, etc., the need for achieving real performance by governmental organizations is felt, and showcase management and other pretentious actions are opposed to realization of such goals. It is needed to maintain appropriate understanding of different aspects of showcase performance in order to overcome it and reduce the use of it among public managers. Furthermore, an investigation on the legal foundations and consideration of legal assignments for governmental bodies in order to establishment of performance management system intensifies the importance of the problem. Accordingly, chapter Eleven of Civil Service Management Act (articles 81, 82, and 83) and executive by-laws and instructions have all left very significant and heavy burden for executive bodies.

Showcase performance is one of the representations of political behaviors and deviant actions along with common discord among Iranian public organization managers. Managers of public organizations unfortunately think of showcase performance and superficial actions rather than real performance. Hence, developing a local and functional model for showcase performance is needed in order to identify and interpret different facets of the phenomenon. Therefore, doing the present study seems essential for public organizations in order to move toward real performance with the aim of realization of higher documents goals. On the other hand, realization of requirements such as meritocracy, development of human resources, talent management, succession, and the like in public organizations is impossible without considering real performance of managers and differentiating real performance from the superficial one. Simultaneously, results of research studies show that showcase performance is repeatedly seen in the performance of managers in Iranian Power Ministry, and real performance contradicts the statements and reports from managers. Hence, in order to make a distinction between talented and merited managers with real performance and hypocritical ones with flashy performance, and to move toward development and training of skillful managers and recruitment of them in important positions in public organizations, it is necessary to identify the concept of showcase performance and its different aspects. The results of the present study which is conducted to present an applied pattern for identification and prediction of showcase performance in employees can be utilized by public organizations which are after evaluation of performance specially and periodically. The main question of the study deals with the aspects and components of showcase performance in public organizations.

The Concept of Showcase Performance

The phrase showcase performance was first used in Ghorbani (2018) as an academic concept. In the study, showcase performance was introduced as a deviant and unfavorable behavior. Conceptually, showcase performance maintains semantic affinity with academic concepts such as “organizational policy”, “organizational discord”, “hypocrisy and two-facedness”, “rhetoric”, etc. Moreover, a number of supporting theories for showcase performance include Peter Principle, Machiavellianism, Natural

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Selection, Thirst for Dignity, McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, Toxic Leadership Theory, and Broken Windows Theory (Ghorbani, 2018). However, none of the theories completely explain the concept of showcase performance; the phenomenon is multifaceted and is beyond such theories.

With the arrival of new sciences, management styles have also undergone changes, among which is the arrival of showcase management which revolves around demonstration of performance rather than real performance (Salahipour & Ziaodini, 2022). Simply put, a common political behavior having become attractive for researchers is utilization of “showcase performance” by managers and employees in organizations. Showcase performance in organizations entails a kind of deviant behaviors in which managers and employees make a negative and disruptive impression on people, organization, and society through their demonstrative and superficial behaviors (Ghorbani, 2018); however, there is significant difference between showcase performance and hypocrisy, organizational discord, flattery, and exaggerating actions in positive and negative aspects of such behaviors. Hypocrisy and discord are considered as a negative deviant behavior whose consequences cannot bring about positive and favorable effects. Accordingly, and based on results from Ghorbani (2018) and Fouladi (2020), the level of showcase performance can be high or low. If showcase performance is considered as in two extremes of an axis, it can be maintained that different effects are posed upon the organization (Ghorbani, 2018).

Showcase performance style refers to a style of performance in which managers and employees in an organization pose disruptive, negative, and long-term effects on people, organization, and society through their demonstrative, superficial, and hypocritical behaviors (Fouladi et al., 2020). Showcase performance from subordinate employees and showcase management from the managers are seen. Such a style in performance or management revolves around demonstrating the performance rather than real performance and productivity. In other words, demonstrative indices and noticeable performance are extremely attended by the manager, and real performance indices are neglected (Ghorbani, 2018). Showcase managers solely rely on ornamentation of their performance window while employees and customers do not see any trace of improvement inside the organization, and due to the abandonment of the system, problems such as statistics manipulation, flattery, flatter-arousing behaviors, executive corruption, and nepotism rise (Fouladi et al., 2020).

It is believed by many that showcase performance arises negative effects on the organization; however, it can be proven wrong. Showcase performance may be constructive or disruptive in an organization. The level of showcase performance can be high or low. The favorable level is when showcase performance is utilized to present performance and activities of the organization in order to achieve the pre-determined goals (Ghorbani, 2018). Showcase performance and its benefits are provided in Table 1.

Level of showcase performance	Benefit for the person	Attributes of the Person	Type of showcase performance
Low	Low	It is considered that the person does not have the skill, commitment, and motivation, and does not show favorable performance at work.	Disruptive

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Favorable	High	The person is satisfied with himself, the organization, and circumstances, and can prove his skills and capabilities to other, and is hopeful for the future.	Constructive and optimal
High	Low	The person concentrates on demonstration of the performance rather than real one, is considered as a person who follows his own personal benefits, and as a flatterer.	Disruptive

Table 1: Types of showcase performance and its characteristics (Ghorbani, 2018)

The favorable level of showcase performance can hinder recession, indolence, and stagnancy in organization, and bring about positive favorable effects in the organization. For instance, and as an example of such behaviors, multiple agreements, meeting with famous figures, embellished interviews with media, photos with famous people and advanced venues, making managerial long-term promises, pleasing behaviors of employees and customers without organizational support, etc. can be considered. Negative consequences of showcase management can be nepotism, flattery-arising behaviors, statistics manipulation, superficiality, administrative and moral corruption, and wasting financial and human resources (Salahipour&Ziaodini, 2022).

