

# Achieving Expert Consensus on the Model of Political Behavior in Governmental Organizations: A Validation Study Using the Delphi Method

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## ABSTRACT

Political behavior in governmental organizations refers to a set of informal actions and interactions undertaken by employees and managers—beyond their formal job descriptions—to acquire, maintain, and increase influence, power, and scarce resources. The primary objective of the present study is to achieve expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations through a validation study based on the Delphi method. This research is developmental in terms of purpose and employs a qualitative–quantitative Delphi methodology. To realize the objective—namely, achieving expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations—the Delphi technique was used. In this study, the model of political behavior in governmental organizations, derived from the research of Tir et al. (2026), was validated using the Delphi method. The statistical population in this phase consisted of experts in public administration and political science who hold academic ranks of associate professor or higher, have conducted studies in the areas of politics, political behavior, and organizational leadership, possess scholarly contributions in these fields, and have managerial or executive experience at senior levels within the public or governmental sector. The sampling method used at this stage was snowball sampling, and the sample size consisted of 15 experts. The statistical software used in the study was SPSS 19. The findings revealed that political behavior in governmental organizations includes three categories: black political behavior comprising 33 components, white political behavior comprising 37 components, and gray political behavior comprising 20 components. Understanding political behavior enables managers to predict and manage such behaviors rather than directly confronting or attempting to eliminate them—an approach that is often impractical.

**Keywords:** political behavior, black behavior, white behavior, gray behavior, governmental organizations, Delphi method.

## Introduction

Political behavior in organizations has long been recognized as an inevitable component of administrative life, shaping decision-making processes, resource allocation, interpersonal dynamics, and ultimately organizational performance. Within governmental organizations—where authority structures are rigid, resources limited, and decision outcomes heavily consequential—the presence and impact of political behavior become even more pronounced. Scholars argue that political behavior emerges whenever individuals and groups attempt to influence organizational processes in ways that serve personal or collective interests, often extending beyond formally



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prescribed duties (1). In the public sector, where bureaucratic layers, competing interests, and ambiguous rules dominate, political behavior manifests with greater complexity and intensity, positioning itself as a central factor in understanding organizational outcomes (2).

Over time, research has emphasized that political behavior may be functional or dysfunctional, constructive or destructive, depending on the motives, strategies, and situational factors surrounding it. While earlier organizational studies often viewed politics as inherently detrimental, contemporary scholarship acknowledges a duality: political behavior can drive innovation, protect organizational interests, and facilitate cooperation, yet it can also lead to conflict, inequality, lowered morale, and reduced organizational health (3). This dual nature is especially significant in public administration, where political pressures, hierarchical authority, and public accountability interact in complex ways (4).

Understanding political behavior in governmental systems requires examining the conditions that foster it, the strategies used by actors, and the consequences that follow. Behavioral dynamics in public institutions are often influenced by structural rigidity, administrative opacity, the absence of clear performance metrics, and uncertainty regarding decision processes (5). When formal mechanisms appear insufficient or ambiguous, employees may turn to political tactics—such as coalition-building, networking with powerful actors, or influencing information flows—to achieve objectives or protect their status. Such behavior becomes even more prevalent when organizational changes occur, resources become scarce, or leadership decisions appear inconsistent or opaque (3).

In this context, scholars have turned their attention to identifying models that explain political behavior and categorize its various forms. One of the most influential recent contributions is the conceptualization of political behavior along a black-white-gray spectrum, capturing unethical or harmful behaviors (black), ethical and constructive behaviors (white), and mixed or situationally dependent behaviors (gray) (6). This spectrum highlights that political behavior is neither uniformly negative nor positive, but must be understood within a nuanced and multidimensional framework. Such an approach aligns with earlier findings that emphasize the diversity of political tactics, ranging from benign influence behaviors to manipulative actions aimed at personal gain (7).

The growing complexity of administrative environments—particularly under conditions of digital transformation, network governance, and increased stakeholder scrutiny—continues to intensify political dynamics in public institutions. Studies show that government organizations, unlike private firms, face unique tensions arising from public accountability, statutory constraints, and political oversight, creating competing demands that foster political maneuvering (8). Public managers, operating under these pressures, often employ political strategies either to navigate institutional constraints or to secure cooperation and alignment among diverse actors (9). As a result, there is an increasing need to systematically identify, validate, and manage political behaviors in order to sustain organizational integrity and improve decision-making effectiveness.

Political behavior is also shaped by cultural and contextual conditions. In many governmental settings, political interactions may occur informally, emerging through personal networks, affiliations, and ideological alignments (10). The presence of hierarchical traditions, collective norms, and uneven power distributions can further intensify the use of political tactics as actors attempt to negotiate influence. These dynamics have led scholars to highlight the necessity of designing contextualized political behavior models that reflect the realities of public administration in specific national environments (11).

One of the emerging areas of inquiry concerns how organizational structures and technological advancements influence political behavior. The digitalization of administrative processes, widespread access to information, and

new forms of communication have transformed the ways political behavior is enacted, monitored, and interpreted (12). While technology may increase transparency and reduce opportunities for covert political actions, it may also introduce new avenues for influence, such as selective data disclosure or digital networking strategies (13). These changes make it increasingly urgent to conceptualize political behavior not only within traditional administrative hierarchies but also within technologically mediated environments.

The consequences of political behavior are significant. Positive or “white” political behavior—such as persuasion, strategic communication, or coalition-building for collective benefit—can enhance organizational cohesion, promote innovative problem-solving, and strengthen public value creation (14). Conversely, “black” political behavior—such as manipulation, concealment, or discriminatory practices—can undermine trust, reduce morale, increase turnover intentions, and impair organizational effectiveness (15). Gray behaviors, which may be ethical under some conditions and unethical under others, further complicate the managerial challenge of properly diagnosing and responding to political dynamics (16).

