

Perception of Party Workers towards Management of Political Parties – an Empirical Study specific to the Political Parties in Gujarat State

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Abstract - Political parties as a form of organization operate in a dynamic environment. Therefore, it is important that they are managed efficiently. One of the important success factors for a political party is its followers/workers and their perception towards the party as a whole. This paper tries to study the perception of party workers towards planning, leadership, their understanding about the structure/hierarchy, development of second line leaders/leadership, and control points. A data of 414 respondents comprising of the workers of various political parties in Gujarat State reveals that in political parties planning is a top-down approach. Contrary to the belief that political parties do not have a clear hierarchy the respondents had a clear understanding about the structure/hierarchy in the party. Additionally the workers showed full faith in the leadership at the national leadership, believed that their party has been working in developing second line leaders/leadership and perceived that the party had sufficient control points in the structure. The above findings give a positive signal towards the political parties from the management point of view. The general perception that political parties are leader driven, unstable, unorganized do not stand true from the findings.

Key words: political organizations, perception, party workers, India, management.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TERM 'MANAGEMENT' FOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

The term '*management*' hardly fits political parties as they are habituated to '*manage*' the parties without any static and proper management guiding principles and styles. Though clear-cut ideology exists in name of constitution of party, they hardly adhere to such constitution and interpret constitution as per the convenience.

The management of parties is by and large done by '*think tanks*' who frame strategies and plans for the party with approval of high command. Such people are usually top leaders closer to high command and are intellectuals of their respective fields with exemplary knowledge of politics and management of parties at a very large scale.

Political science defined political party as an organized group of people having a clear ideology which is based on certain well-defined principles and has clear purposes. It is also defined Political Party as, "*A group of persons or human organized to acquire and exercise political power.*" Downs (1957) defines political party as "*A political party is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election*".

II. POLITICAL MANAGEMENT

Political management is a skill of managing the information as an important resource on the political market where there are voters, current and potential members of political parties, political leaders etc., whose confidence for a certain political idea and a political programme should be gained by a political party or a political member or person, and in that way there should be acquired the possibility for the political party to perform the political governance, i.e. to implement its political programme in the best interest of all, based on pre-election promises. Political management is a special scientific discipline which implies the system of procedures previously specified for all campaigns or for all political candidates. It derived from the relation of voters, as a target political segment – political parties and their political programmes, as a means of their better communication and understanding. Considering that the politicology, as a separate scientific discipline, is also concerned with the same problems, and the politics is nothing but the communication, management with its functions of planning, organizing, deciding, leading and control improves that communication and unites these two scientific disciplines into one, the political management. So, the political management is based on the principles of

the classical management which could be used in leading the political parties, private or public companies and state administration.

Principles of Political Management

Principles are the fundamental form of knowledge which is useful for better understanding of the scientific field which is under study. Political Management includes application of management functions for increasing efficiency and effectiveness of any political party. There are principles in all the fields and so are in the political management too. The political member at any level in party structure must be familiar with all scientific principles, and above all, with those which she or he considers to be the most essential ones for leading the political party and political system. For the political management the most vital principles would be: *principle of interpersonal relations, principle of the quality of the political programme, principle of the political administration efficiency.*

Functions of Political Management

The basic functions of political management consists of:

1. Political planning,
2. Organization of the political party and political processes,
3. Leading or managing the political party and political processes, or
4. Coordination between the participants in the political process, from the political party to the state administration
5. Motivating participants or members in the political process and
6. Control of work and results of the political party and members of the political party on the positions of the executive and legislative power (information, human, financial, natural and other resources)

Party Workers perceptions towards Management of Political Parties

There are different levels of the political management. Every level of the political management has a different role in managing the variety of activities in party. From the president (as the highest level) toward the lower levels of the political management the extent of obligations decreases. The extent of responsibilities determines the level on which the political manager performs. The higher level the bigger duties or responsibilities. That means that the abilities which must be possessed by the political manager depend on the level on which she or he is to be engaged.

