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Moderation of Superior-Subordinate Communication: Relationship between Policymaking and Policy Based Attitude towards Implementation

Headings

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Abstract: *The study bridges the research gap concerning the direct relation of policymaking (PM) and policy-based attitude (PBA), later by investigating the moderation of superior-subordinate communication (SSC) in their relationship by advancing the LMX theory. Using the demonstrative sample (n=253) collected from the in-service bureaucrats of Punjab, data were analyzed by using (SEM) Structural Equation Modeling approach on AMOS 22.0. The findings demonstrate that a positive relationship existed between policymaking and policy-based attitude. Meanwhile, SSC moderates the policymaking and policy-based attitude positively. It also suggests some recommendations for improving the policymaking by ensuring the availability of SSC channels among the bureaucracy of Punjab.*

Key Words: Superior-Subordinate Communication, Policymaking, Policy-Based Attitude, Pakistan. Bureaucracy of Punjab.

Introduction

Public policy deals with the study of government decisions and actions planned to deal with an issue of public concern, whereas policy analysis describes the investigations that yield precise and valuable information for policymakers. The public policy is also regarded as whatever the governments choose to do or not to do (Cairney, 2013). In this regard, the social scientists show the conviction that rational, scientific methods can be used to improve the service delivery (May & Jochim, 2013). The policy provides several lessons to be learned even if it is not proven to be a success. Some policies fail to achieve targets not necessarily because of the paucity of funds rather the shortage of qualified and trained human resource (Pelletier et al., 2012; Strehlenert, Richter-Sundberg, Nyström, & Hasson, 2015).

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Policy instruments are often formulated without accounting for the environments under which these instruments are applied, and the implementation strategy is often ignored (Mytelka & Smith, 2002). Thus, many policies fail to achieve targets in the way that policymakers intended even when it seems in their self-interest to do so. Poor policy implementation may also be due to inadequate communication between organizations within government hierarchies those who do not comply with the policy and execute it with less enthusiasm due to their exclusion from the policy process. It means the policymakers should not assume that the policies will be implemented automatically and universally (Dieleman, Shaw, & Zwanikken, 2011; Stoker, 1998).

Policy analysis is a multidimensional field in which a variety of different activities are analyzed and collated. Therefore, there is no single or "one best" way of conducting policy analyses (Mayer, van Daalen, & Bots, 2004). Public policy always involves questions of institutional designs where it is practiced (Considine, 2012), and it is imperative that policies formulated by real actors might become more efficient which not only improve institutions but also social milieu. Institutions of policymaking are important because most of the time the process of policymaking is entrenched in routine practices carried out by the government agencies. It is interesting that the interactions and communications frequently follow predefined and historically practiced processes and norms (Howlett, Tan, Migone, Wellstead, & Evans, 2014). It can be inferred safely, now, that both actions and inactions are determined by the institutions in a normative way (Wellstead, Stedman, & Howlett, 2011).

The golden thread that connects policy and outcomes together rules that play a critical role in policy-making. The rule is a policy instrument that limits human agency. Thus, rules both grant and limit power. The politics and policy making are intertwined and a game of rule-making and rule-breaking design any intervention strategy (Knill & Bauer, 2016). Rules define the organization of the department and how it will conduct its business (Tambulasi, 2011), and formal rules and regulations are central to the policymaking process and policy implementation (Fischer, Miller, & Sidney, 2007). However, the consultation through communication between superiors and the subordinates can provide more sophistication examination of the LMX theory in the process of the formulation of the rules which remains minimal in the literature.

Therefore, in response to the recent call for further investigation the aspect of the communication and policy implementation by several scholars e.g. Bisel and Kramer, (2014), this research contributes to the development of a more rigorous understanding of policy formulation through the utilization of primary data to make conclusions in the context of LMX theory. Moreover, this study tests the proposed model of the moderation of the superior-subordinate communication in the policymaking and Policy Based attitude of the implementers to improve policy making in Punjab to bridge the research gap in the literature of communication and policy management.

Rationale and Theoretical Framework (LMX Theory)

Tanner and Otto, (2015) noted that the notion of generalization and wide-ranging application of

a theory such as a leader member Exchange (LMX) is imperative. Therefore, this study uses the LMX theory by its nature abstract and examines in a new context of Pakistan. Although numerous researchers such as <u>Abu Bakar, and McCann, (2016)</u> validated the practicality of LMX theoretical models in defining superior and subordinate relations across many disciplines. Previous studies in communication discipline also evident its application in clarification of several aspects of the communication channels. Similarly, this study applied the LMX model in the context of the policy making to identify its possible impacts on the policy-based attitude of the implementers which may reflect the same wide-ranging explanation.