Literature Review

Showcase performance and its related concepts are investigated in research studies. Salahipour&Ziaodini (2022) identified and ranked factors affecting the arrival of showcase management in Sarcheshmeh Copper Complex. Based on the results, the factors affecting the advent of showcase management include lack of strategic intelligence, lack of meritocratic system, and lack of effective performance evaluation system. Seifi et al. (2022) developed a rhetoric pattern for managers in public organizations. The results showed that managers use verbal tricks to justify themselves, cover up their imprudence, and deceive others. Moreover, public systems ought to prioritize meritocracy and avoid assigning inapt and inexperienced managers to overcome rhetorical actions. Results of the study conducted by Fouladi et al. (2020) suggested that the consequences of utilizing showcase performance style include decline in productivity and efficiency, increment of administrative corruption, decline of creativity and innovation, decrease in job satisfaction, decrease in job motivation, and decline in spirit of employees. Findings in Yousefiet al. (2019) showed that components of individual factors (except for narcissism), job-related factors (except for job feedback), organizational factors (except for concentration and size of organization), and environmental factors can predict managers' political skills. Ghorbani (2018) presented a conceptual framework for processing the theory of showcase management. The results indicated that the four factors affecting showcase management include authoritarianism, need for publicity, personality, and emotional possession. Findings in Zarghamifard&Danayifard (2016) pointed out that two themes including behavioral honesty (truthfulness, promise keeping, , and adaptation in speech and deed) and moral behavior (trying for gaining divine satisfaction, reliability, kindness, respecting others, justice, sense of commitment, and following rules and regulations) were considered as the main aspects of righteousness of managers.

Findings in Lu et al (2022) showed nine types of distinctive pretending on basis of social collaborative responsibility behaviors and collaborative hypocritical behaviors on basis of pre-event, in-event, and post-event. Shah &Surienty(2021) conducted a study in which it was shown that organizational policies are harmful to the organization since

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they pose obstacles for management rather than maintaining calmness for employees. Furthermore, having policies among managerial and non-managerial employees result in forming obstacles for an organization. Winkler et al. (2020) pointed out that for corporate social responsibility, rhetorical talks can grab attention of members of the organization. Nonetheless, insistence in the rhetoric forms and perpetuates tensions which bring up separation and disagreement. Wagner et al. (2020) identified three theoretical aspects for corporate discord perception including moral discord, behavioral discord, and discord documents. The perceptions result from two distinctive conceptual paths including deceptive methods of managers and incompatible behaviors, and lead cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions of stakeholders. Findings of Mishera et al. (2016) puts forward that consequences of workforce diversity (organizational level), conflict of relationship (work environment level), and need for power (individual level) have positive significant impacts on organizational policies.

All in all, despite the fact that “performance management”, “organizational discord”, “demonstration and discord of managers”, and “political and deviant behaviors of managers” have been studied in different research studies, the keyword “showcase performance” seems a brand new issue which seeks to introduce a common and complex concept along with integrating other related concepts and to reveal its unknown aspects. Hence, the present study can fill the present research gap and increase the knowledge about “showcase performance.” Showcase performance is a new subject to have only been studied in three research studies done by Salahipour & Ziaodini (2022), Ghorbani (2018), and Fouladi et al. (2019) where a conceptual framework and its consequences have been investigated shortly and on an item-based basis, and the three studies have been conducted following grounded theory which is utilized for less known subjects, and suggest lack of sufficient knowledge about the cause-and-effect factors and different aspects of the subject of showcase performance. After searching for English articles with the title of “showcase performance” and “showcase management,” no results were found by the researchers. Therefore, it seems a research study entitled as phenomenology of showcase performance in organizations can be innovative since in the available studies for the field of showcase performance, no complete conceptualization for the aspects and components of showcase performance has been done, and no comprehensive understanding is at hand. In the present study, identification of aspects and components in public organizations was sought, because of which the study can be considered as innovative. In the study, semi-structured interviews with elites were used, and the collected data were interpreted using theme analysis technique.

Methodology

The present study aimed at identifying and determining different aspects of the phenomenon of showcase performance in Iranian public organizations. The study is applied-developmental since it sought to increase knowledge and develop academic knowledge in the field of showcase performance in public organizations. Moreover, due to the fact that the results of the study will be used to improve the management conditions in public organizations, the study is applied in type. Furthermore, the study is mixed. In qualitative phase of the study, theme analysis was used, and in quantitative phase, confirmatory factor analysis was used. The approach of the study is exploratory since it sought to identify aspects of showcase performance about which limited knowledge and awareness is available, and the results of the study can increase the knowledge and enhance academic foundations in the field of showcase performance.

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In quantitative phase, and in order to develop research model, semi-structured interviews and theme analysis technique were used. For this purpose, ten academic elites and seventeen managers in public organizations who were selected through purposive sampling technique were interviewed. Accordingly, a protocol including interview information and developed questions was formed, and the interviews were then conducted. The interviews were continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. While holding Ph.D., academic elites were educated in different branches of management or other related fields, and were familiar with showcase performance. Executive elites held at least a Master's degree, with ten years of management experience in public organizations, and were familiar with academic discussions in management. After interviews and collecting the data, coding stages were fulfilled and components of research model were identified. After developing the model, validity of the study was assessed based on the criteria for investigating validity and reliability. The information for academic and executive elites are separately sorted in terms of position and education level in Table 2.

Position	Education
CEO assistant	Ph.D.
CEO assistant	Ph.D.
Deputy of HR & Research	M.A.
Organizing and Methods Improvement officer	Ph.D. Candidate
Strategic Management and Productivity Officer	M.A.
HR Planning & Education Officer	M.A.
Employees & Welfare Affairs Officer	M.A.
Mahdasht Water and Sewage Organization Manager	B.A.
IT Officer	M.A.
Organization, Education & HR Officer	Ph.D. Candidate
Budget & Economic Investigations Officer	B.A.
Consumption Management Officer	B.A.
Water Utilization Officer	M.A. Student
Sewage Utilization Officer	Ph.D.
Customer Services Officer	M.A.
Water Utilization & Development Deputy	Ph.D. Candidate
Karaj Water and Sewage Organization Manager	B.A.
Faculty Member in Management & Accounting Faculty, Islamic Azad University of Qods, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Accounting Faculty, Islamic Azad University of Karaj, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Accounting Faculty, Alame Tabatabai University, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Accounting Faculty, Tehran University, Iran	Ph.D.
Instructor in Management & Accounting Faculty, Islamic Azad University of Qods, Iran	Ph.D.
Instructor in Management & Accounting Faculty, Islamic Azad University of Karaj, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Economics, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran	Ph.D.