The abilities of the political manager are divided into: *technical, management and creative ones.* *Technical abilities* imply that every political manager must have the knowledge of what she or he does. The political manager

can take the role of a director or a head of the offices for some functions or activities. *Management abilities* talk about the required knowledge for performing the function (Viz.: Planning, Organizing, Coordination, Motivation, Control, etc.) of the political manager. *Creativity* talks about the ability of the political manager to separate the parts of a situation (e.g. changes in the surrounding of the political party) which affect the political party and to create and furthermore to implement a convenient defensive strategy for betterment of party. The more is the creative ability required, the higher is the management level. So the political manager on the highest level must establish a relation between what happens in and out of the political party and keep a bird eye on all the stakeholders.

On the other hand, the political manager of the middle level, and especially of the lower level, follows the events in his or her surrounding, and his or her surrounding within the political party is internal. The technical and management abilities are learned by time. The creative ability is partially a talent and partially earned based on experience. Therefore, in order to be professional and successful, the political manager must have the required (high) knowledge, skills and abilities. It is a dignified vocation for all those who dedicate themselves to organizing and successful functioning of the organized ventures, such as the political party. So, *there is a gap to find out perceptions of Party Workers towards Management (i.e.: planning, organizing, leadership and control) practices of Political Parties with special reference to the Political Parties having presence in Gujarat State.*

Need to Study Management Practices of Parties

The study of political parties has vital importance in today's world. These parties shape the future of the Country. Political stability is also very much important for the growth of business (Odeyemi, 2002) in the country. There is an increasing focus on research of political marketing and political management in last decade. (Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2007b). However, the vast majority of work, to date, has been either conceptual or qualitative in nature and further discussions of political marketing orientation have failed to take into consideration the fit of organizational make-up of political organizations with the overall party strategy (Ormrod and Henneberg, 2011). India, being the largest democracy has large number of political parties at national, state and regional level; as a result many parties merge, divide and even cease to exist. Therefore, there is a need to study how these parties are managed and grow by time. This paper focuses on the perception of followers i.e. party workers on how the party is managed because for the success of any party, its workers are back bone. Therefore to it is necessary to understand what workers think about the party and its leaders.

This paper tries to address two objectives, firstly, to understand the current management (i.e.: planning,

organizing, leadership and control) practices of political parties and secondly to understand the perception of people working at different levels in their party towards management practices and overall aspects of their party.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present work has been seen a combination of single cross sectional, descriptive and analytical research design. It is descriptive in the nature due to fact finding with the help of literature survey and the analysis of demographic profile of the respondents in the particular area are considered for this study. It is single cross sectional due to data collected from the respondent at one time only. The study is said to be analytical due to the application of statistical tools used for data analysis.

Data was analyzed with use of reliability of the study, frequency analysis, cross tabulation.

Sampling unit: For this research, the universe of the study consisted of party leaders, workers and members of political parties in Gujarat State. The sample consisted of party leaders, workers and members of political parties in Gujarat namely Congress (I), Bhartiya Janta Party, Shiv Sena, party workers who worked for as an independent

Profile of the Respondents

Name of Party	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	184	44.4	44.4
2	193	46.6	91
3 Other Parties	13	3.1	94.1
4. NA (Workers that worked for an independent leader)	24	5.8	100.0
Total	414	100.0	

The above table depicts that there are almost equal respondents from the two parties either ruling or opposition. The sample was purposefully distributed to avoid the bias from ruling and opposition parties. As the objective of the study was to know the perception of the workers about the party today and for future the workers were asked the question about which party did they belong currently.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this paper is to understand the management of political parties. Therefore, the major aspects of management namely planning, organizing, leadership and control were taken for analysis.

Planning

Planning is the first and most vital activity in managing any entity. Hence an attempt was made to understand awareness and process of planning among the respondents. In this question the respondents were given predefined statements and were asked to rate them from highly agree to highly disagree on *likert scale* where 1 meant 'highly agree' and 5 meant 'highly disagree'. The following table shows the analysis of the responses.

Table 1: Planning

Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
The strategic planning is a top priority activity, performed on a regular basis, e.g. each year	1.521	1	0.7922
My party follows a defined set of procedures in its strategic planning process	1.703	2	0.776

leader, etc. In total, 500 active party workers affiliated to different political parties at different levels were contacted in person. However, but many respondents did not provide sufficient information and were omitted and residual 414 questionnaires were taken for final analysis. To protect the identity of the respondents' only aggregate data is shown in the analysis.

