

Impact of Perceived Organizational Politics on Supervisory-Rated Innovative Performance and Job Stress: Evidence from Pakistan

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Abstract—Perceived organizational politics, as an organizational stressor, is considered as detrimental for the effective functioning of organizational members. However, previous studies have shown some mixed evidence for the effect of perceived politics on a variety of job outcomes. The current investigation examines the impact of organizational politics on job stress and innovative job performance. To test our hypotheses, we collected data from a diverse sample of employees and their supervisors (237 paired-responses) in Pakistan. Consistent with our hypothesis we found that perceived organizational politics had detrimental effects on supervisory-rated innovative job performance. Employees, who perceived high politics in their work environment, demonstrated low levels of innovative behaviors. In contrast to the findings of previous studies conducted in North America, we found that perceived politics had no effect on job stress in Pakistani environment. Based on our findings, we discuss implications for managerial practice and directions for future research.

Index Terms—perceptions of politics, job stress, supervisory-rated innovative performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational politics is the part of the social fabric of any organization. Although some researchers view politics as necessary for organizational growth, majority of researchers argue that politics has harmful consequences for the proper functioning of organizational members. Previously several studies have been conducted on the possible harmful effects of politics perceptions. Researchers argue that organizational politics is viewed as an organizational stressor that hinders in the way of the organizational members. Despite this general agreement on the harmful consequences posed by workplace politics, previous studies have shown some mixed evidence on the effect of perceived politics on a variety of job outcomes. For example, the recent meta-analysis by [1] reveals that the effects of organizational politics on a variety of job outcomes vary across cultures and certain outcomes.

Moreover, previous studies have largely ignored the effects of organizational politics perceptions on creativity or innovation related job outcomes. Despite the relevance of innovative behaviors and creativity to organizational politics (a hindrance-related stressor), no study, up to our knowledge best, has examined the influence of politics perceptions on innovative performance. In addition, majority of the previous studies are based on North American samples, therefore making it difficult for both researchers and practitioners to draw inferences for non-American work settings. Based on the above discussion, we believe that it is very critical to explore the influence of politics perceptions on innovative job performance and job stress.

Therefore, the objectives of the current study are threefold. First, we attempt to investigate the impact of perceived politics on supervisory-rated innovative performance. Second, we will examine the effects of politics perceptions on employees' job stress. Third, we will conduct this study in Pakistan thereby extending the perceived politics theory predominantly developed and tested in North America. This study will provide evidence for external validity to the theories of perceived organizational politics and innovative job performance.

A. Perception of Organizational Politics

Politics perceptions are defined as an employee's perceptions regarding the self-serving behaviors exhibited by the influential members of the organization regarding manipulation of organizational rules and policies to serve certain individuals even at others' expense [2] and [3]

Ferris, Russ, and Fandt [4] first developed the theoretical model of perceived organizational politics where they discussed the antecedents and consequences of perceived politics. The theory of perceived organizational politics is based on the assertion that behaviors are driven primarily based on the perceptions of reality [5]. Ferris *et al.* [4] in their theoretical model propose that organizational factors (e.g., centralization, delegation of authority and span of control), workplace environment and individual factors

contribute towards one's perceptions of organizational politics which in turn affects the individual's job attitudes and behaviors. Development of this model was the first attempt in the conceptualization of perceived organizational politics. Later studies tested various relationships proposed in Ferris et al's [4] theoretical model. Ferris and Kacmar [6] proposed three dimensions of organizational politics namely general political behavior, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies.