In response to these complexities, researchers have begun exploring the antecedents of political behavior, emphasizing factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, communication patterns, and perceived fairness. One strand of research suggests that responsible or authentic leadership can reduce destructive political behaviors, foster ethical climates, and strengthen employee commitment through increased trust and transparency (17). Other studies highlight the mediating role of emotional intelligence, communication skills, and interpersonal competence in shaping how political behavior unfolds in public contexts (18). Understanding these antecedents enables managers to proactively shape organizational contexts that discourage destructive political tactics and promote constructive political engagement.

Additionally, research suggests that employees’ perceptions of ethics and fairness significantly influence their propensity to engage in political behavior. When organizational environments lack ethical clarity or enforce norms inconsistently, employees may rely more heavily on political strategies to navigate uncertainty (5). Similarly, when managerial decisions appear opaque or biased, political behavior may intensify as individuals attempt to compensate for perceived inequities or gain informal advantages (19). These findings underscore the importance of studying political behavior through both structural and psychological lenses.

Political behavior has also been linked to job satisfaction, organizational health, and work performance in a wide range of cultural contexts. Evidence shows that political behavior affects individual productivity both directly and indirectly, mediated by factors such as workplace stress, perceived support, and employee engagement (20). In universities, public agencies, and nonprofit institutions, political dynamics shape not only interpersonal relations but also the ability of institutions to meet strategic objectives (15). As such, understanding political behavior has become a critical priority for organizational scholars and public sector leaders alike.

Models developed in recent years have attempted to capture the multifaceted nature of political behavior in public organizations. Among them, the shadow management theory has been used to explain hidden mechanisms that drive political actions within administrative systems (10). Other models attempt to classify political behavior based on causes, strategies, and consequences, using methods such as interpretive structural modeling (ISM), mixed-methods research, and meta-synthesis (21-23). Despite these advancements, there is still a need for validated, empirically supported frameworks that reflect the evolving nature of political behavior in governmental settings.

The work of Tir and colleagues, who introduced the black-white-gray model of political behavior using a meta-synthesis approach, represents a foundational contribution to the field and provides a comprehensive starting point

for further validation studies (6). Their model identifies 90 components within the three political behavior categories, yet these components require expert validation in real-world contexts to determine their applicability, relevance, and conceptual clarity. Validating such a model is essential for developing practical tools that policymakers, public managers, and organizational leaders can use to diagnose political behaviors and improve administrative effectiveness.

Given the theoretical significance of political behavior, its practical consequences for public administration, and the necessity of empirically validating existing conceptual models, the present study seeks to contribute to the literature by systematically examining expert consensus on the black-white-gray political behavior model proposed by Tir et al. using the Delphi method.

The aim of this study is to achieve expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations using a Delphi-based validation approach.

## Methods and Materials

The present study is developmental in terms of purpose and employs a qualitative–quantitative Delphi research method. To achieve the objective—namely, obtaining expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations—the Delphi method was applied. In this study, the model of political behavior in governmental organizations, derived from the research of Tir et al. (2026), was validated using the Delphi technique.

The statistical population of this phase consisted of experts in public administration and political science who hold an academic rank of associate professor or higher, have conducted research in the fields of politics, political behavior, and organizational leadership, possess scholarly contributions in these areas, and have managerial or executive experience at senior levels within the public or governmental sector (including ministries, national organizations, provincial governorates, or policy-making institutions). The sampling method applied at this stage was snowball sampling, and the final sample size consisted of 15 individuals. Snowball sampling is a non-probability method that nevertheless contains an element of random selection. This approach is appropriate when members of a target group or population cannot be easily identified. In this method, the researcher initially identifies several individuals and, after collecting information, asks them to introduce additional individuals. This technique is also commonly used to identify experts in a specific field.

In this phase, the data collection instrument was a questionnaire adapted from the article by Tir et al. (2026), and respondents were also asked to express their own views beyond the items contained in the questionnaire. The statistical software used in this study was SPSS 19.

Accordingly, 15 subject-matter experts were invited—forming the Delphi panel—to validate the extracted components and indicators of political behavior in the public sector through iterative Delphi rounds. Selection of the Delphi panel members was carried out using the snowball sampling method. During the coordination meetings with panel members, the extracted indicators from the qualitative phase were provided to them, and the procedure for completing each Delphi round was explained. Subsequently, they were formally invited to participate in this study. In the first round, a list of political behavior dimensions in the public sector—derived through meta-synthesis—was presented to the participants. Additionally, they were asked to propose any factors they believed were missing from the list. In the second round, the set of factors proposed in the first round, along with the initial extracted factors, were provided to the experts to determine their level of importance. The Delphi process was concluded after the second round, once satisfactory consensus had been achieved. The following diagram illustrates the

implementation process of the Delphi method. The validity and reliability of the questionnaires were confirmed using Kendall's coefficient of concordance and Cronbach's alpha.

The dimensions and components identified in the research of Tir et al. (2026) are as follows:

**Table 1. Categorization and Labeling of Political Behavior Dimensions Adapted from Tir et al. (2026)**

| Row | Dimensions Extracted from Articles                  | Researcher's Categorization |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1   | Lack of transparency in behavior                    | Black political behavior    |
| 2   | Insistence on political participation               | Gray political behavior     |
| 3   | Interaction                                         | White political behavior    |
| 4   | Role ambiguity                                      | Black political behavior    |
| 5   | Political friendship                                | Gray political behavior     |
| 6   | Mediation                                           | Gray political behavior     |
| 7   | Avoidance of destructive political behaviors        | White political behavior    |
| 8   | Observance of honesty in communication              | White political behavior    |
| 9   | Patriarchy                                          | Black political behavior    |
| 10  | Individual influence for group benefits             | White political behavior    |
| 11  | Using political insight to predict events           | Gray political behavior     |
| 12  | Social discrimination                               | Black political behavior    |
| 13  | Use of appropriate tone and speech                  | White political behavior    |
| 14  | Accountability                                      | White political behavior    |
| 15  | Establishing stable and predictable interactions    | White political behavior    |
| 16  | Consistency between claims and actions              | White political behavior    |
| 17  | Political discrimination                            | Black political behavior    |
| 18  | Functional diversity in interactions                | Gray political behavior     |
| 19  | Trust in organizational politics                    | White political behavior    |
| 20  | Concealment                                         | Black political behavior    |
| 21  | Diversity of competencies                           | White political behavior    |
| 22  | Attention to political parties                      | White political behavior    |
| 23  | Dogmatic attitude                                   | Gray political behavior     |
| 24  | Political ambition                                  | Black political behavior    |
| 25  | Value conflict                                      | Black political behavior    |
| 26  | Flattery                                            | Black political behavior    |
| 27  | Use of power based on expertise and skill           | White political behavior    |
| 28  | Use of power to advance group objectives            | White political behavior    |
| 29  | Factionalism                                        | Black political behavior    |
| 30  | Positive emotions                                   | White political behavior    |
| 31  | Control over resources                              | White political behavior    |
| 32  | Group formation                                     | Black political behavior    |
| 33  | Awareness of political trends for optimal decisions | White political behavior    |
| 34  | Ideological justification                           | White political behavior    |
| 35  | Access to information                               | Gray political behavior     |
| 36  | Competitiveness                                     | Gray political behavior     |
| 37  | Positive affect                                     | White political behavior    |
| 38  | Networking with powerful individuals                | Gray political behavior     |
| 39  | Participation in decision-making                    | White political behavior    |
| 40  | Reverse reactions                                   | Gray political behavior     |
| 41  | Networking ability                                  | White political behavior    |
| 42  | Manipulation of emotions                            | Black political behavior    |
| 43  | Communicational contamination                       | Black political behavior    |
| 44  | Political literacy                                  | White political behavior    |
| 45  | Exaggeration                                        | Black political behavior    |
| 46  | Political participation                             | White political behavior    |
| 47  | Perceived personal inefficacy                       | Black political behavior    |
| 48  | Attention to feedback                               | White political behavior    |
| 49  | Individual power                                    | Gray political behavior     |
| 50  | Uncertainty                                         | Black political behavior    |
| 51  | Religious behavior                                  | Gray political behavior     |
| 52  | Understanding emotional intelligence in behavior    | White political behavior    |
| 53  | Appropriate use of political intelligence           | White political behavior    |
| 54  | Concentration of power                              | Black political behavior    |

|    |                                                              |                          |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 55 | Political use of information                                 | Gray political behavior  |
| 56 | Accurate perception of the environment in personal behavior  | White political behavior |
| 57 | Building a support base                                      | Gray political behavior  |
| 58 | Individual alertness                                         | White political behavior |
| 59 | Gender differences                                           | Black political behavior |
| 60 | Bridging gaps                                                | Black political behavior |
| 61 | Negative emotions                                            | Black political behavior |
| 62 | Persuasion                                                   | White political behavior |
| 63 | Reduced formality                                            | Gray political behavior  |
| 64 | Protest activity                                             | Black political behavior |
| 65 | Appealing to values                                          | White political behavior |
| 66 | Ambiguous behavior                                           | Gray political behavior  |
| 67 | Supporting group interests                                   | White political behavior |
| 68 | Efforts to overcome resource scarcity                        | White political behavior |
| 69 | Obsequiousness                                               | Black political behavior |
| 70 | Reliance on expert power                                     | White political behavior |
| 71 | Blaming and threatening                                      | Black political behavior |
| 72 | Relational conflict                                          | Black political behavior |
| 73 | Task conflict                                                | Black political behavior |
| 74 | Use of power                                                 | Gray political behavior  |
| 75 | Socializing with stakeholders                                | Gray political behavior  |
| 76 | Reliance on referent power                                   | White political behavior |
| 77 | Perceived systemic inefficacy                                | Black political behavior |
| 78 | Monetary motivations                                         | Black political behavior |
| 79 | Correct use of political skills                              | White political behavior |
| 80 | Ideological conflicts                                        | Black political behavior |
| 81 | Power structuring                                            | Gray political behavior  |
| 82 | Political will to attract group benefits                     | White political behavior |
| 83 | Unprincipled behaviors                                       | Black political behavior |
| 84 | Application of political knowledge for non-personal benefits | White political behavior |
| 85 | Resistance to change                                         | Black political behavior |
| 86 | Political influence                                          | Gray political behavior  |
| 87 | In-group trust                                               | White political behavior |
| 88 | Illegitimate behaviors                                       | Black political behavior |
| 89 | Playing with time                                            | Black political behavior |
| 90 | Lack of structure in activities                              | Black political behavior |

## Findings and Results

In this section, the Delphi test was used to achieve expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations. The results of the two stages of the Delphi test and Kendall's correlation test, used to evaluate the accuracy of the Delphi measurement, are presented in the relevant tables. In each round, the first table shows the mean and standard deviation of the obtained responses.

Round one of the Delphi method: In the Delphi questionnaire, respondents (15 experts) were asked to indicate the extent of the influence of each indicator by selecting one of the available options and to present their suggestions in written form. These options were designed as a Likert scale and included: very low influence (1), low influence (2), moderate influence (3), high influence (4), and very high influence (5). In the first round, 90 indicators obtained in the previous stage were provided to the experts, and the results are presented in the table below.