Furthermore, as the LMX theory reflected unique generalizability to articulate the communication factors, this study also expects such articulation that how communication between superiors and their subordinated influences the policy implementation**.** Based on above arguments LMX theory may reflect how policy-based attitude may vary in the case of the positive or negative superior-subordinate communication. Therefore, based on the assumptions of the LMX theory the current study is considering the role of the (SSC) in the diverse relation of the (PM) and (PBA) of the public organs in Pakistan based on the policy. The attitudinal domains of the theory as postulated in the theory are amongst the important consequences of the LMX theory and have never been tested in the context of the Pakistani organization. The current study focuses on the role of the (SSC) one of the dimension studies in many studies in the context of the LMX theory.

Therefore, it is interesting to consider one of the consequences of LMX theory e.g. attitudinal related outcome to examine its prediction by considering the policymaking procedure in the Pakistani public organ such as secretariat group and district administration. Moreover, to date, not many studies have addressed the explanation of the diverse relationships between policymaking procedures in Pakistan and its attitudinal outcomes with the communication perspective. We argue, this effort will enrich the literature of the LMX theory by examining this new conceptual perspective alongside the Pakistani organizational settings. Based on the argument we propose the moderation of superior-subordinate communication conceptual model presented in the Figure 1 addressing the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

There are Following Objectives if the Study:

1. To determine a way forward to give reasonable solutions or possibilities for resolving the policy formulation problems in the context of the Pakistani organization.
2. To determine the role of superior-subordinate communication on the policy-based attitude in the context of the Pakistani organization.
3. To determine the interaction of the superior-subordinate communication and policy formulation on the policy-based attitude in the context of the Pakistani organization.
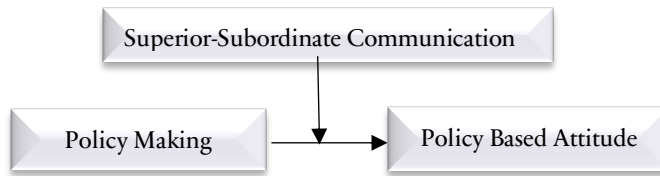
Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Moderation of Superior-Subordinate Communication Model for Policy-Making

Policymaking

The term policy as a concept or procedure has neither been defined in the Rules of Business nor its essential components, as given by several scholars e.g. (See Hallsworth, Parker, & Rutter, 2011; Parsons, 2002), have been elaborated to provide a framework to guide policy formulation and subsequently its implementation. The rules are not exhaustive and inclusive, thus, provide an inadequate framework for policy formulation. They are also generalized and discretionary in the allocation of business to departments and other administrative matters. For example, rules empower the CM to pass orders to decide a particular case, in cases of urgency or other exceptional circumstances, without placing it in the Cabinet meeting (see Rule 24 (1) and (2), Rules of Business, 2011), without defining the terms 'emergencies' or 'exceptional circumstances. Thus, the policy formulation capacity of administrative departments has been eroded over time due to centralized decision making and top-down approach.

Furthermore, researchers (see Farr, Hacker, & Kazee, 2008; Fulton, 2004) also supported the use of discretion for preference of creativity (Farr, Hacker, & Kazee, 2006). Discretion may be curtailed where the systems are not maturing enough to impose self-regulation. A similar argument has been put forward by Sidney that all institutional areas have rules, norms, and procedures that affect actors' choices and strategies (Fischer et al., 2007). John and Cole have further stated that such informal and formal rules determine the course of public decision making (John & Cole, 2000) and result in the negative attitude towards the policy implementation. Based on the prior argument, we hypothesize that:

H1; There is a Direct Link Between Policymaking and Policy Based Attitude of the Implementers.

Policy Based Attitude of the Implementers

The attitude refers to the overall judgment about the individual anything or the idea based on his/her perception developed (Tuu, Olsen, Thao, & Anh, 2008). With the potential context of the organizations, the team members or the implementers of the organization expect to be involved in the process of the policy formulation. The implementers face the real-time problems in the field therefore, they expect to get involved in the phase of the policy-making. The attitude as discussed in the previous studies related to the organizational behavior, is the outcome of several factors e.g. work value, satisfaction and communication (Bakar, Mohamad, & Mustafa, 2007). However, from the perspective of the communication factor influence, the attitude based on the nature of the treatment the member of the organization gets from the leaders of that organization.