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Faculty Member in Management & Economics, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Economics, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran	Ph.D.
Faculty Member in Management & Accounting, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran	Ph.D.

Table 2: University and executive elites' characteristics based on responsibility and education

In quantitative phase, confirmatory factor analysis and Smart PLS were used to verify the validity of the developed model. The statistical sample for the validation of the research model were managers and experts of Iranian Power Ministry. At this level, the size of the sample was 150 of senior and middle-level managers of Iranian water and sewage companies who were active in human resources deputy. The size was calculated using Cochran formula, and the sample was selected using simple random sampling. The size of the calculated sample was 108. Validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by three elites after modifications. Moreover, the validity of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.829 through Cronbach's alpha, which was acceptable. The information of the sample is shown in Table 3.

Gender	
Male	81
Female	27
Education Degree	
B.A.	16
M.A.	65
Ph.D.	27
Work Experience	
10-20 years	39
20-30 years	59
More than 30 years	10
Age	
35-45	25
45-55	50
More than 55	33

Table 3: Characteristics of sample participants

Findings

The present study was done in two stages of theme analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. In order to analyze the data collected from the interviews, theme analysis technique was used. The technique is for determining, analyzing, and representing the themes inside the data. After the interviews, and at the first stage, the content of the interviews was meticulously investigated, and the codes were extracted. In the study, the method in Braun & Clarke (2006) was used for data analysis through theme analysis technique. Based on Braun & Clarke (2006), the process of theme analysis starts when the analyzer considers the patterns of meanings and topics which are potentially attractive. The analysis includes a continuous back-and-forth movement, coded summaries, and analysis of the data that are formed.

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In order to conduct the process of theme analysis, researchers first investigated the conducted interviews with the elites. The content of the interviews was listened to twice in a matter of twenty days in order for the points and content mentioned by the elites to be extracted. Moreover, where there was any ambiguity in the mentioned content, calls were made with people to ask for clarification. After taking notes from the content of the interview, the researcher investigated and went through the notes for multiple times until a full understanding over the content was achieved. A period of one month was spent for reviewing the interviews which was done in two stages by the researcher. Finally, all the notes mentioned by the elites were extracted. On the next level, after investigating and mastering the content of the interviews, the researchers started to identify the elementary codes. Code one introduced the characteristics of the data which seemed to be significant and attractive by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher extracted a code for each piece of information mentioned by the interviewees. On the next level, the codes which were extracted and had the same content were integrated and formed the aspects. On this level, researchers reinvestigated the findings related to the extracted themes, and the results of the coding were adapted with the results of theme identification and academic foundations. Furthermore, map of the theme was investigated proving an acceptable and favorable structure. Ultimately, after the themes were identified and categorization was validated, themes were labeled. The content of a number of the interviews is as follows:

Question 1: “In your opinion, how much difference is between real performance of public organizations and what stated by managers?”

Answer of Elite #1: *“We should accept that public managers do not have a firm position, and the fear of losing the position always exists. A number are ready to defame managers with only the smallest amount of weakness. Therefore, managers possibly try to provide a favorable demonstration of their performance and hide their negative points, and stand out the positive ones.”*

Answer of Elite #2: *“Some managers personally try to grow in any way and do not hesitate to present fake statistics and deceive others. Their personality is insatiable. Unfortunately, lack of a system for evaluation of favorable performance intensifies the problem, and hardens a true diagnosis and accuracy of statistics and figures presented by the managers.”*

Answer of Elite #3: *“In our country, managers are expected to make great changes in a matter of months, and solve the problems. Such an expectation cannot be fulfilled, and if a manager promises to solve the problems in three years, it won't be accepted, while if a manager promises the same for 100 days, he has more chance to be assigned as the manager. When a manager promises to solve the problems in short period of time, and improve performance, in most cases it is not possible. Managers have to turn to demonstration of performance and manipulation of statistics and figures. That's why managers demonstrate minor and trivial issues rather than basic solution to problems, and simple problems turn into crises in the future.”*

Answer of Elite #4: *“We see that the atmosphere and culture in public organizations have undergone great changes in recent years. Public organizations normally have unhealthy atmosphere, and defamation and selling out is common among employees. Managers are no exception as well. Hence, public organization managers are compelled to present acceptable performance.”*

Answer of Elite #5: *“Morality has faded away among managers of public organizations. At the beginning of Iranian Revolution, managers had concerns about*

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...serving people, and having personal benefits was not an issue; however, nowadays the condition has changed and for some, personal benefits are prioritized. Some of the managers shrink off their responsibility, and do not accept their weakness and deficiencies.”

Question 2: “What does showcase performance mean?”

Answer of Elite #1: “Showcase performance is more of demonstrating the performance beautifully and notably. This beautiful and notable demonstration is not accompanied with favor and quality, and is for covering up weak points. Therefore, showcase performance can be done to better demonstrate the performance, one which is not qualified and suitable.”

Answer of Elite #2: “Managers in public organizations spend most of their time in meetings. When they want to report about their performance, the meetings serve as their performance, and not the outcomes and results of the meetings. Another example of this behavior is the missions which waste the organizational resources. Among some managers of public organizations, real performance is forgotten and replaced with demonstrative activities and performance.”

Answer of Elite #3: “Some managers in public organizations who do not have real performance try to change the reports and statistics and figures related to their performance, and to show off themselves as a skillful and qualified manager. Mostly, these managers seem successful since there is no appropriate structure to evaluate their performance, and they try to manipulate performance criteria and generalize the reports in order to avoid responsibility. That’s why we sometimes see a weak manager has been able to go up the managerial hierarchy successfully.”

Answer of Elite #4: “Unreal statements and promises is common among some managers. They speak about their dreams and wishes exaggeratingly rather than their own performance. It is usual and common among them to promise without thinking about realizing them.”

Answer of Elite #5: “Information technology and social media has entangled public managers to themselves. However, it proves useful in cases since it provides continuous communication with customers and stakeholders; however, among some others, excessive use of social media is noticed, and they make statements about whatever incident and event which may be unrelated to their organization.”

Question #3: “In your opinion, what activities or statements represent showcase management?”

