

Public Privatization: An Examination of Reinventing Government on Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction

ABSTRACT

Initiatives to enhance the efficiency and accountability of the United States government have resulted in government organizations implementing business-like practices. The privatization initiative, known as “reinventing government,” has been examined as a dependent variable in the literature, but researchers have largely neglected examining the influences of reinvention efforts on the internal nature of organizations. Thus, this study uses structural modeling techniques to examine the relationships among organizational reinvention, organizational climate, and job satisfaction. The results indicate that a positive relationship exists between organizational reinvention and organizational climate, and organizational climate is significantly related to job satisfaction. Additionally, due to the uncertainty that arises in organizations experiencing such changes, it is found that job satisfaction is negatively influenced by organizational reinvention. A detailed examination of the results is provided, followed by a discussion of the implications for researchers and practitioners.

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It has long been recognized that governments around the world (including the United States) operate under a hierarchical, top-down structure. Governments centralize powers, authorities, decisions, and resources in delivering services to the citizens. In addition, detailed and complicated procedures are used to run governmental operations. This centralized, top-down, procedure-oriented way of doing business often leads to criticisms of poor performance, poor services, and lack efficiency.

To tackle this problem, the U.S. government established the National Performance Review (NPR) in 1993 (Kettl, 1994). The initiative was later re-named to the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, with the aim of improving service delivery operation in the public sector. The NPR has been diligently working to encourage and support public organizations around the country to adopt the new, innovative processes for conducting business. This reforming force of reinventing government has led to, and is still leading to, changes in public organizations in many ways including work operation, human resource management, and other management practices. Reinventing government effort could have several important implications for managing public organizations in today's changing administrative environment where citizens tend to have high expectations.

Most of the previous research on reinventing government is theoretical and/or descriptive. Specifically, these papers only review the concept of reinventing government (also referred to more broadly as "organizational reinvention"), compare it with similar concepts, analyze or reinterpret the concept, provide syntheses, or offer a case study (e.g., Moe, 1994;

Epstein, 1993; 1994; Schachter, 1995; Nathan, 1995; Kamensky, 1996; Morgan et al., 1996; Frederickson, 1996; Gilmore & Jensen, 1998; Thompson & Riccucci, 1998; Williams, 2000; Lenkowsky & Perry, 2000; deLeon & Denhardt, 2000). Researchers have just begun to empirically examine the influence of reinventing government, and of the studies conducted, the vast majority examine reinventing government as a dependent variable (e.g., Brudney et al., 1999; Brudney & Write, 2002; Kearney et al., 2000; Krebs & Pelissero, 2009; Jae Moon & Norris, 2005).

Researchers have generally remained myopic when assessing the full implications of the reinventing government effort. Specifically, few researchers have assessed the influence of reinventing government on the internal components of public organizations. For example, researchers have yet to assess the influence of reinventing efforts on internal organizational climate, employee satisfaction, and other internal organizational phenomena. Therefore, the primary contribution of this investigation is to address the influence of organizational reinvention efforts on the perceived organizational climate and job satisfaction in governmental organizations. By addressing this topic, researchers will have a better understanding of the manner in which reinventing efforts influence employee perceptions of the organization.

The core research question of this investigation relates to how reinventing government influences organizational climate and job satisfaction. To answer this question, we begin with a literature review of reinventing government. We then propose three hypotheses that seek to further describe the relationships among the constructs examined, and we empirically examine the relationships through structural modeling. We conclude with a discussion of the results and implications for researchers and practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reinventing Government

Since the book on reinventing government by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in 1992 and the establishment of National Performance Review in 1993, public organizations in the United States have gradually adopted the new ways of doing businesses. These new ways of doing governmental businesses closely resemble private sector practices. Reinventing government refers to the new way of doing business in the public sector, which requires public organizations to be strategic in resource spending and operational management. This entrepreneurial approach to public management has an ultimate goal of achieving efficiency and accountability. That is, public managers need to know how to “shift resources out of an area of low productivity and minimal yield into an area of higher productivity and greater yield” (Osborne, 1993, p.351). Thus, the modern public organizations must be catalytic, competitive, mission-driven, results-oriented, customer-driven, and entrepreneurial (Osborne, 1993).