B. *Perceived Politics and Innovative Performance*

Although few controversies exist as to how perceived politics affects a variety of job outcomes, however there is an agreement among researchers that perceived politics is generally harmful for desirable job outcomes. Previous studies have found considerable evidence on the harmful effects of perceived politics on a variety of job attitudes and behaviors. For example, previous studies revealed that perceived politics had a negative effect on job performance [7]-[9] and a positive influence on intentions to quit [2]. So far, two meta-analysis have been published on the impact of perceived organizational politics on a variety of job outcomes. These meta-analyses conclude that politics perceptions are generally positively related to job stress and turnover intentions and negatively correlated with job satisfaction [2] and [10]. More recently, Abbas *et al.* [2] found that organizational politics perceptions had a negative influence on employee's job performance and job satisfaction. In addition, the perceived politics was positively associated to intentions to quit.

Meanwhile, during recent years, research on organizational stressors has gained considerable attention by the researchers. Perceived organizational politics is considered as a type of organizational stressors and is generally categorized as "hindrance-related stressor" [11] and [12]. Hindrance stressors are the stressors that hinder in the way of individual employees and make their targets difficult to achieve. Past research has also shown some preliminary evidence on the effects of organizational stressors on creativity related outcomes. However, previous studies have largely ignored the effects of perceived organizational politics on innovative job performance.

The changing customer demands and high competition among firms has triggered the need for creativity and innovation in services and products. Creative and novel ideas provide the basis for all innovations [13] and [14], for all types of jobs [15] and for all organizations [16] and [17].

According to Janssen [10], innovative behaviors are defined as "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization" (p. 202). Innovative job performance is, although, related to creativity. However, creativity is an initial stage of innovative behaviors. Creativity includes generation of novel ideas at the workplace whereas innovation includes generation,

support, and implementation of creative, and genuine ideas across all organizations [14] and [18].

Regarding the relationship between perceived politics and innovative behaviors, previous literature has paid very little attention to these domains. Given the relevance of perceived politics as a hindrance stressor, we believe, it is pertinent to examine the impact of organizational politics on innovative job performance.

Lately, organizational stressors have been divided in to two general categories namely hindrance-related stressors and challenge-related stressors [11]. Challenge-related stressors are, although stressful, beneficial for individual performance related outcomes. These stressors include having responsibility, job scope and time pressure. In contrast, hindrance-related stressors are deleterious for individual performance. They include resource constraints, role conflict and organizational politics [12]. Based on this theoretical framework, we also conceptualize perceived politics as hindrance stressors.

As a hindrance stressor, perceived politics harmfully affects employees' job related outcomes because it dampens their motivation. When organizational policies and distribution rewards are political driven, individuals reduce their involvement in their tasks and their commitments towards their organizations and increase their intentions to quit their jobs [1] and [2]. When employees perceive that politics is high in their organizations, this perception may produce acute stress. As a result, the employees may spend all their efforts in coping with this stress and may not pay due attention to their tasks. Conservation of resource theory advanced by Hobfoll [19] supports this line of thought. Conservation of resource theory suggests that individuals invest their resources to cope with stressors. Lazarus and Folkman [20] also suggest that individuals appraise the stressors and then decide the mechanism through which they can cope with this stress. We argue that when individuals perceive organizational politics to be high, they may spend all their cognitive and motivation efforts to address this environmental stressor. However, since this stressor comes from the environment/organization and it is not in their control, they may end up with investing all their cognitive and motivational efforts thereby providing little attention to the generation and implementation of creative ideas at their workplace. Therefore, on the basis of the above discussion the following is suggested.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived politics will be negatively related to supervisory-rated innovative performance

C. *Perceived Politics and Job Stress*

As discussed earlier, perceived organizational politics is categorized as a hindrance-related stressor that hinders in the way of proper functioning of individual employees. Since individuals need to invest substantial cognitive efforts to address perceived organizational politics, this may results in high job stress. Previous investigations have examined the impact of perceived politics on job stress. For example, Miller et al's [10] meta-analytic study reveals that perceived politics was generally positively related to job stress. These studies suggest that employees who perceive their organizational politics and

practices to be political driven, they feel high job stress [1] and [10].