Primary data

Questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data from respondents. Initially a rough draft of questionnaire was prepared. It was then showed to political party workers and leaders. Subsequently, some changes were made to clarify the ambiguous statements and more statements were added. Since it was anticipated that many of the respondents will not be conversant with English language, the questionnaire was translated to Gujarati language. Help of expert translator was taken for the translation.

The questionnaire was strictly restricted to be answered and filled-up by the workers of a given political party only in India and which especially has presence in Gujarat State and is an active party and registered with Election Commission of India. Majority of the responses were collected while the State assembly session was on.

The national level leaders/wings play an advisory role in planning the activities of the party	1.717	2	0.7354
After completing its external and internal analyses, my party reviews the mission and goals in light of the apparent threats/ opportunities and strengths/weaknesses	1.817	2	0.8762
All internal stakeholders also participate in the planning process	1.873	2	0.8837
The macro level planning is done at the national level which applies to party as a whole at all the levels	1.883	2	0.7815
All external stakeholders whose work is affected significantly by strategic planning participate in the planning process	1.949	2	0.9117
My party periodically gathers and analyzes data about the markets and other external factors which affect the affairs of the party	1.949	2	0.8844
My party provides resources (time, money, staff support, etc.) earmarked specifically for strategic planning	1.951	2	0.8464
The micro level planning is done at the state/regional level	1.961	2	0.893

From the above table it can be observed that respondents strongly gave highest rating to the statement like ‘The strategic planning is a top priority activity, performed on a regular basis, e.g. each year’, ‘My party follows a defined set of procedures in its strategic planning process’, and ‘The national level leaders/wings play an advisory role in planning the activities of the party’ with the mean score of 1.52, 1.70, 1.72 and 1.82 respectively.

It can be inferred from the above results that planning in political parties is a top-down approach. The top leadership with help of selected leaders usually known as a ‘*think tank*’ plans the strategies for the party. Although the planners try to plan in detail, improper planning in some areas is also a truth. This may be attributed to the large/mass scale of operations and dynamic factors affecting specific regions. Planning also differs during election and non-election times. In political organizations some critical aspects of planning are known while others are kept secret.

Organization Structure and Communication: Organization structure and communication is second important and significant function of management. An attempt was made to understand the awareness of respondents regarding the various factors of organizing.

Table 2: Organization structure and communication

Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
The organization structure/hierarchy of my party is clear	1.6	1	0.826
I believe that the smallest party worker has the opportunity to reach at the top most level	1.8	2	0.8842
Leaders in my party give clear directions to work and clearly clarify the procedure to complete such work	1.81	2	0.7409
The communication channel in my party is transparent and clear	1.85	2	0.8516
My party believes in decentralization of powers at level	1.86	2	0.776
I believe that my party uses updated technology and social media for communication	1.87	1	2.7246
The system and structure in my party automatically allows strong control over its organizational structure	1.89	2	0.813
The organization structure of my party is strong enough for long term sustainability of my party	1.94	2	1.0384

The perception about organization structure and communication of the parties was measured through eight statements on five point *likert scale* where 1 meant ‘*strongly agree*’ and 5 meant ‘*strongly disagree*’. From table 2 it has been observed that most

of the respondents agreed to the statements of ‘The organization structure/hierarchy of my party is clear’, ‘I believe that the smallest party worker has the opportunity to reach at the top most level’ and ‘Leaders in my party give clear directions to work and clearly clarify the procedure to complete such work’ with the mean score of 1.60, 1.802 and 1.812 and median score of 1, 2 and 2 with standard deviation of 0.826, 0.8842 and 0.7409 respectively.

Respondents believed that they have a clear understanding about the structure/hierarchy in the party. This fact can be believed because in a political party it takes several years of investment to reach higher positions. Therefore, any active leader has to interact frequently with these members for various activities. Similarly, at the state and national level usually ‘seniority’ is taken into consideration while promoting and offering lucrative designations. Thus workers are clear about the hierarchy in their party.