Many studies explored this diverse relationship and concluded that accessibility of the communication channels in the organization to its members can provide a better opportunity for them to have participation in the organizational decision (Bisel & Kramer, 2014; Miles, Patrick, & King, 1996). Consequently, it is expected towards the positive attitude of the members by getting involved in the discussions related to the policy.

Whereas, the domains of the (SSC) construct offer the openness in the communication channels to ensure the positive association amongst the members of the organization from the top management to the implementers (Abu Bakar & McCann, 2015). It offers the prospect for the members that the superiors allow them to give the suggestions, they get concerns of the superiors on their personal matters and get constructive environment at the workplace where they have permission to give input on the policy-making. The positive communication provides a chance to ask questions to the superiors about the implementations of the policy and problems related to the existing policies (Tanner & Otto, 2015). Thus, the (PBA) may differ in an organization where positive and upward communication channels are available for the implementers.

On the other hand, the, if these communication channels are not available or such kind of the communication, doesn't exist the negative (PBA) can be assumed in that organization. For instance, the irrationally in the disapproving of the implementer's ideas about the policymaking in the presence of others. There are other aspects of the explained in the previous research (see Steele & Plenty, 2015) which suggest that the informational sharing to the feedback from the subordinates can have a better impact on their performances, however, the explanation of the (PBA) is slightly hazy in the perspective of the (SSC). Therefore, the current study considers this relationship to give a better explanation of the said phenomena.

H$_2$; There is a positive link between positive superior-subordinate communication and Policy based attitude of the Implementers.

Moderation of the Superior-Subordinate Communication

The (SSC) addresses the interactions between administrative executives and their subordinates and how they work composed to attain individual and organizational objectives (Steele & Plenty, 2015). Reasonable ascending and descending communication is crucial for an efficacious organization as it minutes the gap amongst superior and subordinates by growing the levels of trustfulness, support, and the rate of recurrence in their interactions. Some earlier studies determine that the (SSC) as the way forward for the improvement in the participation of the stakeholders as it provide opportunities to interact (Lamude et al., 2004; Remland, 1984). The domains of the (SSC) ranges from the communication styles to the feedback. Moreover, (SSC) specifies a policy formulation procedure in which participation of the stakeholders play a key role in determining the course and result of public policies (Bisel & Kramer, 2014). The policymaking process without having the positive communication between the implementers and the policy drivers may lead to the negative attitude of the implementers. However, it remains with the

limited exploration in the past studies hence, the current study design offers to evaluate the moderating effect of the (SSC) in the said perspective.

Consequently, in the context of the policy formulation, there is need to examine the policy formulation as it is way forward to give the sort of reasonable solutions or possibilities for resolving the policy problems (Fulton, 2004). The emerging problem's solutions need time to time consultation among the policymakers and the implementers may need to consider the interaction of the (SSC) with among them to provide the necessary explanation of this important channel. Previous studies recommend that if the administration is to progress the value and efficacy of their policies there is need to improve the tools of the (SSC) which remains slight in the explained in the context of the Pakistani bureaucracy.

H3; The Link Between Policymaking and (PBA) Intensify when there is a Positive Superior-Subordinate Communication.

Methods

Sample

A total 253 Participants in the current research were considered among the primarily administrative employees from the cadres of the bureaucracy from the government organization including the secretariat group and the district government group of the province of the Punjab Pakistan.

Sample Characteristics

Regarding designations, 74 were section officers, 48 deputy secretaries, 22 additional secretaries, 4 secretaries, 30 assistant commissioners, 14 DCO/ ADC's, 3 commissioners, 23 EDO's, 17 planners and 18 were field officers of the Punjab government. Out of the total sample n=253, 14.6 percent were female remaining 85.4 percent were male officers.

Procedure

A structured survey was conducted with various heads of administrative departments. 253 respondents serving officers (bureaucrats) working in the secretariat, attached departments, autonomous bodies, and field offices were asked a series of 47 standard questions in a structured questionnaire based on convenient sampling technique. The justification for the selection of these participants is to be in line with the purpose of the study as it is designed to explain the policymaking and implementation process in the government organizations of the Punjab. The sample size (n=253) among the said population is determined by adopting the method of the sample size determination suggested by the Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, (2001). Survey packets were sent directly to 253 randomly selected administrative officers. Moreover, the proposed model was tested for the goodness of fit CFA on AMOS.23.

