Journal of
New Approaches in Management and Marketing

https://www.jnamm.ir

Volume 5, Issue 2, Summer 2026, Pages 136 to 162

eISSN: 2981-1554

Original Article (Mixed)

Presenting a Model for the Career and Organizational Advancement of Middle Managers with a Meritocracy Strategy Approach

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Receive:
18 April 2026
Revise:
07 June 2026
Accept:
01 July 2026

Keywords:
Career and organizational promotion, meritocracy, talent management, competence, middle managers

Abstract

The aim of this study is to present a career and organizational promotion model for middle managers with a meritocracy strategies approach. The research method is applicable in terms of purpose, and of descriptive-exploratory research type. The statistical population of the study includes 12 experts and specialists of Bushehr Petrochemical Company, and the sampling method is purposive. Based on the summary of previous studies and the data obtained from the implementation of the Delphi technique among Bushehr Petrochemical experts, four criteria of meritocracy strategy were identified for career and organizational promotion, meritocracy thinking, organization qualification, and talent management; and by a hierarchical approach, a hierarchy tree was first formed through this method, and then the criteria were ranked by Expert Choice software. The results of this study showed that meritocracy in managers and employees in Bushehr Petrochemical is as follows: meritocracy strategy for career and organizational promotion has a value of 0.362, meritocracy thinking for career and organizational promotion has a value of 0.384, organization qualification has a value of 0.152, and finally talent management has a value of 0.102, and the compatibility rate of 0.004 is also in the acceptable range. These results can transform managers' decisions and cause changes in their attitudes.

Please cite this article as (APA): Raeis Poor, A and Azizi, P. (2026). Presenting a Model for the Career and Organizational Advancement of Middle Managers with a Meritocracy Strategy Approach. *New Approaches in Management and Marketing*, *5*(2), 136-162.

https://doi.org/10.22034/jnamm.2026.582375.1294

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Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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Journal of
New Approaches in Management and Marketing
https://www.jnamm.ir
Volume 5, Issue 2, Summer 2026, Pages 136 to 162

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Today, given the extremely intense and complex competition, unstable environment, lightning-fast technological advances, the increasing development of information and communications, and... almost no organization can survive without knowledge-based components, which are specialized and experienced managers and employees. The era of information technology and the digital revolution has also doubled the need to pay attention to the value of these precious elements in the life cycle of companies and organizations, and perhaps it can be safely claimed that the progress and excellence of any organization is due to the unique abilities and competencies of its human resources. An organization is a social environment whose cultures and values provide space for the creativity and ingenuity of its employees. Without creating this creative environment, the hope for the growth and flourishing of elites and the emergence of their talents will be an illusion (Rastgar, 2024).

On the other hand, the competence of managers in an organization causes the emergence of organizational competence. Therefore, the competence relationship between the individual and the organization is a two-way relationship, which, due to the major benefit from the organization, must naturally grow from the whole to the part, that is, from the organization to the individual. In simpler terms, organizations need to create a suitable space for the activities of competent individuals and the emergence of their competencies (Hajili, 2022). One of the main solutions to get rid of the inefficiency of Iranian organizations is to value competent managers and make appropriate use of their competencies by appointing them to appropriate jobs. However, to establish this system, there is a need to make fundamental changes in the values and culture of organizations, but the role of the government in promoting this thinking correctly and in a principled manner is undeniable (Vahidi Rad et al. 2026). To develop and promote this thinking, it is also necessary to be well acquainted with its obstacles and try to overcome them. On the other hand, the need to establish this system in organizations must become a widespread belief and senior organizational managers must accept it as the only model for saving their troubled organizations. In addition, familiarity with the requirements for implementing this system provides them with more operational solutions and helps them in the correct and comprehensive implementation of this thinking in organizations (Daniyali Deh Hoz et al. 2018). In meritocracy, the latent talents of individuals are usually identified and then cultivated through the creation of a talent base and made available to the organization's goals. Meritocracy begins with the production of competence in employees and managers, then evolves in the context of opportunity creation. In meritocracy, criteria such as commitment, expertise, skill, ability, experience, and compassion are the criteria for selecting and promoting individuals in the organization. The degree of excellence, popularity, attachment, and the use of components in planning, decision-making, and their implementation are in line with the achievement of the organization's goals (Wade & Obwegeser, 2019). When a company helps employees in career promotion, employees are less willing to leave the company. Career promotion can increase employee morale, also increase productivity, and on the other hand help the company become more efficient (Rastiani, 2024). Considering the above, it can be said that the main purpose of conducting the research is to answer the main question: what is the career and organizational promotion pattern of middle managers with the approach of meritocracy strategies?