All the parties have a clear organization structure but it is usually on paper. Candidates are ‘Selected’ instead of ‘Elected’ in majority of the cases. There are ample instances where Election Commission of India had to issue notices to parties for internal elections.¹ Respondents gave low rank to the statement regarding decentralization of power. Almost all the parties work on the direction of one or few leaders who usually ‘direct’ the subordinates. The selection too usually is based on influences or to satisfy/balance different factions of senior leaders within party. Respondents gave lowest ranking to the statement that the organization structure of their party is strong enough for long term sustainability of the party. This may be attributed to the short vision of the respondents or their lack of belief in the long term sustainability of the party. The respondents may also be considering others factors which affect the sustainability of the party apart from the organization structure.

Further, respondents believed that the communication channel in the party was transparent and clear. Thus, structure plays an important role in smooth communication.

Leadership: Probably no party can be successful in its objective without a strong leadership. According to Vidaver-Cohen (2004), the leader is a significant identity of any organization his/her actions and words can be important. The leader also acts as a significant source of information about the organization and the reputations of leader and party are highly correlated. (Davies and Mian, 2010). The perception about the leadership was measured through sixteen statements comprising of three sub-sections competency of leadership, leadership and direction of the organization, and succession of leadership on five point *likert scale* where 1 meant ‘*strongly agree*’ and 5 meant ‘*strongly disagree*’.

Table 3: Leadership

Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
I have full faith in the current leadership of my party	1.421	1.000	0.720
My party has been working in developing second line leaders/leadership	1.688	2.000	0.798
I believe that leadership at the national level is competent	1.710	2.000	0.819
I believe that the lowest level party worker has full chance of reaching the highest level in party	1.750	2.000	0.786
The current leaders of my party are driving the organization in the right direction	1.770	2.000	0.855
I believe that current leaders in my party are taking appropriate care to establish and improve the image of my party	1.802	2.000	0.818
I believe that leadership at the state level is competent	1.836	2.000	0.876
Top leaders in the party help/guide the coworkers in times of crises/doubt	1.874	2.000	0.857
I believe that ‘competency’ and ‘merit’ are the most important parameters considered to climb up in the hierarchy	1.916	2.000	0.835
Party workers are given appropriate rewards for their work	1.953	2.000	1.023
Top leaders in the party take special care to develop the subordinate workers working under them	1.966	2.000	0.972
My party leadership exhibits strong control over its organizational structure	1.973	2.000	0.923

Past leaders in my party at national level were more competent than the current ones	2.103	2.000	0.998
Past leaders in my party at state level were more competent than current ones	2.165	2.000	1.092
I believe that the family from which the party worker belongs plays a major role to climb up the ladders of hierarchy in my party	2.293	2.000	1.277
The current leaders of my party are especially academically qualified in political science and they hold valid academic degree of political science	2.389	2.000	1.320

Table 3 shows that the respondents rated statements like ‘I have full faith in the current leadership of my party’, ‘I believe that leadership at the national level is competent’ and ‘The current leaders of my party are driving the organization in the right direction’ with the mean score of 1.421, 1.710 and 1.770 respectively. This gives an overall feeling that their perception towards current leadership is positive.

It will be right to state that the culture of the top-leader or ‘party supremo’ gets reflected on the overall management of the party. Leader is someone who stands the test of time and yet stubbornly sticks to the morals, values, beliefs and ideology and who themselves become an example. The respondents here have shown full faith in the leadership at the national level. Secondly, they also believed that their party has been working in developing second line leaders/leadership. However, in reality it is seen that the succession of leadership is not always smooth. It is often observed that top leaders do not give enough room for lower leaders or equals to come-up (even at cost of party) as they see or envisage competition in those leaders. It is observed that the son or daughter or a family member of a top leader becomes a ‘so-called’ leader directly.

One of the response which has surprisingly received high rating is ‘I believe that the lowest level party worker has full chance of reaching the highest level in party’. There may be some exceptions but this phenomenon is not seen frequently. The worker from the lowest cadre rises to the top level is by and large exceptional and depends on many parameters.

