



RESEARCH PAPER

The Virtuous Aspect of Perceived Organizational Politics: The Future of Higher Education

Dr. Shakira Huma Siddiqui ¹ Dr. Hira Salah ud din Khan* ²
Muhammad Salman Chughtai ³

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, NUML, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Associate Professor, School of Management, Jiangsu University Zhenjiang, The Peoples Republic of China
3. Ph. D Scholar, Faculty of Management Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: October 23, 2021	Based on the job demand-resources theory, this study examines the impact of perceived organizational politics and Job Satisfaction. Further, this study investigates that how Political Skill moderates the above mentioned direct link in the higher educational institutions of Pakistan. As a result, the study employs structural equation model technique (SEM) via Analysis of a Moment Structure (AMOS) software version 24.0. The data was collect data from 401 teaching faculty by systematic sampling approach from higher education institutes in Pakistan. Results indicated that Perceived organizational politics was negatively related to Job satisfaction. While Political skill weakens the association between perceived organizational politics and job satisfaction. The study also highlights theoretical as well as managerial implications and future directions.
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*Corresponding Author hirakhan@ujs.ed u.cn	

Introduction

Employees' perceptions are inevitable in the context of political atmosphere at workplace (Khan et al., 2021). Perceptions involves both positive and negative outcomes (Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Eldor, 2016; Khan et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2018). Given this, POP has been considered as a barrier to organizational success (Drory & Vigoda-gadot, 2010; Khan et al., 2017; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008; Vigoda, 2002). Scholars expounded that POP plays an essential role in an organization resulting to unfavorable aspect that retards employees productivity (Khan et al., 2019). Further, other stream of scholars added that POP is actually a monster that derailed the confidence and aspirations of employees in an (Jabeen,

Huma, & Hira, 2021; Khan et al., 2021). Although POP is associated with negative outcomes, some scholars believe that it helps employees to grow, thus, POP can possibly lead employees to protect their resources in the organization (Ahmed, Farooqi, & Iqbal, 2020; Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019). Accordingly, the individual resources hold a central role to stimulate energy so as to cope with negative and harmful influence of politics. Building on this assumption, this study asserts that Political Skill (PS) serves a useful purpose for individuals to harness a coping tool to minimize the harmful effect of POP. Political Skill in this scenario is believed to be as a composite of positive characteristics required for survival in current work environment and promotes employee engagement at workplace leading to job satisfaction (Eldor, 2016; Perrewé & Ferris, 2016). Although literature has given substantial attention to negative outcomes (Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2017; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2003) limited research studies have examined the moderation effects of personal resource (PS) on the job demands (POP) and Job Satisfaction. Furthermore, although the present knowledge in the area highlights the essential association between job demand and personal resources, there are limited studies that have examined the moderation effects of job demand (POP) and personal resource in the academia. To address this, the present study builds on Job-Demand Resource theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) to investigate the impact of POP on Job Satisfaction (JS) and further the moderating impact of PS.

Given this consideration, the study offers a number of contributions: theoretical, methodological and contextual. On the theoretical angle, the conceptual model employed in the study would enrich the literature of POP and in the same vein can be used in other areas of organizational studies. Moreover, the theory used in the study Job-Demand Resource (JD-R) theory will also in a long way enrich the literature on job stressors. With regards to methodological contribution, the study employed SEM to conceptualize the study constructs different from prior studies that focused on qualitative approach (Buchanan, 2008; Landells & Albrecht, 2015). Further, the present study focuses on the educational sector of the Asian culture i.e., Pakistan which will add to the existing body of knowledge.

Literature Review

Perceived Organizational Politics and Job Satisfaction

Workforce in an organization perceives politics as a harmful factor, thus, it is recognized to be negative characteristics that is termed as POP (Atta & Khan, 2016). According to the scholars POP model is associated with employee's job attitudes such as JS are significantly affected including other related job outcomes like job commitment and turnover mainly have some association of the environment (Ferris, Russ & Fandt, 1989). These opinions are indirectly influenced by negative job attitudes.

Consequently, it is postulated that there is tendencies of POP having influence of diminishing JS.

In consideration of JS, growing literatures regarding it pointed out that is fundamentally on individuals that shows passion and eagerness on occupation (Khan et al., 2017). Against this, it is pointed out that individuals encounter difficulties with jobs that are flooded with unfavorable political climate and negative job perceptions, thus researchers bemoaned that such act potentially erode one JS (Hsieh, Hsieh, & Huang, 2016; Wong, Hui, & Law, 1998). Job satisfaction is an essential product of POP. Corroborating this assertion, literature reveals that POP exert negative effects on workforce job attitudes such as JS is linked with other job outcomes such as job commitment (Lambert et al., 2018). Although current meta-analytic studies confirms differences in impact of POP pertaining to job related outcomes e.g., (Abbas et al., 2014; Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009; Miller et al., 2008), study done by researchers revealed that perceived politics largely have positive correlation with negative outcomes such as JS and job performance in developed countries (Kimura, 2014; Park & Lee, 2020) . Given this, JD-R theory expounds that how certain aspects of the job such as tangible, societal, or organizational elements can be accumulated and sustained to achieve tangible and intangible benefits (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). In light of this, it is argued that amid high job demands such as POP, employee's psychological elements like JS is affected greatly. Based on the argument and theory, therefore it is hypothesized that,

H1 POP significantly and negatively relates to Job satisfaction.