Furthermore, recent studies have categorized organizational politics as hindrance-related stressor. Hindrance stressors are deleterious for effective human functioning because they produce acute stress. When individuals are exposed to hindrance stressors (in this case perceived politics), they feel that they cannot remove these stressors even if they put their energies and efforts to cope with such stressors. As a result they get stressed. Consistent with this line of thinking, we argue that individuals who perceive higher levels of organizational politics, they may appraise it as a hindrance to the achievement of their goals. This negative appraisal may dampen their motivation and hence result in increased feelings of job stress. Consequently, the following hypothesis is suggested.

Hypothesis 2: perceived politics will be positively related to job stress.

II. METHODS

A. Sample Size and Procedures

TABLE I. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, CORRELATIONS, AND RELIABILITIES

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.20	.40	--						
2. Age	30.7	8.03	-.27**	--					
3. Tenure	4.80	6.43	-.15*	.76**	--				
4. Income	2.14	.99	-.13*	.59**	.44**	--			
5. POP	3.02	.54	-.00	-.03	-.01	-.07	.70		
6. JS	2.95	.57	-.10	-.06	-.05	-.16*	.04	.71	
7. IP	4.53	1.08	-.00	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.13*	-.09	.88

Note. N = 237; For Gender, 1 = Male, 2 = Female; For Income, 1 = below 15000, 2 = 16000-30000, 3 = 31000-45000, 4 = 46000-75000, 5 = 76000 and above; POP = Perceptions of Organizational Politics; M= Mean; S.D= Standard Deviation; JS= Job Stress; IP= Innovative Performance; Reliabilities reported in Italic

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

We collected the data through on-site administration of questionnaires across a diverse sample of employees working in a variety of organizations such as telecom, manufacturing, government, and banking. We used personal and professional contacts to access these organizations. The questionnaires were distributed in English as almost all working professional, except for few blue-collar employees, understand and speak English. We distributed 300 questionnaires, of which, 237 usable pairs were received back yielding a response rate of 79% which is similarly to the response rate of previous studies conducted in Pakistan, e.g. [2] and [21]. About 80% of the respondents were male. 30% had received undergraduate degrees, 68 percent had graduate

qualification and 2% were post graduate. The means and standard deviations for all variables are given in Table I. The average age of the respondents was 31 years with standard deviation 8.03.

A cover letter was included in the questionnaire that mentioned the purpose of research and ensured strict confidentiality of the data and that the participation was voluntary.

B. Measures

We measured all variables using self-reports except for innovative job performance which was assessed using supervisory report to avoid method bias issues. The responses for job stress and perceived politics were taken on a 5-point likert scale. Responses for innovative performance were taken on a 7-point likert-scale. Respondents also provided data on their occupational level, age (in years), gender, qualification, and tenure (in years) in the questionnaire.

We used the following questionnaires for the survey.

Perceptions of organizational politics (POP): Perceived politics was measured by an 11-item scale. This scale was developed by Kacmar and Ferris [3]. A sample item of the scale is "Favoritism not merit gets people ahead". The reliability of this scale was .70.

Innovative Performance: We measured supervisory-rated innovative performance by 6-items scale for employees' innovative behaviors at the workplace developed by Janssen's [17]. This scale is based on Kanter's [22] work on innovation stages and covers almost all necessary phases of individuals' innovative behaviors. It has three dimensions namely idea promotion, idea generation, and idea realization, which, although distinct, are highly related to each other. Each dimension was assessed by two items. Sample items include "Generates original solutions to problems" and "Acquires approval for innovative. The reliability of this scale was $\alpha = .88$.

Job Stress: We measured Job stress by a 9-item scale by Parker and Decotiis [23]. The original scale had 13-items. Sample items include "Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest". We used the shorter version of the scale due to the length of the questionnaire. The reliability of this scale was .71.

Control Variables: Previous research suggests that gender and income levels may possible affect creativity and job stress. Therefore, gender and income were controlled for all regression analyses.