Practically, this reinventing effort drives public organizations to “create a clear sense of mission, delegate authority and responsibility (to frontline employees), replace regulations with incentives, develop budget based on outcomes, and measure success by customer satisfaction” (NPR, 1993). This implies that reinventing effort forces public organizations to change the ways services are delivered and how human and financial resources are managed (e.g., reduce the number of employees, reduce the size of the organization). These changes have critical implications for the organization as well as its employees.

Theoretically, the reinventing government effort potentially affects organizations in many ways. Osborne (1993) proposes several principles that help a public organization to transform itself into a more entrepreneurial, flexible, competitive, and strategic organization. In elaborating

how these principles change an organization, Osborne (1993) implicitly supports the relationship between reinventing effort and the implications for the adopting organization.

First, Osborne (1993) claims that public organization can be more efficient in providing services to the citizens if the management or leaderships in that organization change their role from “rowing” to just “steering” the organization. This statement implies more delegation and decentralization are needed for managing public organization in today’s administrative environment. Osborne (1993) explains that decentralization gives more power or discretion to lower-level employees to make any decision about daily operations. In the organization that is adopting the idea of reinventing government, employees would have more chances to get involved (or participate in) the management and decision of several issues in an organization. By this way, reinventing effort changes the basis for making decisions in an organization and, as a result, employees are empowered to participate more in the work processes.

Reinventing effort also potentially adjusts the operation of doing daily business in the adopting organization. Osborne (1993) argues that competition enhances productivity and efficiency. Thus, public organizations should be more competitive in providing services for their citizens if they want to survive in today’s highly competitive environment and in order to be more competitive they need to change some, if not all, aspects of their current operations. Examples of strategies an organization can employ to improve their operation include creating quality circles, labor-management committee to improve communication within the organization, and using several types of incentives to motivate employees. In short, adopting this principle of reinventing government would result in changes in business operations in an organization.

Organizational reinvention also implies an emphasis on organization’s mission. Mission is one of the most important aspects of a strategic organization and a force that drives an

organization to achieve its goals. Osborne (1993) argues that, instead of relying heavily on rules and budget, today's public organizations should minimize rules and focus more on mission. A clear goal and mission allow managers to manage the organization more efficiently. In short, adopting reinventing government approach requires an organization to employ strategic ways of doing business.

The reinventing effort also drives the organization to adopt a result-based management style. In order to be more efficient and productive, public organizations are encouraged to focus on how to measure the results of what it does and then tie incentive to achieving those results (Osborne, 1993). Implementing organizational reinvention also implies that an adopting organization needs to be more creative in motivating its employees. More innovative ways in incentivize the employees are required if productivity needs to be achieved. In all, efforts oriented toward reinventing government have an underlying foundation of implementing business-like practices to enhance the efficiency and boost performance of public organizations.

Given that reinventing government efforts are shown to have implications for the adopting organization, we next seek to investigate the relationship of organizational reinvention on two internal factors: organizational climate and job satisfaction. We discuss these relationships and hypothesize the respective influences. A graphical model of the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Organizational Reinvention and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as “the fulfillment or gratification of certain needs of the individual that are associated with one’s work” (Hopkins, 1983, p.7). Many scholars have studied job satisfaction and identified factors that influence employee job satisfaction. However, job-related environmental influences are among the most significant predictors of job satisfaction. As exemplified by Hopkins (1983), work situation has a positive, significant influence on job satisfaction.

However, the nature of the job environment is likely to have an influence on the satisfaction of the employee. For example, in a study of government organizations, Yang and Kassekert (2009) find that efforts to contract-out positions are negatively related to job satisfaction given that employees experience uncertainty about their own job security. Similarly, Fernandez and Smith (2006) note that employees who perceive privatization efforts as a threat toward job security are less likely to view privatization as an incentive.