**Table 2. Statistical Description of Respondents (Delphi Round One) (In your opinion, can the following indicators be effective in measuring political behavior in the public sector?)**

| Row | Indicator                                 | Number of responses | Mean of responses | Standard deviation of responses |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
|     | Black political behavior                  |                     |                   |                                 |
| 1   | Lack of transparency in behavior          | 15                  | 4.05              | 0.83                            |
| 2   | Role ambiguity                            | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.85                            |
| 3   | Patriarchy                                | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.80                            |
| 4   | Social discrimination                     | 15                  | 3.75              | 0.85                            |
| 5   | Political discrimination                  | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.79                            |
| 6   | Concealment                               | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.79                            |
| 7   | Political ambition                        | 15                  | 3.75              | 0.91                            |
| 8   | Value conflict                            | 15                  | 3.85              | 0.88                            |
| 9   | Flattery                                  | 15                  | 4.00              | 0.86                            |
| 10  | Factionalism                              | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.91                            |
| 11  | Group formation                           | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.77                            |
| 12  | Manipulation of emotions                  | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.91                            |
| 13  | Communicational contamination             | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.91                            |
| 14  | Exaggeration                              | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.77                            |
| 15  | Perceived personal inefficacy             | 15                  | 4.05              | 0.83                            |
| 16  | Uncertainty                               | 15                  | 3.85              | 0.81                            |
| 17  | Concentration of power                    | 15                  | 3.75              | 0.72                            |
| 18  | Gender differences                        | 15                  | 4.00              | 0.79                            |
| 19  | Bridging gaps                             | 15                  | 2.75              | 0.82                            |
| 20  | Negative emotions                         | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.85                            |
| 21  | Protest activity                          | 15                  | 4.15              | 0.67                            |
| 22  | Obsequiousness                            | 15                  | 4.15              | 0.75                            |
| 23  | Blaming and threatening                   | 15                  | 3.80              | 0.77                            |
| 24  | Relational conflict                       | 15                  | 4.00              | 0.82                            |
| 25  | Task conflict                             | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.89                            |
| 26  | Perceived systemic inefficacy             | 15                  | 4.00              | 0.92                            |
| 27  | Monetary motivations                      | 15                  | 2.20              | 0.74                            |
| 28  | Ideological conflicts                     | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.83                            |
| 29  | Unprincipled behaviors                    | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.70                            |
| 30  | Resistance to change                      | 15                  | 2.70              | 0.80                            |
| 31  | Illegitimate behaviors                    | 15                  | 3.85              | 0.81                            |
| 32  | Playing with time                         | 15                  | 3.95              | 0.89                            |
| 33  | Lack of structure in activities           | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.89                            |
|     | Gray political behavior                   |                     |                   |                                 |
| 34  | Insistence on political participation     | 15                  | 3.80              | 0.83                            |
| 35  | Political friendship                      | 15                  | 4.00              | 0.86                            |
| 36  | Mediation                                 | 15                  | 3.75              | 0.85                            |
| 37  | Using political insight to predict events | 15                  | 3.80              | 0.83                            |
| 38  | Functional diversity in interactions      | 15                  | 3.85              | 0.88                            |
| 39  | Dogmatic attitude                         | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.79                            |
| 40  | Access to information                     | 15                  | 4.15              | 0.81                            |
| 41  | Competitiveness                           | 15                  | 3.95              | 0.88                            |
| 42  | Networking with powerful individuals      | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.80                            |
| 43  | Reverse reactions                         | 15                  | 3.75              | 0.67                            |
| 44  | Individual power                          | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.91                            |
| 45  | Religious behavior                        | 15                  | 2.05              | 0.75                            |
| 46  | Political use of information              | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.85                            |
| 47  | Building a support base                   | 15                  | 2.60              | 0.75                            |
| 48  | Reduced formality                         | 15                  | 4.05              | 0.94                            |
| 49  | Ambiguous behavior                        | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.72                            |
| 50  | Use of power                              | 15                  | 4.20              | 0.95                            |
| 51  | Socializing with stakeholders             | 15                  | 4.10              | 0.85                            |
| 52  | Power structuring                         | 15                  | 4.30              | 0.80                            |
| 53  | Political influence                       | 15                  | 3.90              | 0.79                            |
|     | White political behavior                  |                     |                   |                                 |



|    |                                                              |    |      |      |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|------|
| 54 | Interaction                                                  | 15 | 4.20 | 0.83 |
| 55 | Avoidance of destructive political behaviors                 | 15 | 2.00 | 0.86 |
| 56 | Observance of honesty in communication                       | 15 | 4.10 | 0.91 |
| 57 | Individual influence for group benefits                      | 15 | 3.95 | 0.76 |
| 58 | Use of appropriate tone and speech                           | 15 | 4.20 | 0.73 |
| 59 | Accountability                                               | 15 | 3.90 | 0.85 |
| 60 | Establishing stable and predictable interactions             | 15 | 3.80 | 0.83 |
| 61 | Consistency between claims and actions                       | 15 | 3.85 | 0.88 |
| 62 | Trust in organizational politics                             | 15 | 3.90 | 0.85 |
| 63 | Diversity of competencies                                    | 15 | 4.25 | 0.91 |
| 64 | Attention to political parties                               | 15 | 4.05 | 0.69 |
| 65 | Use of power based on expertise and skill                    | 15 | 4.00 | 0.86 |
| 66 | Use of power to advance group objectives                     | 15 | 3.85 | 0.88 |
| 67 | Positive emotions                                            | 15 | 3.95 | 0.89 |
| 68 | Control over resources                                       | 15 | 4.10 | 0.91 |
| 69 | Awareness of political trends for optimal decisions          | 15 | 4.05 | 0.83 |
| 70 | Ideological justification                                    | 15 | 3.90 | 0.72 |
| 71 | Positive affect                                              | 15 | 4.20 | 0.70 |
| 72 | Participation in decision-making                             | 15 | 4.00 | 0.79 |
| 73 | Networking ability                                           | 15 | 4.10 | 0.72 |
| 74 | Political literacy                                           | 15 | 4.25 | 0.75 |
| 75 | Political participation                                      | 15 | 3.90 | 0.79 |
| 76 | Attention to feedback                                        | 15 | 3.85 | 0.67 |
| 77 | Understanding emotional intelligence in behavior             | 15 | 4.40 | 0.82 |
| 78 | Appropriate use of political intelligence                    | 15 | 3.75 | 0.85 |
| 79 | Accurate perception of the environment in personal behavior  | 15 | 4.10 | 0.79 |
| 80 | Individual alertness                                         | 15 | 4.20 | 0.70 |
| 81 | Persuasion                                                   | 15 | 4.20 | 0.70 |
| 82 | Appealing to values                                          | 15 | 2.85 | 0.75 |
| 83 | Supporting group interests                                   | 15 | 3.85 | 0.81 |
| 84 | Efforts to overcome resource scarcity                        | 15 | 4.10 | 0.83 |
| 85 | Reliance on expert power                                     | 15 | 3.95 | 0.94 |
| 86 | Reliance on referent power                                   | 15 | 4.15 | 0.88 |
| 87 | Correct use of political skills                              | 15 | 4.05 | 0.83 |
| 88 | Political will to attract group benefits                     | 15 | 4.10 | 0.85 |
| 89 | Application of political knowledge for non-personal benefits | 15 | 4.00 | 0.92 |
| 90 | In-group trust                                               | 15 | 3.85 | 0.81 |