Measures

Policymaking (PM)

The variable of the Policymaking (PM) will be measured by using the measure based on the 14-items with the 5-point Likert-type scale developed by Wellstead et al., (2011) and revealed high reliability with Cronbach Alpha =0. 915. These items can apprehend the diverse nature of the policymaking and it can evaluate the policymaking process from the perspective of the employees in a comprehend manner.

Policy Based Attitude (PBA)

The variable of the Policy Based Attitude (PBA) of the officers will be measured by using the measure based on the 9-items with the 5-point Likert-type scale developed by the Wellstead et al., (2011) and revealed high reliability with Cronbach Alpha =0. 718. These items are designed to capture the dimensions of the (PBA) of the officers in the context of the employees and, therefore, adopted in this study based on its utility in the recent studies related to the theme of policy analysis.

Superior-Subordinate Communication (SSC)

The English version of the Superior-Subordinate Communication (SSC) measure based on the 24-items with the 5-point Likert-type scale selected from the work of Miles et al., (1996) was used to attain the data. It also showed high reliability with Cronbach Alpha =0. 911. These items can apprehend the certain dimensions of the (SSC) to offer the dynamics of ranges from positive communication to the work-related performances of the employees.

Analysis

In the initial analyses of a total sample (n=253) comprises of the serving officers (bureaucrats) working in the secretariat, attached departments, autonomous bodies, and field offices of Punjab government we conduct a descriptive analysis. Afterward, the data were tested for entrance and data keying mistakes. Further, normality (based on Skewness, Kurtosis, and Shiparo Wilk's test) of the distribution of each item and the compound score of each variable was analyzed. The results show that the data is within the range of normality as Skewness test values for the Policymaking (PM), Policy based attitude and Superior-Subordinate communication (SSC) were normal. The mean with standard deviation was also less than one and is always regarded as the normal (see Table I). Furthermore, the correlation between the (PM), (PBA) and (SSC) (see Table 1) is also significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). The reason for selecting the correlation test before conducting the hypothesis testing as we proposed the moderation of the (SSC) is the proposed model and it was not sure that how it will influence. For example, when there is need to know about the relationship between them as recommended in the previous literature.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlation (N= 253)

Constructs	Mean	SD	α	PM	PBA	SSC
PM	2.8506	0.83281	.915	1		
PBA	3.4083	0.61162	.718	.423*	1	
SSC	3.1545	0.68006	.911	.528*	.329*	1

PM= Policy Making, PBA= Policy Based Attitude, and SSC= Superior-subordinate Communication

Construct Statistical Analysis

Secondly, the reliability of the scales was tested, which reflected that the reliability of the scales is highly reliable (see Table 2). Before reliability of the scale, we reversed coded the relevant e.g. 2 items of the (PBA) (item 4 and 10) as both items were negative. There was no need to conduct EFA as the scales adopted from the established constructs and reliability showed the satisfactory result, however, the goodness of the fit and validities is tested by CFA on AMOS version 22. Whereas, the standardized loadings of each of the (PM), (PBA) and (SSC) variables are presented in figure 2.
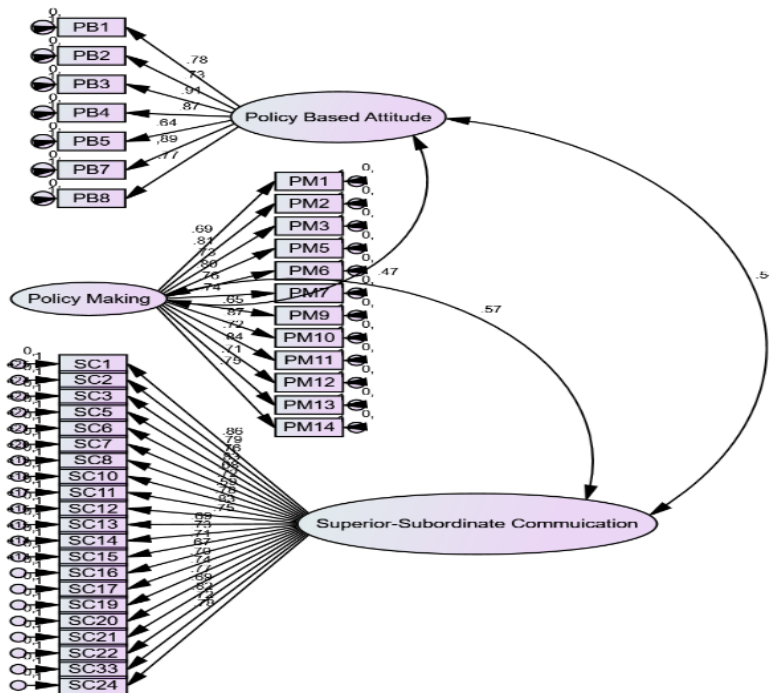

Figure 2: Measurement Model with Standardized Loadings of (PM), (PBA) and (SSC) variables.