Employees in dynamic environments – such as those in government organizations undergoing changes in an effort to become more “private-like” – are more likely to work in the context of uncertainty. Given that reinventing government efforts are aimed toward incorporating business practices, which is a transition away from the previous method of standard government operations, it is likely that employees in such organizations will experience uncertainty and dissatisfaction, which will diminish overall job satisfaction. Thus, we propose that organizational reinvention efforts are negatively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1: Organizational reinvention is negatively related to job satisfaction.

Organizational Reinvention and Organizational Climate

Literature on reinventing government suggests that organizational reinvention potentially affects the adopting organizations in many ways. The aim of reinventing government effort is to create public organizations that work better and cost less (in terms of efficiency) by improving the internal operation of adopting organizations. Among other intentions, improving organizational environment or climate that facilitates employees in performing their tasks is one clear objective of reinventing effort.

When the reinventing government initiative was announced, several principles were proposed, which related to the development of a clear vision, creation of a team environment, empowerment of employees, ensuring customers are a priority, minimization of “red tape” (unnecessary and redundant procedures), and the creation of clear accountability (Gore, 1994). These principles are consistent with what Osborne (1993) envisioned. That is, the management should take a supporting role and delegate more tasks and power to frontline employees, empower employees and encourage them to participate in management and operational issues and accept their opinions. Managers should be creative and innovative in motivating employees, creating a teamwork environment, develop and communicate the organization’s goal, vision, and mission, adopt a result-based management, and pay more attention to the needs of the customer.

Conceptualizations of organizational climate relate to the perceived support received by employees, innovation supported by the organization, cohesion among employees, and the pressure exerted by organization leaders (Koys & DeCottis, 1991). Given that the principles of reinventing government were aimed at enhancing the internal climate of public organizations in order to enhance overall efficiency and accountability, it is likely that reinventing efforts are

related to the internal climate of the organization. Thus, it is hypothesized that reinventing government has a positive effect on organizational climate.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational reinvention is positively related to organizational climate.

Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction

As noted by Hopkins (1983), external forces are among the strongest influences on job satisfaction. Organizational climate is a conceptualization of organizational-level influences that are shown to influence job satisfaction (Meeusen et al., 2011), and conceptualizations of organizational climate relate to the extent to which employees perceive a supportive, yet positively challenging culture (Koys & DeCottis, 1991).

The effect of organizational climate on job satisfaction has been examined in numerous professions. For example, Reinardy (2009) conducts an investigation to test the effects of intrinsic factors (motivators) and extrinsic factors on job satisfactions for newsroom journalists and finds a significant relationship between the extrinsic factor of climate and job satisfaction. In all, organizational factors such as organizational climate have been shown to have a direct relationship with job satisfaction (e.g., Gilbert, 1998; Reinardy, 2009; Acquavita, 2009; Meeusen et al., 2011; Al Jenaibi, 2010; Sharma & Bajpai, 2010). Based on research findings, researchers often suggest that organizational climate is related to job satisfaction. Thus, it is hypothesized in this study that organizational climate has a direct, positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Organizational climate is positively related to job satisfaction.

METHODS

Data & Sample

The data from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government Employee Survey (known as NPR survey) 2000 are used for analyses in this study. Each year starting from 1998 to 2000 NPR mailed a survey to federal employees to gather information about reinventing government effort and job satisfactions for these federal employees. In 2000, there were 49 agencies participated in the survey. This NPR survey was sent to a stratified random sample of 50,844 federal employees (representing 1,382,461 full-time federal executive branch civilian employees at the time the survey was conducted). The overall response rate was 42% based on receiving 21,157 completed surveys from the sample. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback to help agencies focus on key employee satisfaction issues, increase the efficiency of government service and thereby better serve customers, and to assess the progress of agencies' organizational changes, especially in relation to efforts to reinvent internal operation (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2000). Respondents were asked to answer questions about the organization, their job, their supervisor, work process and operation, and also to rate their job satisfaction.