Answer of Elite #1: “One of the common behaviors among public managers is generalization instead of presenting details about their performance, and hence they cover up their weaknesses. For example, a manager may speak about having been able to decrease the expenses by five percent rather than giving details about the expense in the organizations and the resulting outcome.”

Answer of Elite #2: “When managers are pressed and do not have favorable annual performance, they may manipulate the reports and present figures and numbers such that the exacerbation of their financial performance. For instance, they bring the coming revenue of a future project in their current reports, or manipulate the figures and numbers. In some cases, the managers try to avoid unfavorable cases in performance in order for them not to grab attention.”

Answer of Elite #3: “One of the justifications of the managers about their performance is usually showing the past conditions as dark, and to assert they have had a good performance based on what they delivered at first. Clarification here is a must. In

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some cases, deficiencies and weaknesses are justified by external factors, and strong points are related to their own performance. There always are extrinsic factors due to disorders and instabilities.”

Answer of Elite #4: *“Demonstrative behaviors is common among managers. It is sometimes seen that managers of public organizations speak of their wishes and dreams instead of reporting what they have done and the outcomes, and report plans that are at the planning level, and no action has been taken toward them.”*

Answer of Elite #5: *“Promising is an action some of public managers do frequently. Despite the fact that the manager himself knows what he promises is impractical or he does not have sufficient resources, he does it for pleasing others.”*

After extracting and going through the content of conducted interviews, the codes were extracted. In the following, a number of texts and extracted codes for the concept of showcase performance are included in Table 4.

Interview Transcription	Code
Focusing on the data and positive figures in reporting	“Managers try to highlight positive information about their performance for showing off, and marginalize the negative information. For example, a manager may highlight a successful project, and marginalize the weaknesses and deficiencies.”
Manipulating the structure of statistical reports	“Some managers manipulate the structure of the reports around the standards and the traditional methods of reporting to decrease the negative statistics about their performance.”
Focusing on general statistics instead of the details	“One of the common behaviors among public managers is stating general points instead of the details, and hence cover up the weaknesses. For example, a manager may declare a five percent decrease at the expenses, and digress from the details.”
Presenting reports from undone projects (or solely declared)	“It is seen that public organization managers, instead of presenting reports for what they have done and the coming outcomes, speak of their wishes and provide reports from plans which are only proposed, and no activity has been done for.
Data manipulation and making false documents in presenting performance	“Some public managers provide unreal documents and results to cover up their unfavorable performance. A spate of corruptive actions is related to making false documents.”
Changing financial reports	“Some managers are pressed and have unfavorable financial performance, and they may manipulate the reports and change the figures and numbers to cover the bad situation. For example, the revenue for a project may be obtained in a few months, yet is included in the present reports.”
Hiding negative performance information in reports	“Managers try not to report unfavorable cases of performance, or marginalize them so that they don’t grab any attention.”
Making unreal promises	“Promising is an action some managers do while they know it is not practical, or there is not adequate resource for it. It is done for pleasing others.”
Exaggerating and overstating perspectives and future	“Managers usually exaggerate about the coming future. There may be a tendency on behalf of the audience as well since they prefer boastful managers.”

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Time manipulation	“Playing with time and postponing things to a later time (e.g. two year later) is one of the ways to evade.
Projection (relating problems to external factors)	“It is seen among managers that they deficiencies and lacks are related to external factors, and strong points to their own performance. There are always external excuses for disorganizations and instabilities.”
Denigrating the past and performance of former managers	“One of the justifications of managers about their own performance is usually denigrate the past conditions and performance of former managers, and state they have good performance taking into account what they have been delivered. Transparency works at these cases.”
Doing multiple interviews with media	“Iranian managers tend to be in media, and be depicted on newspapers and media. Interviews are required; however, excessive interviews bring about negative consequences.”
Multiple agreements	“In every public organization, a number of agreements with organizations and institutions are seen, and they have not yet practically executed. It seems signing agreements is considered as an act of performance, not as an outcome.”
Multiple, fruitless work trips	“Unjustified viewing and trips are among the activities public managers tend to because of the publicity depiction and financial resources.”
Active participation in conferences	“Professional and managerial conferences are among the activities in which public managers actively participate. With respect to the higher educational degrees of managers and the tendency to seem academic and knowledgeable, they incline to such activities.”
Meeting famous people (politicians, entrepreneurs, actors, athletes, etc.)	“It is occasionally seen that public managers meet with a famous athlete and actors or takes photos with them in order for them to be depicted in media extensively.”
Meeting and communicating with other managers	“Communicating with influential managers is among the things managers try to do to show themselves and appear among high level successful managers.”
Meeting and cooperating with popular and social institutions and activists	“Managers try to develop their communication with social institutions to appear as servants who pay attention to important issues of society. Most of the meetings are limited to some photos or very limited supports, and don’t help solve problems of people.”

Table 4: A number of interview content examples and extracted codes for the concept of showcase performance

After extracting the primary codes, the codes with common or approximating concepts were integrated, and themes were formed. The results of theme analysis related to showcase performance are provided in the table. As it can be seen, showcase performance involves cognitive, communicative, and behavioral dimensions. In the present study three organizing themes and seven basic themes were identified for showcase performance. The results for theme analysis about showcase performance are included in Table 5.

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Comprehensive themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes	Codes
Showcase performance	Cognitive dimension	Statistics manipulation	Focusing on data and positive figures in reporting, manipulating the structure of statistical reports, focusing on general statistics instead of details, focusing on short-term and intermittent performance (instead of long-term performance)
		Information distortion	Intentional change in negative data about performance, manipulation and false documentation in presenting the performance, manipulating financial reports, presenting reports about undone projects
		Information concealment	Hiding information about negative performance in reports, dismissing documents
	Communicative dimension	Demonstrative statements	Unreal promises, exaggerating and overstating about the future and perspectives, time manipulation, purposive statements to stimulate others, dishonesty in speech, projection (relating problems to external factors), denigrating the past and performance of former managers
		Extensive media performance	Doing multiple interviews with media, statements about issues unrelated to the organization (political, social, cultural, etc.), extensive participation in social media.
	Cognitive dimension	Superficial activities	Multiple agreements, multiple daily meetings with employees, multiple fruitless trips, active attendance in conferences, national and international academic gatherings, excessive expenses, emphasizing rituals in every field
		Demonstrative relations	Meeting famous people (politicians, entrepreneurs, actors, athletes, etc.), excessive meeting and relationship with other out-of-organization managers, multiple meetings with professors and university managers, meeting and cooperating with popular and social institutions and activists

Table 5: Results of showcase performance theme analysis

Based on the findings, three dimensions including cognitive, communicative, and cognitive were identified for showcase performance. Moreover, the thematic network for showcase performance in public organizations is provided in Figure 1.