Model Fitness, Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Thirdly, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed on AMOS (Analysis of a Moment Structures) to determine the uniqueness of the instruments used to measure (PM), (PBA), and (SSC) as used in previous studies (Raza, Bakar & Mohmad, 2018). The values that determine the proposed model of moderation of (SSC) attained goodness of measurement model fitness see Table 2. By using mix approach of the indices, the (SSC) moderation measurement model shows the goodness of fitness as suggested ((Raza, Bakar & Mohmad, 2019).

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Model	χ^2	(df)	χ^2/ (df)	CFI	NFI	SRMSR	RMSEA
SSC-PM-PBA Measurement	370.73	237.04	2.07	0.86	0.89	0.057	0.053
(PM X SSC) Structural	365.21	178.76	2.04	0.93	0.92	0.045	0.032.

Whereas after deleting the seven-items from the (SSC) measurement model three-items from the (SSC) variable, two-items from the (PM) and two-items from the (PBA) demonstrated (also see Figure 2) the convergent and discriminate validity as presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Discriminant and Convergent Validity of the (PM), (PBA) and (SSC) Variables.

Variables	CR	AVE	PM	PBA	SSC
Policy Making	.942	.575	(.758)		
Policy Based Attitude	.926	.646	.47*	(.804)	
Superior-Subordinate Communication	.963	.557	.57*	.54*	(.746)

$p < 0.001$, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted and Square Root of the AVE is in parentheses.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested by using the HLM steps presented by the Preacher and Hayes Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes, (2007), alongside with the (SEM) structural equation modeling approach is recently revised and recommended by the Hayes, Montoya, and Rockwood, (2017) as a rigorous, suitable, and well-organized procedure for testing moderation (Hasnain, Raza, & Qureshi, 2020). Therefore, adopting this recent approach to test our (SSC) moderation model AMOS 22.0 for the (SEM) analysis was used as also many scholars such as Raudenbush, (2002) also suggested it analyze interaction effects. Due to the reasons, it permits for immediate analyses of multilevel data (e.g., nested structure), which reduces probable biases, provisions moderating tests, and identifies sources of variance (Stephen Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

In the first model, both variables having significantly influences (PBA) of the officers R^2 = 0.11 as (PM) direct effect on (PBA) was (β = .35, $p < 0.05$). After adding the (SSC) in the model 1 as the antecedent the direct effect of the (SSC) on (PBA) was (β = .14, $p < 0.05$ and R^2 = 0.27) (see Table. 4). Whereas, in second model after adding the interaction term (PM X SSC) the direct

effect between (PM) and (PBA) was significantly increased (β = .52, p < 0.05), and direct effect of (SSC) on (PBA) in model 2, was also significant (β = .12, p < 0.05).

Table 4. Moderation of Superior-Subordinate Communication Model Results.

	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome Construct		
Policy Based Attitude		
Step 1: Independent Constructs:		
Policy Making	.35*(6.78)	.52*(4.81)
Superior-subordinate Communication	.14*(3.34)	.12**(2.79)
R^2	.11	.27
Step 2: Interaction		
Policy Making X Superior-subordinate Communication		.17*(6.18)
R^2		.43
ΔR^2		.16
Convergent Criterion	1.09	1.08
Means Interception	1.21*	1.47*

Note: The values in parentheses represent t statistics, N = 253, R^2 = proportion of variance explained by antecedent in both model 1 and 2, * =p<0.01, and **p<0.05.

The structural model of the (PM X SSC) interaction also reveals model fitness (see Table 3) as $\chi 2$ =365.21 df= 178.76. $\chi 2$/ (df) = 2.04, CFI =0.93, NFI =0.92, SRMSR =0.045, and RMSEA =0.032. The interaction effect (PM X SSC) was also positive and significant (β = .17, p < 0.01) with the 't' value 6.188 (see Table. 5). Thus, the interaction term is significant which is a signal that the (SSC) positively moderates the relationship of (PM) and (PBA) of the officers. Therefore, based on the above results the interaction of the (PM) and the (SSC) on the change the attitude of the implementers (R^2 =.43) and change in ΔR^2 =.16 presented in Table 5, excluding the direct effect of the independent variable of (PM) which is (R^2 .11).