Controlling and Monitoring: Controlling and monitoring is another important and significant function of the management which includes ‘feedback’ to decision-makers. The perception about controlling and monitoring of the parties was measured through the six statements measuring on five point Likert scale where 1 meant ‘strongly agree’ and 5 meant ‘strongly disagree’.

Table 4: Controlling and Monitoring

Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
I believe that in my party, there are strong administrative control points at each level	1.641	1	0.9171
I believe that in my party, appropriate control points are in place to ensure that input data is properly authorized	1.871	2	0.7215
I believe that in my party each person has sufficient authority to do the job assigned to them	1.963	2	0.8577
I believe that in my party, each person is clear about the task and the responsibility given to him	2.020	2	1.647
In my party, there is a defined time frame to achieve targets and such achievements are taken seriously	2.020	2	1.0146
My party has top down approach in decision making means the decisions are taken at top level which has to be followed by lower level people/workers	2.030	2	0.916

From table 4 it is observed that respondents strongly agreed with ‘I believe that in my party, there are strong administrative control points at each level’, ‘I believe that in my party, appropriate control points are in place to ensure that input data is properly authorized’ and ‘I believe that in my party each person has sufficient authority to do the job assigned to them’ with the mean score of 1.641, 1.871 and 1.963 respectively.

From the above results depicts that the respondents believed that there were sufficient control points in the structure. However, in reality the top leaders do not enjoy enough control over its leaders and workers at all the levels which results into lack of discipline and damage to the party. This lack of control may be attributed to factors like scale of operations, socio-economic dynamics at different levels, personal interests etc. The management of

party is often seen as being 'easy-going' and has 'tolerance' towards such indiscipline.

The party management monitors the each incident with different angles. However, more care and attention is given to the incidents which the party feels important. Therefore monitoring may not be done properly in many instances. Generally, each party appoints observers who look after the party activities in their respective areas. However, in many cases observers do not present a correct to party high-command. In many cases even when observers present correct pictures the party leadership has failed to act.

Limitations: The study suffers from several limitations. The large portion of sample consists of workers from either ruling or opposition party. These parties being successful or in influential position have some impact on the motivation and perception of the workers. Workers of such parties are hopeful about the future of the party. Hence, the results may not be generalized. Secondly, the biases of workers or their unwillingness to provide true information may also have affected the results.

V. CONCLUSION

The research concludes that perception of party workers towards their party is positive. Majority of respondents believed that planning in parties is a top-down approach. The top leadership with help of selected leaders plans the framework and strategies for the party. Although the planners try to plan in detail, improper planning in some areas is also a truth. This may be attributed to the large/mass scale of operations and dynamic factors affecting specific regions. Planning also differs during election and non-election times. In political organizations some critical aspects of planning are known while others are kept secret.

Respondents believed that they have a clear understanding about the structure/hierarchy in the party. It can be concluded that only those reach the top positions who have invested a long time in the party. Thus workers are clear about the hierarchy in their party. However, in reality candidates are 'Selected' instead of 'Elected' in majority of the cases. Respondents gave low rank to the statement regarding decentralization of power. Almost all the parties work on the direction of one or few leaders who usually 'direct' the subordinates. The selection too usually is based on influences or to satisfy/balance different factions of senior leaders within party. However, respondents believed that the communication channel in the party was transparent and clear. Thus it can be concluded that despite of all the shortcomings of the political parties party workers are happy with the type of communication.

Overall the respondents showed full faith in the leadership at the national leadership. Secondly, they also believed that their party has been working in developing second line

leaders/leadership. However, in reality it is seen that the succession of leadership is not always smooth. It is often observed that top leaders do not give enough room for lower leaders or equals to come-up (even at cost of party) as they see or envisage competition in those leaders. It is observed that the son or daughter or a family member of a top leader becomes a 'so-called' leader directly. However in conclusion it can be said that workers had full faith that second line leadership is being developed.

Finally the respondents believed that there are sufficient control points in the structure. Thus it can be concluded that whatever be the reality, the perception of party workers towards their party was positive and they showed faith in the party.

The above findings give a positive signal towards the political parties from the management point of view. The general perception that political parties are leader driven, unstable, unorganized do not stand true from the findings.

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ⁱ Government of India, Law Commission of India, Electoral Reforms Report No.255 March 2015.

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