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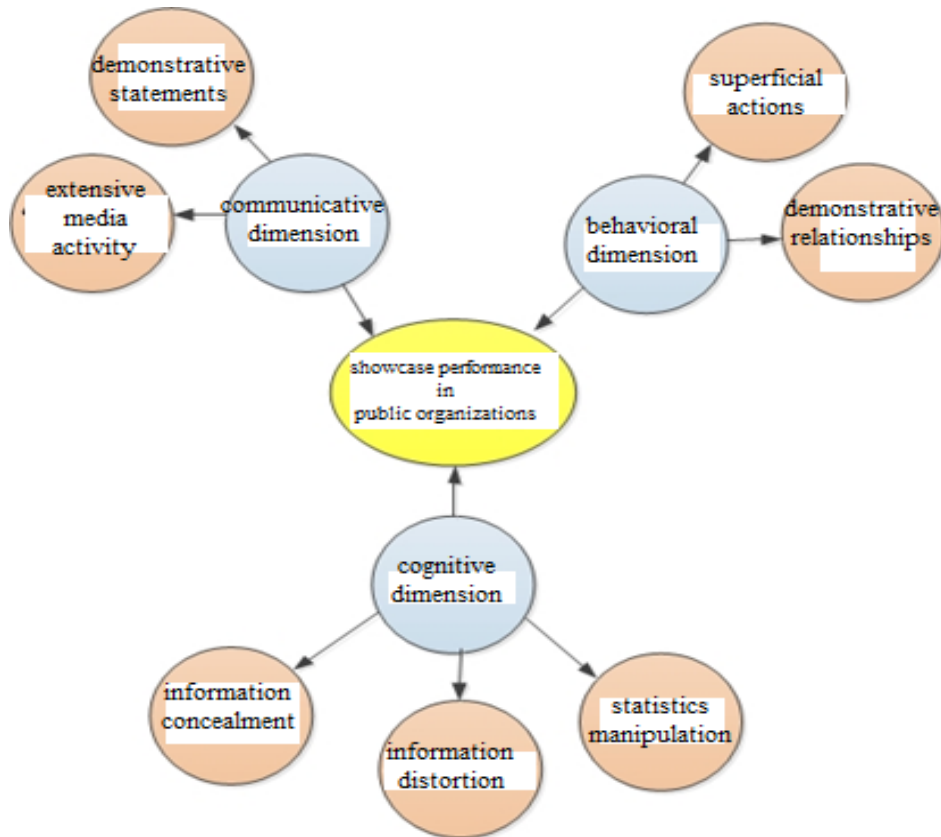


Figure 1: Thematic network for showcase performance in public organizations

After the theme analysis, the validity of qualitative phase based on validity and reliability was investigated. Merriam (2009) defines internal validity as the adaptability of research findings with realities. In the present study, and based on Merriam (2009), the researcher utilized triangulation, member checks, and bias avoidance. For this purpose, the results of theme analysis were investigated by three elite participants, and were confirmed. The results were adapted with reports from public organizations. Moreover, the researcher tried to reserve any presumption and attitude before the interviews, and only follow research procedure. At the interviews, researcher only posed the questions and avoided any personal statement and attitude in order not to direct the comments of elites.

Furthermore, Mohaghar & Sadeghimoghadam (2011) used a combination of criteria utilized in interpretive research evaluation for evaluating the reliability of data and interpretations, all of which were used in the present study to assess adequacy requirement of research procedure. The results are presented in table 6.

No.	Criterion	Concept of the Criterion
1	Reliability	A scale which shows to what extent the results of the study represent the data.

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2	Transferability	A scale which shows the extent of utilizing the research findings in similar situations.
3	Dependability	A scale which shows specificity of findings to time and place.
4	Verifiability	A scale which shows the extent to which the analysis is resulted from interviewees, and not affected by researcher bias.
5	Integrity	A scale which shows interpretations are not affected by false information or digression of interviewees.

Table 6: Results for assessing goodness of fit for the research
(Mohaghar&Sadeghimoghadam, 2011)

Reliability is referred to as data durability during different time lengths and conditions. Reliability of the interviews are deeply affected by the coding procedure, and the high percentage of agreement in coding shows the high or low reliability of interviews. In order to investigate the reliability of the research findings, Raw Percent Agreement or Crude Association was used which is consistent with Test-retest method was used based on the following formula:

$$PAO = 2M / (n_1 + n_2)$$

PAO: Percentage of Agreement Observation (reliability coefficient)

M: Number of agreements in two coding stages

n₁: Number of coded units on first stage

n₂: Number of coded units on second stage

In the present study, four out of all interviews were chosen as samples, and each were coded over a period of twenty days for twice by the researcher. Determined codes for each interview were individually compared. In each interview, similar codes were labelled as “agreement” and dissimilar codes as “disagreement.” Reliability of the findings is included in Table 7.

Interview	Number of codes on first stage	Number of codes on second stage	Number of agreements	Number of disagreements	Reliability percentage
1	13	15	3	3	85
2	12	14	2	2	92
3	10	13	4	4	78
4	9	10	2	2	84
Total	11	13	2.75	2.75	85

As can be seen in the table, average of codes on first stage second stage, agreements, and disagreements were respectively 11, 13, 10.25, and 2.75, and total reliability was 85%, and with respect to the fact that the percentage was above 70, the reliability was confirmed.