The final summary of the first Delphi round is as follows:

- Elimination of 7 items that were irrelevant or ambiguous, based on precise conceptual justifications.
- Relocation of 2 items in order to increase alignment with the three dimensions of political behavior.
- Addition of 3 new items to address conceptual gaps and enhance the content validity of the instrument.

Next, the Delphi results, including the mean responses in the second round and the difference between the means of the first and second rounds, are presented:

**Table 3. Degree of Difference in Experts' Views in the First and Second Round Surveys**

| Row                                 | Indicator                        | Mean of first-round responses | Mean of second-round responses | Difference in means |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Dimension: Black political behavior |                                  |                               |                                |                     |
| 1.                                  | Lack of transparency in behavior | 4.05                          | 4.40                           | 0.35                |
| 2.                                  | Role ambiguity                   | 3.90                          | 4.50                           | 0.60                |
| 3.                                  | Patriarchy                       | 4.20                          | 4.40                           | 0.20                |
| 4.                                  | Social discrimination            | 3.75                          | 4.40                           | 0.65                |
| 5.                                  | Political discrimination         | 4.10                          | 4.50                           | 0.40                |



|                                     |                                                                       |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| 6.                                  | Concealment                                                           | 4.10 | 4.60 | 0.50 |
| 7.                                  | Political ambition                                                    | 3.75 | 4.65 | 0.90 |
| 8.                                  | Value conflict                                                        | 3.85 | 4.55 | 0.70 |
| 9.                                  | Flattery                                                              | 4.00 | 4.65 | 0.65 |
| 10.                                 | Factionalism                                                          | 4.10 | 4.45 | 0.35 |
| 11.                                 | Group formation                                                       | 4.20 | 4.45 | 0.25 |
| 12.                                 | Manipulation of emotions                                              | 3.90 | 4.30 | 0.40 |
| 13.                                 | Communicational contamination                                         | 3.90 | 4.60 | 0.70 |
| 14.                                 | Exaggeration                                                          | 4.20 | 4.55 | 0.35 |
| 15.                                 | Perceived personal inefficacy                                         | 4.05 | 4.45 | 0.40 |
| 16.                                 | Uncertainty                                                           | 3.85 | 4.45 | 0.60 |
| 17.                                 | Concentration of power                                                | 3.75 | 4.50 | 0.75 |
| 18.                                 | Gender differences                                                    | 4.00 | 4.60 | 0.60 |
| 19.                                 | Negative emotions                                                     | 3.90 | 4.45 | 0.55 |
| 20.                                 | Protest activity                                                      | 4.15 | 4.60 | 0.45 |
| 21.                                 | Obsequiousness                                                        | 4.15 | 4.45 | 0.30 |
| 22.                                 | Relational conflict                                                   | 4.00 | 4.45 | 0.45 |
| 23.                                 | Task conflict                                                         | 4.20 | 4.65 | 0.45 |
| 24.                                 | Perceived systemic inefficacy                                         | 4.00 | 4.50 | 0.50 |
| 25.                                 | Ideological conflicts                                                 | 4.20 | 4.35 | 0.15 |
| 26.                                 | Unprincipled behaviors                                                | 4.20 | 4.50 | 0.30 |
| 27.                                 | Illegitimate behaviors                                                | 3.85 | 4.50 | 0.35 |
| 28.                                 | Playing with time                                                     | 3.95 | 4.50 | 0.55 |
| 29.                                 | Lack of structure in activities                                       | 4.20 | 4.55 | 0.35 |
| 30.                                 | Selective interpretation of rules to justify managerial decisions     | –    | 4.40 | –    |
| Dimension: Gray political behavior  |                                                                       |      |      |      |
| 31.                                 | Political friendship                                                  | 4.00 | 4.35 | 0.35 |
| 32.                                 | Blaming and threatening colleagues in meetings                        | –    | 4.55 | –    |
| 33.                                 | Use of informal networks to advance organizational goals              | –    | 4.35 | –    |
| 34.                                 | Mediation                                                             | 3.75 | 4.65 | 0.90 |
| 35.                                 | Using political insight to predict events                             | 3.80 | 4.60 | 0.80 |
| 36.                                 | Functional diversity in interactions                                  | 3.85 | 4.55 | 0.70 |
| 37.                                 | Dogmatic attitude                                                     | 4.10 | 4.70 | 0.60 |
| 38.                                 | Access to information                                                 | 4.15 | 4.50 | 0.35 |
| 39.                                 | Competitiveness                                                       | 3.95 | 4.65 | 0.70 |
| 40.                                 | Networking with powerful individuals                                  | 3.90 | 4.70 | 0.80 |
| 41.                                 | Reverse reactions                                                     | 3.75 | 4.60 | 0.85 |
| 42.                                 | Individual power                                                      | 4.10 | 4.45 | 0.35 |
| 43.                                 | Political use of information                                          | 4.10 | 4.65 | 0.55 |
| 44.                                 | Reduced formality                                                     | 4.05 | 4.60 | 0.55 |
| 45.                                 | Ambiguous behavior                                                    | 4.10 | 4.55 | 0.45 |
| 46.                                 | Use of power                                                          | 4.20 | 4.35 | 0.15 |
| 47.                                 | Socializing with stakeholders                                         | 4.10 | 4.55 | 0.45 |
| 48.                                 | Power structuring                                                     | 4.30 | 4.70 | 0.40 |
| 49.                                 | Political influence                                                   | 3.90 | 4.60 | 0.70 |
| Dimension: White political behavior |                                                                       |      |      |      |
| 50.                                 | Interaction                                                           | 4.20 | 4.55 | 0.35 |
| 51.                                 | Insistence on participation in the organization's political processes | –    | 4.65 | –    |
| 52.                                 | Observance of honesty in communication                                | 4.10 | 4.65 | 0.55 |
| 53.                                 | Individual influence for group benefits                               | 3.95 | 4.80 | 0.85 |
| 54.                                 | Use of appropriate tone and speech                                    | 4.20 | 4.40 | 0.20 |
| 55.                                 | Accountability                                                        | 3.90 | 4.40 | 0.50 |
| 56.                                 | Establishing stable and predictable interactions                      | 3.80 | 4.55 | 0.75 |
| 57.                                 | Consistency between claims and actions                                | 3.85 | 4.65 | 0.80 |
| 58.                                 | Trust in organizational politics                                      | 3.90 | 4.40 | 0.50 |