III. RESULTS

The means, reliabilities, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of all study variables are presented in Table I. The correlation analysis revealed that perceived politics was significantly and negatively related to supervisory rated innovative performance ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$), however, it was not significantly related to job stress ($r = .04$, ns).

Hypothesis 1 and 2 were tested using multiple regression analyses. Gender and income, as control variables, were entered in the first step and then

perception of politics in next step. The regression results presented in Table II (step 2) revealed that perceived organizational politics had a negative influence on supervisory-rated innovative performance ($\beta = -.27$, $p < .05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. However, our results showed that perceived politics did not significantly predict job stress ($\beta = .03$, ns). As shown, politics perceptions did not trigger job stress among individuals in our sample.

TABLE II. REGRESSION ANALYSES FOR IMPACT OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

	Job Stress		Innovative Performance	
	B	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1:				
Gender	-.18*		.00	
Income	-.10**	.009**	-.05	.00
Step2:				
POP	.03	.00	-.27*	.02*

Note. N = 237; For Gender, 1 = Male, 2 = Female; For Income, 1 = below 15000, 2 = 16000-30000, 3 = 31000-45000, 4 = 46000-75000, 5 = 76000 and Above; POP = Perceptions of Organizational Politics.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

IV. DISCUSSION

Despite two meta-analytic studies, research on the impact of perceived organizational politics on a variety of job outcomes is still inconclusive. The previous meta-analyses suggest that perceived politics is generally harmful for the desirable job outcomes [2] and [10]. However, its impact on the creativity or innovation-related job outcomes has largely remained unexplored. Moreover, most of the previous studies have been conducted in North American work settings thereby restricting the implications of their findings to Western countries only. The current investigations is an attempt to explore and understand the possible effects of organizational politics on two important job outcomes namely innovative job performance and job stress. In addition, we have examined these relationships in Pakistan, and therefore provided evidence for generalizability and external validity to the findings of previous studies.

In particular, we found that perceived organizational politics was had a negative relationship to supervisory-reported innovative performance. Consistent with our hypothesis, employees, who perceived elevated levels of politics in their organizations, were less likely to demonstrate innovative behaviors at their work. In contrast, those who perceived low levels of politics in their workplace were more likely to exhibit innovative

behaviors at work. This finding is consistent with previous categorization of perceived politics as a hindrance-related stressor that dampens one's motivation to work. It further suggests that individuals invest their cognitive efforts to cope with the organizational politics and hence find little time and energy to invest in their tasks.

Moreover, contrary to our hypothesis, our findings revealed that perceived politics was not significantly related to job stress. Perhaps, the scale used for job stress may be limited to measure the stress related to one's job only. There may be some other contextual or personal factors that may moderate these relationship. On the basis of this insignificant finding, we have provided some directions for future research.

V. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Majority of the previous studies in organizational behaviors are conducted in Western settings, particularly in North America. The current study examines the impact of perceived politics on innovative job performance and job stress in Pakistani context. Nevertheless, more research is required to test various theories predominantly developed in West in Eastern settings to provide evidence for generalizability.

Our study suggests that managers need to be aware about the harmful effects of organizational politics on desirable employee behaviors and attitudes. Particularly, managers should remove all the environmental factors that may possibly trigger political behaviors in the organization.

Future research should test the effects of perceived politics on creativity and innovation related outcomes in other Asian contexts. Moreover, given the non-significant relationship between perceived politics and job stress, future research should explore the possible contextual and personal factors that may moderate this relationship. Moreover, the effects of politics perceptions should be directly compared across cultures to reveal how perceived politics affects job outcomes across cultures. Moreover, research on innovation and creativity should examine the harmful effect of other organizational stressors such as resource constraints, role ambiguity, and role overload. Future research may also examine the differential effects of hindrance- and challenge-related stressors on creativity or innovative behaviors. Such studies may help to understand whether challenge-related stressors enhance innovative or creative behaviors.

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