Results for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Showcase Performance

After conducting theme analysis, in order to determine the validity of showcase performance, 108 participants from managers and elites of Water and Sewage Organization were selected and questionnaires were used. The data from confirmatory factor analysis were analyzed for identified dimensions of showcase performance. In confirmatory factor analysis, the researcher aims at confirming a structural framework

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beforehand, which means he determines the relationship of each factor with a specific subcategory of variables or questions, and then tries to confirm them. After forming the model, multiple methods exist for estimating goodness of fit of the model with the data. Primarily, in order to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, it should be fulfilled that the samples have the essential adequacy. In order to validate sampling adequacy, Bartlett's test was used and KMO was calculated. The results of investigating sampling adequacy are provided in Table 8. As it is shown, KMO was more than 0.6, close to 1, and level of significance of Bartlett's test was less than 0.05, which showed confirmatory factor analysis was suitable for the structure and factor model.

KMO Test		0.824
Bartlett's test	X ²	954.230
	Degree of freedom	25
	Level of Significance	0.000

Table 8: Bartlett's test and KMO Test

After confirming the adequacy of sample size, reliability and validity must be investigated. In order to investigate reliability, Cronbach's alpha and compositional reliability were calculated, and the calculated values are provided in Table 9 for model latent structures. The values of reliability are acceptable if above 0.7. As can be seen in Table 9, all model structures enjoy appropriate Cronbach's alpha and compositional reliability.

Reliability	Cognitive Dimension	Communicative Dimension	Behavioral Dimension
Cronbach's alpha	0.85	0.82	0.80
compositional reliability	0.88	0.84	0.82

Table 9: Values of Cronbach's alpha and compositional reliability

Moreover, the values related to validity were calculated for convergent and divergent validity. AVE is an index of convergent validity which shows the average of pooled variance between each structure and its indices. Simply put, AVE shows the level of correlation of a structure with its indices. The more the correlation, the more the goodness of fit. Fornell&Larcker (1981) presented AVE for estimating convergent validity, and stated that value of more than 0.5 for AVE suggests acceptable convergent validity. As can be seen in Table 10, value of AVE is more than 0.5 for all model structures, and convergent validity of all the structures are suitable.

Variables	AVE
Cognitive Dimension	0.75
Communicative Dimension	0.70
Behavioral Dimension	0.68

Table 10: AVE values

Diagnostic validity shows detailed correlation between indices of a structure and indices of other structures. For this purpose, the square root of explained variance values for each structure must be more than the value of correlation of the same structure with

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other ones. Fornell&Larcker (1981) stated that divergent validity is accepted when AVE for each structure is more than pooled variance of the structure and other structures in the model (square value of correlation coefficients among structures). In Table 11, diagnostic validity assessment matrices are presented.

Dimensions	Cognitive	Communicative	Behavioral
Cognitive	0.830		
Communicative	0.316	0.813	
Behavioral	0.339	0.414	0.855

Table 11: Matrix for diagnostic reliability measurement

As can be seen in the above table, for diagnostic validity, the results showed that square of calculated correlation coefficients for latent variables in pairs is less than the value of AVE average for each of the latent variables. Therefore, the research enjoys suitable diagnostic validity, and each category of components related to different latent variables (dimensions of showcase performance) independently measure a different subject. For goodness of fit for the research model, seven goodness of fit indices for latent variables were calculated which are presented in Table 12. As it is noted in Table 12, the indices are acceptable.

	Cognitive	Communicative	Behavioral	Suitable value
df /χ^2	3.76	2.31	4.01	Less than 5
RMSEA	0.05	0.04	0.04	Less than 0.08
Average of remainders	0.05	0.09	0.16	Near 0
GFI	0.87	0.89	0.90	Near 1
CFI values	0.95	0.93	0.91	More than 0.9
NFI values	0.90	0.88	0.86	More than 0.8
NNFI values	0.95	0.93	0.91	More than 0.9

Table 12: Goodness of fit indices

Ultimately, the hypotheses related to the model of factor analysis were confirmed. The most primary criterion for assessing the relationship among the structures in confirmatory factor analysis is the significance value of t. If the value of t is out of [-1.96-+1.96], the level of significance equals 95%, and if the calculated value of t is in the interval, the coefficient of the estimated path is not significant, and the hypothesis is rejected. In Figure 2, the calculated value of t for all the variables was more than 1.96. Hence, the relationship between variables and the main variable is significant, and the variables are suitable indicators of the main variable.

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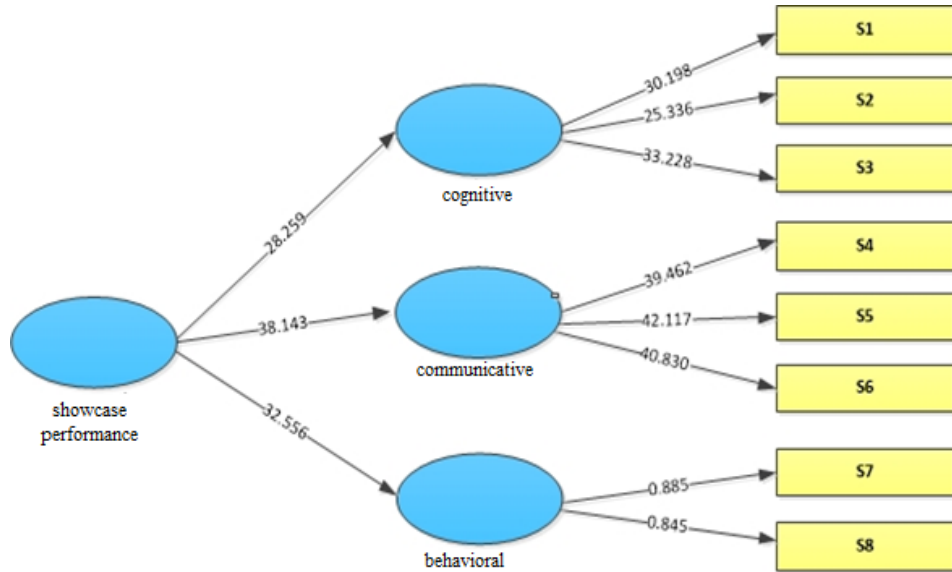


Figure 2: Fitted measurement model of showcase performance or Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Significant level

Moreover, in factor loadings standard estimation conditions, the more the value of factor loading and the more it approaches 1, the more the observed variable can elaborate on the latent variable. If the factor loading is less than 0.4, the relationship is referred to as weak, and is left aside. As can be seen in Figure 3, the factor loading of all questions is more than 0.5. Thus, indices are appropriately elaborative for the main variable.