Measures

A 5-point Likert-type scale is utilized for all items in this survey. The anchors ranged from 5 – indicating strongly agree, a very great extent, or very satisfied – to 1 – indicating strongly disagree, not at all, or very dissatisfied – depending on the item measured. The three latent constructs examined in this research are organizational reinvention, organizational climate and job satisfaction.

Organizational reinvention is measured using five items. All items relate to the changing nature of the organization. A sample item is, “Has your organization streamlined the process for hiring employees?” Four items are used to measure job satisfaction. One item is used to represent each dimension of the construct: nature of work, supervision, pay, coworker relationships (Spector, 1997). A sample item is, “How satisfied are you with your job?” To measure organizational climate, eight items are used to measure four dimensions of the construct: support, innovation, cohesion, and pressure (Koys & DeCottis, 1991). A sample item is, “Managers communicate the organization’s mission, vision, and values.”

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Results from reliability analysis show that all constructs have reliabilities above the recommended level of 0.70(Nunnally, 1978): organizational climate (0.85), job satisfaction (0.80), and organizational reinvention (0.74). These Cronbach’s alpha values indicate an acceptable level of internal consistency and, thus, support the use of these items (observed variables) in each factor. Reliability analysis results from Cronbach’s alpha test are consistent with results from the test of construct reliability using LISREL. Schreiber et al. (2006) recommend that, for CFA, the squared multiple correlations (SMC) are used to determine the reliability of the observed variables in relationship to the latent constructs. In SEM, each value of SMC (for each measurement equation) tells us how much of the variance in each observed variable is accounted for by the latent construct (the factor) (Schreiber et al., 2006). The obtained SMC values indicate an acceptable level of observed variable’s reliability. Item 22 has the highest reliability (0.68) and item or question 12 has the lowest reliability (0.27). An example of interpretation of the SMC value is that the construct organizational reinvention accounts for 68 percent of the variance in item/question 22.

Results from confirmatory factor analysis show that factor loading value of each observed variable on each latent construct (or factor) is acceptable. Specifically, factor loadings range from 0.52 to 0.82, with the majority of observed variables having factor loadings of 0.60 or higher. These loading values suggest that the selected items (observed variables) define or measure each of the latent construct (factor) quite well.

RESULTS

The primary purpose of using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test theories is to find a statistically significant theoretical model that also has practical and substantive meaning. However, as Scumacker and Lomax (2004) suggest, determining model fit in SEM modeling is not as straightforward as it is in other statistical techniques such as analysis of variance, multiple regression, path analysis and others where observed variables used in these statistical procedures are assumed to be measured without error and have statistical tests with known distributions. Determining model fit in SEM involves considering several model fit criteria as there is no single statistical test of significance in SEM indices that identifies a correct model given the sample data (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). Thus, researchers using SEM technique often report the values of chi-square test and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) as the global fit measures (a RMSEA value less than or equal to 0.08 is considered acceptable), a t value or a critical t value as a test for statistical significance of individual parameter estimates for the paths in the model (obtained t value is typically compared to a table t value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance), goodness-of-fit (GFI) (any value above 0.90 reflects a good fit), comparative fit index (CFI) (any value above 0.90 reflects a good fit), and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) to indicate how the reproduced implied covariance matrix is close to the sample variance-covariance matrix (a value less than 0.08 is considered acceptable).

Except for the value of chi-square, all other fit indices suggest that the model has a good fit. The model generates high value of chi-square ($\chi^2 = 27371.80$, $df = 116$, $p < 0.000$) which indicates a marginal fit. However, since the chi-square statistic is based on the assumption that the model holds exactly in the population, which may be an unrealistic assumption in most empirical research (Joreskog, 1993) and it is also sensitive to sample size (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Thus, researchers often suggested that it is very important to also assess a model using RMSEA (Joreskog, 1993) and other goodness-of-fit statistics (Ko & Stewart, 2002).

