From Revolution to a Credible Political Alternative: A Case Study of AAP from Organizational, Leadership and HR Theory Perspective

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Abstract

The transformation of social movements into institutionalized political entities remains insufficiently examined within organizational and management scholarship, particularly in emerging democracies. This study investigates the evolution of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from an anti-corruption mass movement in 2011 into a credible political alternative within a decade. Drawing upon Organizational Behavior theory (Schein, 2010; Mintzberg, 1979), Transformational and Situational Leadership theories (Bass, 1985; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), and Human Resource Management (HRM) frameworks (Saks, 2006; McGregor, 1960), the paper analyzes the structural, cultural, and leadership mechanisms that facilitated—and at times constrained—AAP's organizational transition.

Adopting a qualitative longitudinal case study methodology (Yin, 2014), the study relies on secondary data sources including peer-reviewed research, policy documents, parliamentary records, party manifestos, and archival media reports spanning 2011–2023. Thematic analysis and theory-driven pattern matching are employed to trace the stages of organizational institutionalization

Findings indicate that AAP's rapid rise was driven by symbolic identity construction (Blumer, 1969), entrepreneurial organizational structuring (Mintzberg, 1979), distributed volunteer mobilization, and governance-based legitimacy building. However, leadership centralization, factional conflict (Forsyth, 2010), structural constraints, and resource limitations posed challenges to internal cohesion and expansion sustainability. The study proposes a Movement-to-Political Institutionalization Model comprising six transformation stages.

1. Introduction

New political parties typically emerge in response to institutional dissatisfaction and unmet societal demands (Kitschelt, 1999; Harmel & Robertson, 1985). Organizational dissatisfaction aligns with Maslow's (1943) framework, where unmet safety and governance needs trigger collective action.

The transformation of protest movements into structured political entities resembles entrepreneurial institutionalization processes (Mintzberg, 1979; Panebianco, 1988). This study bridges political science and management scholarship by applying Organizational Behavior (OB), Leadership, and HRM perspectives to examine AAP's transformation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political Party Formation

Party formation often results from systemic dissatisfaction and ideological voids (Harmel & Robertson, 1985). Political entrepreneurship parallels venture creation processes (Gartner, 1985).

2.2 Organizational Institutionalization

Organizations evolve through structuring, role formalization, and legitimacy-building phases (Mintzberg, 1979). Resource dependence theory further explains external institutional constraints (Davis & Cobb, 2010).

2.3 Leadership in Political Movements

Transformational leadership mobilizes followers by articulating a compelling vision (Bass, 1985). Leadership effectiveness depends on contextual alignment (Fiedler, 1964) and situational adaptability (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

2.4 Organizational Culture and Group Dynamics

Strong culture enhances cohesion but may generate internal conflict if misaligned (Schein, 2010). Group development and factional tensions follow identifiable stages (Tuckman, 1965; Forsyth, 2010).

2.5 Human Resource Management in Political Organizations

Volunteer engagement aligns with Theory Y assumptions (McGregor, 1960). Conflict resolution mechanisms are essential for sustainable institutionalization (Deutsch, 1973). Employee engagement enhances performance stability (Saks, 2006).

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative longitudinal case study approach (Yin, 2014) covering 2011–2023.

Data Sources
- Peer-reviewed journals
- Party manifestos
- Parliamentary debates
- Governance reports
- Media archives

Analytical Strategy
- Thematic coding
- Process tracing
- Pattern matching
- Stage-based institutional analysis

Triangulation enhances validity and reliability.

4. Theoretical Framework

Organizational Behavior

Organizational culture (Schein, 2010), change management (Lewin, 1947; Kotter, 1996), and entrepreneurial configurations (Mintzberg, 1979) explain structural transformation.

Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) mobilized mass support. Situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) guided governance adaptation.

Human Resource Management

Talent management, engagement (Saks, 2006), and conflict resolution (Deutsch, 1973) underpin institutional sustainability.

5. Conceptual Model

Stage 1: Ideological Mobilization

Stage 2: Symbolic Identity Construction

Stage 3: Entrepreneurial Structuring

Stage 4: Leadership Consolidation

Stage 5: Governance Legitimization

Stage 6: Expansion Replication

6. Conclusion

AAP's transformation illustrates how political institutionalization parallels entrepreneurial organizational evolution. Symbolic legitimacy, adaptive leadership, and structured HR practices are essential for sustainable expansion.

The proposed staged framework contributes to political management scholarship by integrating organizational and leadership theories into political institutional analysis.

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