Theoretical Framework

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a social system in which the highest power and social status are entrusted to those with the most ability. Meritocracy is a social system in which progress in society is based on individual abilities and competencies, not derived from family wealth or social background (Nasiri & Jafari, 2026). Vahidi Rad et al. (2026) studied the design and

presentation of a sustainable human resource management model with a meritocracy promotion approach in seven education districts of Mashhad. The findings in the sustainable human resource management model with a meritocracy promotion approach include 5 dimensions and 24 components, which include merit-based recruitment, sustainable human resource competency development-based improvement, human resource retention with a merit-based approach, sustainable and merit-based human resource performance evaluation, and a performance-based payment system. In the quantitative section, the results showed that the aforementioned model has the necessary validity. According to the results of the research, managers of the seven education districts of Mashhad can promote meritocracy in the organization by developing and strengthening sustainable human resource management. Nasiri & Jafari (2026) studied the identification of the underlying factors and challenges in irresponsible appointments and away from meritocracy in education. The results of data analysis led to the identification of 47 basic themes and 7 organizing themes in the context of the underlying factors in irresponsible appointments and away from meritocracy in education, which were classified into 4 comprehensive themes: management in the shadow of politics; organizational affiliation bottlenecks; conflict between economy and educational strategy; and fundamental structural faults. Also, 105 basic themes and 9 organizing themes were identified in the context of the challenges in irresponsible appointments and away from meritocracy in education, which were classified into 4 comprehensive themes: managerial and organizational crises in the education system; social and cultural crisis in education; inequality crisis in education; and qualitative crisis in education were classified. Considering the identification of the underlying factors and challenges in irresponsible and meritocratic appointments in education in this research, implementing the solutions presented in it can facilitate and bring about the realization of the appointment of competent people in education.

Research Methodology

Regarding its purpose, the research method is applicable based on its objective, and a descriptive-exploratory research type. The statistical population of the research includes 12 experts and specialists of Bushehr Petrochemical Company, and the sampling method is purposive.

Research findings

Based on the summary of previous studies and the data obtained from the implementation of the Delphi technique among experts in Bushehr Petrochemical, four criteria of meritocracy strategy for career and organizational promotion, meritocracy thinking, organization competency, and talent management were identified. Through a hierarchical approach, a hierarchy tree was first formed by this method, and then the criteria were ranked by Expert Choice software. The results of this study showed that meritocracy in managers and employees in Bushehr Petrochemical is as follows: meritocracy strategy for career and organizational promotion has a value of 0.362, meritocracy thinking for career and organizational promotion has a value of 0.384, organization competency has a value of 0.152, and finally talent management has a value of 0.102. The compatibility rate of 0.004 is also within the acceptable range. These results can transform managers' decisions and cause changes in their attitudes.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to present a career and organizational promotion model for middle managers with a meritocracy strategies approach. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Baffour Gyau et al. (2024), Wang et al. (2023), Eskandarany (2024), Alotaibi

(2024), Byambaa et al. (2025), Svoboda (2024), Lin et al. (2024), McKinsey (2020), Abdulsalam & Tajudeen (2024), Deloitte (2024), and Khan et al. (2024). The results of Baffour Gyau et al, (2024) study on the dynamic relationship between AI technology innovation in banking and finance and financial performance of banks in 20 countries show that AI technology innovation in banking and finance positively affects the return on assets of banks and highlights its role in increasing financial performance. The interaction term between AI innovation and economic growth emphasizes their joint positive effect on financial performance. Mediation analysis highlights the role of information and communication technology development in transforming AI innovation into improved financial results. According to the results of the study, the following suggestions were made:
Training comprehensive AI literacy to bank employees: the findings showed that the bank should shift its focus from training skills in simple tools to training comprehensive AI literacy and enable its workforce to transform from passive users to active participants in the AI ecosystem.

Acknowledgments
The authors gratefully acknowledge all individuals, institutions, and organizations that provided scientific, technical, administrative, or advisory support throughout this research and the preparation of this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement
The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement
The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

Funding
The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other financial support were received during the conduct of this research or the preparation of this manuscript.

Ethics Approval
All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.