|     |                                                                                             |      |      |      |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| 59. | Diversity of competencies                                                                   | 4.25 | 4.50 | 0.30 |
| 60. | Attention to political parties                                                              | 4.05 | 4.45 | 0.40 |
| 61. | Use of power based on expertise and skill                                                   | 4.00 | 4.50 | 0.50 |
| 62. | Use of power to advance group objectives                                                    | 3.85 | 4.60 | 0.75 |
| 63. | Positive emotions                                                                           | 3.95 | 4.60 | 0.65 |
| 64. | Control over resources                                                                      | 4.10 | 4.70 | 0.60 |
| 65. | Awareness of political trends for optimal decisions                                         | 4.05 | 4.25 | 0.20 |
| 66. | Ideological justification                                                                   | 3.90 | 4.60 | 0.30 |
| 67. | Positive affect                                                                             | 4.20 | 4.50 | 0.30 |
| 68. | Participation in decision-making                                                            | 4.00 | 4.55 | 0.55 |
| 69. | Networking ability                                                                          | 4.10 | 4.65 | 0.55 |
| 70. | Political literacy                                                                          | 4.25 | 4.50 | 0.25 |
| 71. | Political participation                                                                     | 3.90 | 4.60 | 0.70 |
| 72. | Attention to feedback                                                                       | 3.85 | 4.80 | 0.95 |
| 73. | Understanding emotional intelligence in behavior                                            | 4.40 | 4.60 | 0.20 |
| 74. | Appropriate use of political intelligence                                                   | 3.75 | 4.40 | 0.65 |
| 75. | Accurate perception of the environment in personal behavior                                 | 4.10 | 4.65 | 0.55 |
| 76. | Individual alertness                                                                        | 4.20 | 4.50 | 0.30 |
| 77. | Persuasion                                                                                  | 4.20 | 4.45 | 0.25 |
| 78. | Supporting group interests                                                                  | 3.85 | 4.40 | 0.55 |
| 79. | Efforts to overcome resource scarcity                                                       | 4.10 | 4.40 | 0.30 |
| 80. | Reliance on expert power                                                                    | 3.95 | 4.65 | 0.30 |
| 81. | Reliance on referent power                                                                  | 4.15 | 4.60 | 0.45 |
| 82. | Correct use of political skills                                                             | 4.05 | 4.45 | 0.40 |
| 83. | Political will to attract group benefits                                                    | 4.10 | 4.50 | 0.40 |
| 84. | Application of political knowledge for non-personal benefits                                | 4.00 | 4.75 | 0.75 |
| 85. | In-group trust                                                                              | 3.85 | 4.55 | 0.70 |
| 86. | Clarification of managerial decisions to reduce ambiguity and enhance political reassurance | —    | 4.65 | —    |

Based on the results of the above table, it can be stated that, first, the opinions regarding all indicators have reached a final consensus, since the difference in the mean responses between the first and second rounds was less than 1 and greater than 0.1 when compared in the final stage. In addition, the mean score above 3 on the Likert scale for all indicators indicates that all of them were identified as effective and therefore no indicator required elimination.

**Table 4. Kendall's W Concordance Test (Delphi Round Two)**

| Number of experts | Kendall's W coefficient | Chi-square statistic | Degrees of freedom | Significance level |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 15                | 0.785                   | 787.312              | 85                 | 0.0001             |

As shown in the above table, the significance value of 0.0001, which is less than the 0.05 threshold, confirms the correlation among the responses. Additionally, the Kendall's W coefficient above 0.5 indicates an acceptable level of agreement among experts in this test.

**Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Calculation for the Second Delphi Round**

| Number of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 86              | 0.790            |

The above table summarizes the statistics related to the reliability analysis. Based on these results, the reliability coefficient for the indicators is 0.790, indicating that the 86 items possess a high degree of internal consistency.