Thus, the other goodness-of-fit statistics obtained from the analysis indicate a good model fit overall. The RMSEA value of 0.08 indicates that the model has a good fit. The values of SRMR (0.05), CFI (0.94) and GFI (0.91) all indicate a good fit among the theoretical model and the sample data. The full measurement model is graphically displayed in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

An investigation of paths finds supports for all three hypotheses. Specifically, it is found that organizational reinvention has a statistically significant, direct negative effect on job satisfaction, which supports the first hypothesis ($\beta = -0.04$, $t = 26.84$, $p < 0.05$). The second hypothesis, which states that organizational reinvention positively influences organizational climate, is also supported ($\beta = 0.25$, $t = 36.13$, $p < 0.05$). Last, the positive relationship between organizational climate and job satisfaction is supported as proposed in hypothesis three ($\beta = 0.92$, $t = 109.88$, $p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The idea of reinventing government began to spread out after the reinventing government book written by Osborne and Gaebler in 1992 and the creation of National Performance Review in 1993. Since that time, federal agencies and public entities began undertaking organizational reinvent activities both either partially or substantially. Since its inception, the concept of reinventing government has been explored by scholars in the field of public administration and management. Most of previous studies about reinventing government are descriptive or theoretical. Some studies employ quantitative methods (i.e. multiple regression, Poisson regression) to understand the progression of implementing reinventing government effort around the country; however, reinvention government in these research papers is considered only as a dependent variables (e.g., Kearney et al., 2000, Krebs & Polissero, 2009; Brudney et al., 1999). Few previous studies, however, quantitatively examine the effects of organizational reinvention on the adopting organizations. Reinventing government effort involves either partial or substantial reorganization, thus it potentially affects the organizational itself and the people working within the organization. Among several organizational aspects that may be affected by the reinventing government effort are organizational climate and employee's satisfaction. Organizational climate and job satisfaction are important to the work life of the employees and are among the most important factors influencing the decision to leave the organization of the employees. The important implication of both organizational climate and job satisfaction calls for a serious need to examine the relationship between the two organizational aspects and organizational reinvention effort.

To address this gap in the literature, we have sought to test a model of organizational reinvention, organizational climate, and job satisfaction. Three hypotheses were empirically

examined, and support was found for each, which provides insight into the influence of reinventing government on internal organizational factors. Specifically, organizational reinvention is found to negatively influence job satisfaction, while organizational reinvention positively influences organizational climate.

The theoretical implications of the influences of organizational reinvention on organizational climate and job satisfaction offer numerous additional research opportunities for scholars. Specifically, it seems almost somewhat paradoxical that one's satisfaction with reinvention is negatively affected, yet the climate of the organization is positively influenced by reinvention efforts. To explain the nature of these findings, an examination of cognitive and cultural influences offers insight. One explanation may be best explained by the desire of employees to "keep up appearances." Organizational cultures are often maintained through individual's subscribing to the best ideals for the organization. When a new policy is proposed, adoption may occur because it is in the best interest of the organization. However, when the policy is implemented, the employees responsible for the implementation may be less eager to alter their behaviors given the inconvenience imposed. Thus, the job satisfaction of the individual may be adversely affected (albeit temporarily). Nonetheless, researchers are encouraged to further investigate this phenomenon to better understand the precise nature of influences and the resulting implications on organizations.

Limitations

Although this study seeks to make a contribution to a developing literature, limitations of the current investigation exist. First, the generalizability of the results is somewhat limited given the context in which the data was collected. Because this study was conducted among government employees, the generalizability of the findings should be further examined before

applied to other types of non-profit or public organizations. In order to minimize such criticisms, the data set selected was chosen because of its vast inclusiveness of a wide cross-section of employees. However, it is recommended that results be interpreted in context.

A second limitation to this study is common method variance. Since all the surveys were collected at a single time period, there may be an influence from common method variance. Future researchers should try to collect surveys from multiple sources in order to increase generalizability. Also, if data were collected longitudinally, researchers would be able to better understand the developmental nature of the constructs examined, which would likely offer interesting insights into the stages of change and the resulting implications on the internal factors of public organizations.