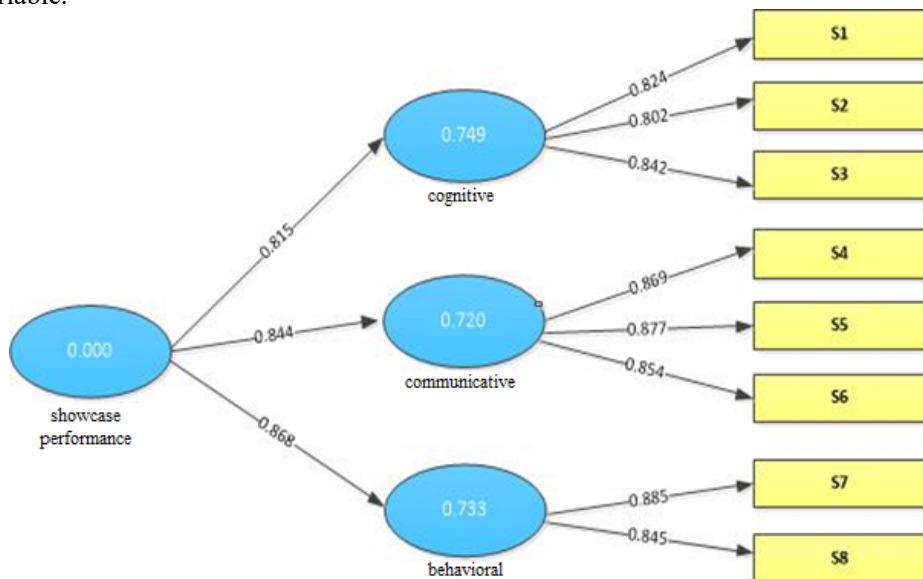


Figure 3: measurement model for goodness of fit for showcase performance using confirmatory factor analysis in standard estimation conditions

Discussion

Nowadays, public organizations in Iran need to present real performance in the interest of their different stakeholders. However, it is unfortunately seen that public managers tend to demonstrate the performance and a favorable picture of it which is at times far from the reality. Showcase performance is a concept which refers to such demonstrations in presenting the performance. On the other hand, showcase performance can have positive aspects as well; however, with respect to the fact that the negative aspect is more dominant in Iranian public organizations, a model for showcase performance in public organizations was provided taking into account its negative side and conceptualizing showcase performance. Taking into account the limitations of the conducted studies about showcase performance, the results of the present study can prove important in terms of conceptualizing and determining dimensions of showcase performance insofar as the dimensions of the phenomenon were not attended in other studies, and in the present study, a specific and measureable concept for showcase performance was presented in terms of cognitive, communicative, and behavioral dimensions. In the following, different dimensions of showcase performance are investigated.

Cognitive Dimension of Showcase Performance

Cognitive performance refers to the attempt to provide the statistics and information in order to maintain positive and favorable awareness and knowledge about the performance of organization among stakeholders, and to hide negative aspects of the performance. Statistics manipulation, information distortion, and information concealment are representations of cognitive dimension of showcase performance. Statistics manipulation is a familiar and widely-used concept in Iranian public organizations. This can be maintained in the reports published occasionally by public managers. In order to show responsible in the public eye and higher managers and to appear successful, managers try statistics manipulation. On the other hand, since there is no specific and standard for reporting performance of managers, they focus on strong points. In statistics manipulation, managers try to present positive points to stakeholders in statistics and figures. Hence, they try to provide general issues, short-term activities reports, and to present the structures and figures in a way that they are not questioned, and a favorable performance of organization is depicted.

Information distortion is wider than statistics manipulation, and deception and fraud are dominant. In this category, data are manipulated, and statistics and figures are changed to make the performance appear favorable. Statistics manipulation was more focused on reporting method; however, it is accompanied with manipulation and fraud. A manager who tries to appear successful through changing reporting method, manipulates the information to change the indices. For example, he manipulates the expenses or revenue to achieve profiting or the least loss. The findings of the study prove themes such as intentional change in negative data of performance, data manipulation and document manipulation in performance, manipulating financial reports, and presenting undone projects for information distortion. Moreover, showcase performance happens at times with information concealment. In this case, the manager tries to hide unfavorable performance in some activities or projects, and tries to conceal the related statistics. In information distortion, the managers manipulate or change the data and statistics to hide the weaknesses. Hence, they try information distortion through document manipulation, data changing, and presenting undone projects. Based on the findings, themes such as

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concealing information related to negative performance in reports, destroying documents and reports for information distortion were identified.

Communicative Dimension of Showcase Performance

Communicative dimension of showcase performance primarily happens through statements of managers and people in organization and through public and virtual media. In communicative dimension, managers and employees of the organization try to show positive news about the organization through bias and demonstration. Communicative aspect is represented through demonstrative statements and extensive media activity. In such statements, managers try to state in a way to show their performance positive and to show a favorable and promising future for the organization. As their name suggests, demonstrative statements, indicates that the manager tries to maintain positive and favorable attitude about the organization and its future through speeches, meetings, public congregations, etc. The level of reality and achievability of the statements doesn't seem significant; the manager tends to maintain positive attitude of the audience. Nonetheless, the managers are not questioned or held credible for their statements, and are always able to justify their statements, and such issues highly affect demonstrative statements among managers. The findings of the study showed that themes of demonstrative statements include unreal promises, exaggeration in future plans and perspectives, time manipulation, purposive statements to stimulate others, dishonesty in speech, projection (relating problems to external factors), and denigration of the past and performance of former managers.