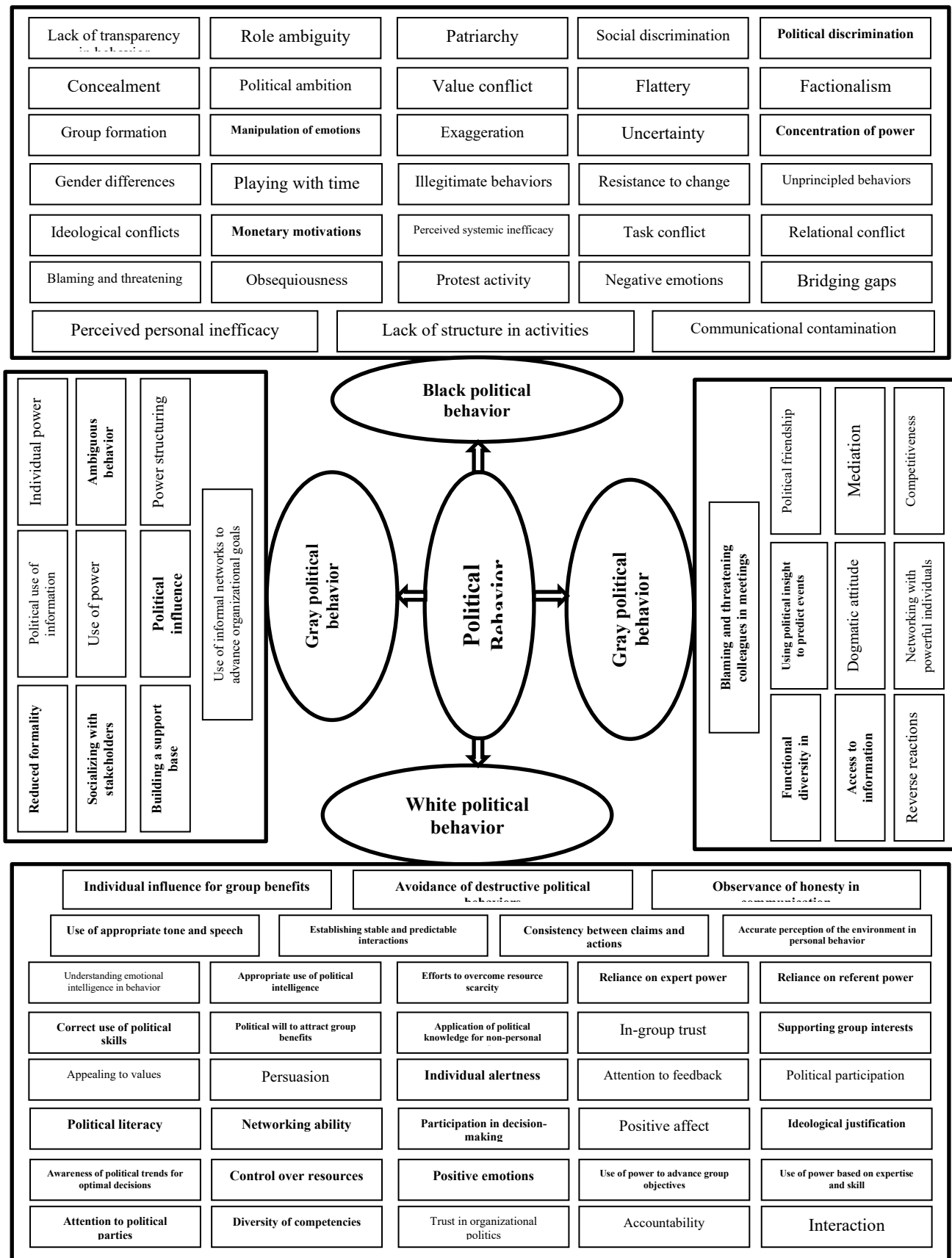


Figure 1. Final Model of the Study

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to achieve expert consensus on the model of political behavior in governmental organizations through a Delphi-based validation approach. The results from two Delphi rounds demonstrated strong convergence of expert opinions regarding the structure, dimensions, and indicators of political behavior. Experts validated 86 indicators categorized across the black, white, and gray behavioral dimensions, confirming the conceptual robustness of the political behavior model originally proposed by Tir and colleagues (6). The overall consensus was supported statistically by a high Kendall's W coefficient, indicating substantial agreement, as well as strong internal reliability based on Cronbach's alpha. These findings indicate that the political behavior typology is both analytically coherent and suitable for application in public administration settings.

The results highlight that political behavior in governmental organizations encompasses a wide spectrum of actions ranging from constructive (white), to ambiguous (gray), to destructive (black) forms. Experts consistently identified lack of transparency, political discrimination, manipulation tactics, and systemic inefficacy as prominent elements of black political behavior. This aligns with previous research showing that destructive political behaviors—such as concealment, favoritism, and manipulative influence—are often more prevalent in hierarchical, heavily bureaucratic institutions where formal channels may be perceived as ineffective or politically constrained (5). Similarly, prior studies have warned that unethical political behavior undermines trust, reduces morale, and negatively affects organizational effectiveness (2). The strong consensus on these indicators underscores that public institutions remain vulnerable to behaviors stemming from structural ambiguity, authority centralization, and unequal access to information.

Conversely, white political behaviors—such as constructive communication, persuasion, responsible use of power, and coalition-building for collective benefit—were also highly endorsed by experts. This reflects the growing scholarly view that political behavior is not inherently negative but may serve critical organizational functions when used ethically and strategically. For instance, studies have found that political skill, emotional intelligence, and constructive influence behaviors enhance collaboration, organizational citizenship, and decision-making effectiveness (18). Likewise, research demonstrates that ethical climates, participatory leadership styles, and open communication structures reduce destructive political behavior while reinforcing healthier, more transparent political interactions (9). The experts' validation of these indicators confirms that public organizations can harness political behavior positively when organizational norms encourage responsible influence and fairness.

Gray political behavior, representing a midpoint between constructive and destructive actions, was also strongly supported. Experts highlighted items such as networking with powerful individuals, use of informal channels, ambiguous interactions, and competitive positioning. These behaviors appeared highly situational, dependent on organizational culture, contextual pressures, and leadership quality. Prior work similarly identifies gray political behaviors as behaviorally adaptive, emerging particularly in environments where formal rules are vague or where organizational outcomes depend heavily on relational rather than procedural control (12). Researchers argue that gray political behavior often thrives in public-sector environments due to institutional complexity and fluctuating internal power dynamics (4). The strong endorsement of these gray behaviors indicates the necessity of acknowledging political ambiguity as a legitimate and recurring element of administrative work.