Given that this research assessed specific components the organization, the model is admittedly underspecified. It is acknowledged that numerous factors are influenced by organizational reinvention; however, it was our intention to provide additional clarity into the influences among only select constructs. The incorporation of other variables will provide further insight into the broad influences of reinvention efforts, and we hope that other researchers will continue to build upon the model to determine how reinvention relates to other organizational components.

The final limitation of this study is that it is conducted at the individual level of analysis. Since employees completed the survey individually, the focus of the questions was an individual's perceptions about the organization's dynamics. Ideally, future studies will build upon the findings and assess similar dynamics at the organizational level of analysis.

CONCLUSION

Results from the analyses contribute to both the public sector management and organizational management literature. Research findings suggest that organizational reinvention is positively related to organizational climate and negatively related to job satisfaction. Also, we find that organizational climate is positively related to job satisfaction. These findings suggest that researchers in the fields of management and public administration are encouraged to further consider the influences of reinventing government on organizational climate and job satisfaction as well as other aspects of the organizations. Organizational reinvention efforts should not only be considered as a dependent variable in quantitative studies on public management as has traditionally been the case. Rather, the construct should be viewed as a predictor variable with vast influence on numerous internal phenomena in organizations.

The results and implications from the current study offer additional insight for both practitioners and researchers. For practitioners planning to reinvent or reorganize an organization using reinventing government principles, the issues of organizational climate and job satisfaction should not be overlooked. For researchers, vast potential lies in the future investigation of the influences of organizational reinvention efforts. As a compliment to the current literature in management on change-related issues, organizational reinvention is likely to offer an additional perspective of how organizations are shaped by current efforts, which is likely to provide further insight into the privatization process occurring in modern-day government organizations.

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FIGURE 1

Theoretical Relationships

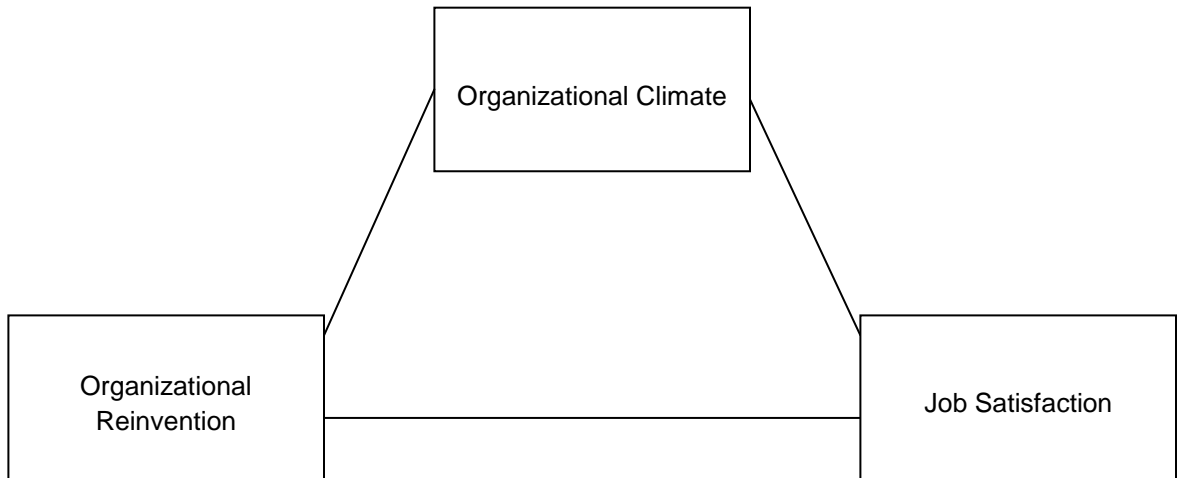


FIGURE 2

Path Diagram Representing the Measurement Model