Further, the slope test (PM X SSC) interaction in figure 3, clarified that there is a positive moderating role of (SSC) and it potentially it has improved the (PBA) in the model. Thus, it is apparent that the officers if effectively involved in the process of policy formulation involving a range of activities mentioned in Item 1 to 14 their attitude towards implementation of the policy significantly increased due to the effective superior-subordinate communication. Hence, the (PM) effectiveness in terms of its impetrations significantly depends upon (SSC) if it is positives and vice versa in context of the bureaucracy of Punjab.
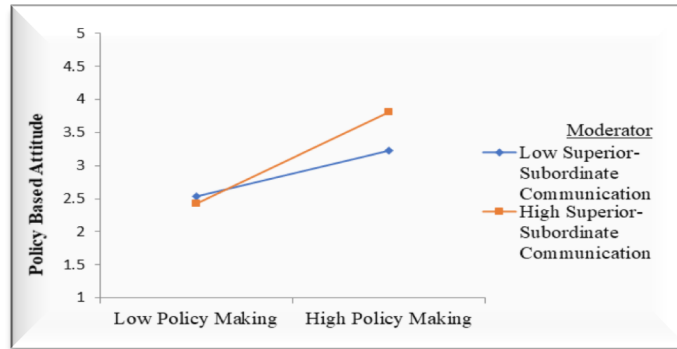
Figure 3: Slope of the Interaction of the Superior-Subordinate Communication (SSC) and Policy Making (PM) on the Policy Base Attitude (PBA).

Discussion

The study is in line with the research call of the Dieleman, Shaw, and Zwanikken, (2011) which recommended to further inquire about the policy formulation process in the context of the public sector organizations. The current study advances the literature by adding the factor of the superior-subordinate communication which remains slight in the explained in the context of the Pakistani bureaucracy. The findings show that there is a significant variance change due to the independent variable (PM) on (PBA) which is in line with the notion of the Araral et.al., (2012) that policymaking may have a direct relationship with the attitude of the employees. However, there is also significant variance change is reported due to the moderating variable (SSC) which indicates that the bureaucracy of the Punjab has less effect on their attitude based on the availability of the communication channels within the organization.

As it is also noted by the Abu Bakar, and McCann, (2016) the effect of the superior-subordinate communication may vary culture to culture. Therefore, as findings reflect that better policy formation can be done by involving the implementers as asked in the items of the (SSC). It can now safely be concluded that all the three variables (PM, (PBA), and (SSC) selected in this research are strongly moderating factors in policymaking and implementation as all hypothesis are accepted. The quality of policy analysis can be enhanced if (SSC) is improved and the bureaucratic hierarchies are effectively involved in (PM) is also expected.

The findings further show that there is a significant variance change due to the independent variable (PM) on (PBA), however, there is also significant variance change is reported due to the moderating variable (SSC). Therefore, it reflects that better policy formation can be done by involving the implementers as asked in the items of the (SSC) (Table 2 & 3). These results validate the Evans, and Wellstead, (2013) notion that by improving the consultation within the organization may result in an improved attitude of employees towards policy implementation. It can now safely be concluded that all the three variables (PM, PBA, and SSC) selected in this research are strongly moderating factors in policymaking and implementation. The quality of policy analysis can be enhanced if (SSC) is improved and the bureaucratic hierarchies are

effectively involved in (PM).

Policymakers think that they know best and have complete knowledge to formulate policies. As a result, the departments are not involved in policymaking to create ownership; therefore, the result is that despite clear direction from the political leaders, the policies could not be implemented efficiently due to the inappropriate dissemination of comprehensive information regarding implementation, monitoring and control of the policies. Therefore, we presented the theoretical model of moderation of communication as pointed out in previous studies that:

- Procedures are not appropriately mentioned in policy decisions.
- The objectives were not achieved over time.
- The primary factors affecting policy outcomes were not incorporated in implementing the strategy.
- Selection of policy instruments was not encompassing.
- Consultation has been inadequate.

Therefore, the present study has many practical implications in the sphere of policy formulation. If the past experiences will be capitalized in the future during the formulation of new policy initiatives by considering the crucial factor of the communication consequently, a positive attitude of the implementers can be attained.

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