The results also support previous insights regarding antecedents of political behavior. For example, political discrimination, factionalism, and ideological conflicts were among the most strongly endorsed black-behavior

indicators. This is consistent with studies suggesting that when organizational contexts are perceived as inequitable or politically charged, employees often adopt strategies to protect themselves or gain advantage, even when such tactics undermine organizational health (3). Likewise, research indicates that destructive political behavior increases under conditions of resource scarcity, unclear decision processes, and inconsistent managerial oversight (23). These patterns again emerged clearly in the validated model, demonstrating that structural conditions of governmental organizations significantly shape political behavior.

Positive behavioral indicators such as honesty in communication, participation in decision-making, and constructive engagement were also endorsed by experts. These outcomes correspond with studies showing that authentic leadership, ethical climates, and transparent practices reduce destructive politics and instead foster loyalty, commitment, and cooperative political engagement (17, 24). Additionally, research on political behavior in public institutions demonstrates that managers who apply responsible political strategies—such as coalition building for policy improvement—enhance organizational performance and increase stakeholder alignment (14). The experts' views therefore reinforce the conceptual distinction between ethical and unethical political behaviors and highlight their respective roles in enabling or hindering public sector effectiveness.

Notably, this study's findings also closely align with the shadow management perspective, which argues that hidden political mechanisms significantly shape organizational behavior beyond formal structures (10). The validation of many gray-behavior indicators—such as informal networking or relational influence—reflects the shadow management notion that covert political interactions often function alongside official processes. This triangulation demonstrates that understanding political behavior requires examining both visible and invisible structures of organizational influence.

Furthermore, the model's validated indicators also support the growing literature emphasizing the role of technology and digital environments in shaping political behavior. Access to information, digital networking, and selective dissemination of data—items included within the gray and white political dimensions—were consistently supported by experts. This echoes emerging research showing that digital transformation enables new modes of influence, including the strategic use of information systems to shape perceptions or outcomes (13). At the same time, digital transparency can reduce opportunities for corrupt or hidden political behaviors, reinforcing ethical norms (12). The inclusion of technology-related elements within the validated political behavior framework suggests that modern models must reflect this evolving environment.

In addition, several indicators relating to competency diversity, communication style, and emotional intelligence received high levels of agreement, demonstrating the significance of individual characteristics in shaping political behavior. Studies have consistently shown that individuals with high emotional intelligence and strong communication skills are more effective in navigating political environments ethically, reducing conflicts, and promoting organizational harmony (22). Similarly, research demonstrates that competency diversity enhances administrative agility and reduces reliance on destructive political tactics by creating more balanced structures of influence (19). The experts' endorsement of these variables reflects their importance in defining constructive political engagement.

The findings also reinforce the notion that political behavior must be examined within cultural and national contexts. Experts identified indicators such as reliance on ideology, patriarchal influences, and normative expectations as critical components of political dynamics. This resonates with studies emphasizing the cultural embeddedness of political behavior, especially in countries where social norms and collective identities shape

organizational interactions more strongly than formal rules (15). Similarly, research in the Iranian context highlights that political behavior is influenced by cultural expectations, ideological alignment, and informal networks, which often determine access to organizational power (25). The results of this study reaffirm the need to evaluate political behavior within contextual boundaries rather than relying solely on universal theories.

Finally, the high reliability and consensus obtained across both Delphi rounds highlight that the validated framework provides a strong evidence-based foundation for analyzing and managing political behavior in governmental organizations. This contributes to the literature by producing a systematic, empirically supported categorization of political behavior that integrates ethical, ambiguous, and destructive dimensions. It also offers public managers a comprehensive tool to better understand, predict, and manage political dynamics within their institutions, which is critical for improving organizational transparency, performance, and integrity.

This study, while rigorous in methodological design, is not without limitations. First, the Delphi method relies heavily on the subjective judgments of selected experts. Although the panel consisted of highly qualified individuals with extensive academic and administrative experience, their perspectives may not fully capture the diverse range of political behaviors present across all governmental institutions. Second, the study was conducted within a specific national and cultural context, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other administrative environments with different organizational norms or political structures. Third, while the Delphi method is effective for reaching consensus, it may also inadvertently suppress minority viewpoints or unconventional perspectives that could be theoretically valuable. Finally, the study's reliance on self-reported assessments from experts, rather than behavioral observations or empirical field data, may limit the ability to capture dynamic, real-time political behaviors as they naturally unfold in organizational settings.

Future research should incorporate multi-method designs that include not only expert consensus but also field observations, case studies, and empirical performance data to deepen understanding of political behavior in governmental organizations. Cross-cultural comparative studies would also be valuable, particularly to examine how political behaviors differ across administrative systems with varying norms, levels of hierarchy, and governance structures. Longitudinal research could explore how political behavior evolves over time in response to structural reforms, leadership changes, or technological transformations. Additionally, future studies may integrate artificial intelligence and data analytics to analyze patterns of political communication or detect covert political behavior within digital administrative networks. Research should also investigate the impacts of newly emerging forms of political behavior—such as algorithmic influence, digital lobbying, and virtual coalition-building—on public sector integrity and decision-making quality.

Practitioners should prioritize developing transparent communication systems, ethical leadership practices, and clear decision-making structures to reduce destructive political behavior and encourage constructive influence. Training programs focusing on emotional intelligence, political skill, and responsible communication can strengthen employees' ability to engage in ethical political behavior. Managers should also implement monitoring mechanisms to detect harmful political actions early and establish guidelines that encourage fair access to information, reduce ambiguity, and promote a culture of trust. Finally, organizations should foster environments where constructive political behavior—such as collaboration, persuasion, and coalition-building—is valued and leveraged strategically to improve public value and administrative performance.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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