On the other hand, managers try to always be seen by stakeholders in virtual and real social media, and to publish favorable news and information about the organizations. In order to fulfill a personal private brand, they present the media from time to time, and the tendency to do so is stronger and wider among some managers, and at times the media activity becomes unacceptably excessive. However, development of social media affects vastly the expansion of media activity of managers. While the media activity was limited to press and newspapers, activity on Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc. includes most of media activity of managers nowadays. In the present study, themes such as multiple interviews with media, unrelated statements to the organization (political, social, cultural issues), and extensive presence in social media were identified for extensive media activity. It is seen in some managers that they take positions about issues that are unrelated to the activities of the organizations, and they try to appear concerned about current issues. On the other hand, it is also seen that they try to continuously keep in touch with different stakeholders through social media, and depict their favorable performance by daily reports. Totally, normal media activity is acceptable and needed for providing a positive image of the organization; however, in some cases, the activity is used to deceive the audience, which leads to multiple problems.

Behavioral Dimension of Showcase Performance

Ultimately, behavioral dimension of showcase performance deals with activities, behaviors and relationships of managers which suggest they are notable people and they have huge volume of work and meetings. Behavioral dimension includes superficial activities and demonstrative relationships. Superficial activities include those where a manager shows hard-working, active, and outstanding, and has higher level than others. Managers with unfavorable performance usually try to hide their deficiencies by superficial actions. Multiple meetings, work trips, agreements, and extravagance in expenses are among the representations of superficial actions. Moreover, a manager, through demonstrative relationships, tries to make connections with famous people,

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university professors, highly ranked managers, politicians, etc., to appear important. In other words, in demonstrative relations, the managers try to promote their credibility and brand and their organization through the people or organizations they have relations with. In superficial actions, managers try to show themselves active and able by attending different meetings and conferences. In this study, themes such as multiple agreements, multiple daily meetings with employees, multiple and fruitless work trips, attending conferences, national and international academic meetings, high expenses, and emphasizing rituals in all fields were identified for superficial actions.

Demonstrative relations are another representation of showcase performance in public organizations. Public managers are highly interested in appearing beside famous and outstanding people, and to appear more in the eye of the audience through utilizing other people's credibility and face. Themes related to demonstrative relations include meeting famous people (politicians, entrepreneurs, artists, athletes, etc.), meeting and connecting with other outer managers, multiple meetings with professors and university managers, and meeting and cooperating with popular and social institutions and activists. Meeting with famous people who are popular and well-accepted by the society leads to the managers' being known and famous. Furthermore, meeting social institutions and activists, especially those related to organization activities, promotes the brand of the manager. Additionally, meeting notable university professors and managers can indicate academic level and influence rate of managers, and hence be attractive to them. Overall, demonstrative relations, while seeming communicative, are more behavioral, and improve professional and social brand of managers.

All in all, it should be noted that showcase performance is noticeably seen among managers of public organizations. It is a multifaceted phenomenon which includes cognitive, communicative, and behavioral dimensions. On the other hand, it is affected by a number of managerial, organizational, and outer-organizational forces. The findings of the present study are in line with those of Ghorbani (2018) and Fouladi et al. (2020); however, the study was able to fill a number of academic gaps in the field of conceptualizing showcase performance and identifying its dimensions, and provide a basis for conducting future research studies.

Conclusion

Showcase performance is prevalent in public organizations, and its negative aspects are primarily seen. In the present study, the identified components cover its negative aspects. It should be born in mind that managers mostly use a combination of cognitive, communicative, and behavioral dimensions of showcase performance, and the present study aimed to conduct a basic phenomenology for these issues. However, showcase performance enjoys positive aspects which can promote brand, credibility, and legitimacy of an organization. In the study, negative aspects were mostly investigated since they are more prevailing in public organizations. In the end, the results of the study indicated that showcase performance in public organizations is a multifaceted, complex phenomenon, and includes cognitive, communicative, and behavioral dimensions.

Besides developing knowledge and academic basis in the field of showcase performance, the present study provided a better understanding of the phenomenon in public organizations and academic and applied basis for managing it. Professors, researchers, and students are able to utilize the findings and results for conducting academic research in the field of showcase performance. Along with adding to knowledge of behavioral studies and managing political behaviors and organizational discord, the results of the study can form a basis for conducting extensive studies about showcase

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performance for private and non-profit organizations among professors, students, and researchers of organizational sciences. It is recommended for future research studies to investigate the effect of showcase performance as a variable on the other organizational variables, and to study the strategies for overcoming showcase performance in public organizations. Ultimately, for academic foundations, it is recommended that researchers investigate positive dimensions of showcase performance in future research for promoting organizational brand. Moreover, the main limitation of the study was generalizability of the results and findings only for public organizations, and not other ones.

Recommendations

In the following, practical recommendations are included.

A. Practical recommendations in managerial dimension

- It is recommended that public managers be chosen based on their qualifications and capabilities, and meritocracy be ruled among them. Meritocracy definitely lessens the need for showcase performance among managers.

- It is recommended to conduct needs analysis about managers' training in public organizations, and theoretical and practical training must be fulfilled periodically and continuously.

- It is recommended to promote trustworthiness and social equity among people in public organizations, especially trust among managers and employees.

B. Practical recommendations in organizational dimension

- It is recommended that in public organizations, strategies and organizational goals be set and considered as the basis for reporting the performance. Moreover, the rate of realization of defined goals should be the basis for evaluation and decision-making regarding promotion of managers.

- It is recommended that performance evaluation system for managers should be set based on objective and transparent indices and be the basis for promotion of managers.

- It is recommended that regulatory actions should be set for performance of managers through regular and periodical auditing, and be the basis for performance reporting of the auditors.

- It is recommended that consistent information systems which are connected simultaneously with upper institutions should be implemented in public organizations so that managers cannot hide or distort the information and figures.

- It is recommended that the laws and frameworks for performance transparency in public organizations and reporting standards (such as financial and accounting fields) should be compiled and implemented, and managers should be required to provide performance reporting to stakeholders based on the frameworks.

C. Practical recommendations in outer-organization dimension

- It is recommended that statements and reports of public organizations to stakeholders should be investigated, and their level of adaptation with realities be determined. Determining frameworks for media activity and statements can be effective.

- It is recommended that intervention of politicians and influential people in assigning public managers should be decreased, and succession systems along with attraction and development of talents and elites for acquiring managerial jobs should be increased.

- It is recommended that media should find realities and publish the information based on real representations and provable figures.

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