Political skill as a moderator of the relationship between POP- Job Satisfaction

Political skill connotes the ability and capacity to appreciate the process of works in organizations and with the help of this trait one can rule over the minds of other, as it serves as a neutralizer in a given specific undesirable conditions (Ahmed et al., 2020; Park & Lee, 2020). Scholars defined PS as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al. 2005, p.127). Ferris et al (2007) demonstrated that with the influence on others, employees having PS also have the ability to work in every state and do as such while keeping up legitimacy and openness. This situation inspires workforce to value employees having PS that serve as hope and dependence. Furthermore, Munyon et al (2013) study buttressed that PS contribute enormously in decreasing the antagonistic impact on POP, encouraging employees to establish the spirit of high obligation in their tasks.

Also, substantial work on PS asserts that workforce facing challenges of social networking often detonate their unsatisfactory attitudes (Ferris et al., 2009). Clercq et

al., (2019); Robinson et al., (2019) argued that employees having PS are encountered with job stressors at workplace, they are less affected by stressors and reduced negative impact on the JS. Conversely meta-analytic studies demonstrated that employees with low PS face negative impacts of politics which may lead attitudinal problems, physical distress, and other negative consequences. Indeed, it is argued employees with high rating of PS are more comfortable and satisfied with their jobs and are less influenced by POP (Munyon et al., 2013). Thus, further studies prove that job resources fuels individual progress and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Therefore this study considered PS as one of the personal resource in mitigating the adverse impact of POP on job attitudes such as Job satisfaction. Based on the discussion and theory above, it is hypothesized that,

H3 Political Skill moderates the relationship between POP and job satisfaction

Material and Method

Population and Sample

The survey data was gathered from 401(64.16% response rate) teaching faculty in some selected public/private universities in Pakistan. The data was gathered via self-administered questionnaires which were distributed to full time regular faculty members in their respective universities. Out of the 625 questionnaire distributed four hundred and one questionnaires were retrieved from respondents as completed questionnaire. Thus, the 401 questionnaire constitute the valid responses. The final sample for testing the study hypotheses were 401 participants 305 men (76.05%) and 96 women (23.95%). The age of workforce were 21years to 60years ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .84$). Employees work tenure in current job ranged from less than 1 to 25years ($M = 1.41$, $SD = .83$). Employees tenure in previous workplace ranged from less than 1 to 25years ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 1.02$). 32% ($n=128.32$) participants holding master's degree were 50% ($n=200.5$) were MS/MPhil and 18% ($n=72.18$) were PhD. Married faculty was 55% ($n=220.55$), 42% ($n=168.42$) were unmarried and 3% ($n=12.03$) were divorced. Prior to the survey, twenty five questionnaire were distributed to participants to fulfill the condition of pilot study. After doing pilot study, the participants were educated the main study objectives which among other things is confidential in nature. Therefore, any opinion or views express in the questionnaire will not be disclosed to anyone. As part of fact finding mission and in a quest to broaden the theory of POP the current study aims to measure POP, JS and PS among university teaching faculty of universities in Pakistan. Based on this, the universities constitute the population of the study.

Measures

As part of ensuring methodological requirement suggested by experts in any given scientific research (Basar & Basim, 2016; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016) The author adopt and modify a five-point Likert-scale consisting “strongly disagree = 1” to “strongly agree = 5”. POP was assessed by 12-item scale sourced from (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Some items found in 12-item scale has to do with: “Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here”. This variable was measured through the means of (Vigoda-gadot & Meisler, 2010) scaling procedure. Items of this measure were investigated and were reduced to 8- items in line with (Ferris et al., 2005). The sample items were; “I always seem to instinctively know the right thing to say or do to influence others” as a typical example of a sample item questionnaire. JS was analyzed on 4-item scale consistent with (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) and (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1974). Example of items are: “All in all, I am satisfied with the persons in my work group”.

Results and Discussion

Analysis Strategy

The descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS version 22 to determine the relationship between the study measures. The AMOS program 24.0 was used to investigate the factor models of each construct using confirmatory factor analyses. As a result, the direct and moderation tests were carried out using structural equation models. Structural models are used to measure the connection between latent and observable constructs. The variables in the study represent latent and observable factors. POP, for example, is used as a latent variable in the study and consists of 12 pieces. Similarly, JS and PS were regarded as latent variables.

Discriminant Validities

Master validity tests in Amos was used to determine the discriminant validity of the current study measures (Gaskin & Lim, 2016) as shown in **table 1**. The correlational matrix's findings revealed a link between POP and JS, as well as PS as a moderator construct. POP shown to have a substantial negative impact on job satisfaction. All of the other study variables were positively connected to PS and shown adequate Cronbach's Alphas and Composite Reliabilities >0.60. On the reflective concept, the measuring items were tested for convergent and discriminant validity, and the results were found to be acceptable (Hu, Bentler, & Hu, 1999).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Study Variables	Mean	SD	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1. POP	2.84	0.47	0.85	0.89	0.52			
2. JS	3.07	0.51	0.82	0.80	0.51	-0.11**		
3. PS	3.19	0.42	0.91	0.85	0.59	-0.02	0.01***	0.02**

Note. $p < .001$ ***, $p < .05$ **; POP= Perceived organizational politics; JS=Job satisfaction; PS=Political skill, SD=Standard deviation; CR=composite reliabilities; AVE= Average Variance Extracted

Model Fit Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a comprehensive operational tool integrated in numerous applications such as AMOS. As a result, AMOS was used to evaluate the expected model's fit to the data (Khine, 2013). As a result, similar research have used AMOS to examine the links that exist between POP, JS and PS. According to Gaskin and Lim (2016) the model fit test was carried out in Amos as can be seen in **table 2**. Low-loading items were removed so that the authors could achieve their goal of model fitness $CMIN=779.337$, $DF=366$, $CMIN/df=2.129$, $CFI=0.932$, $SRMR=0.042$, $NFI=.885$, $IFI=0.939$, $TLI=0.931$, $CFI=0.932$, and $RMSEA=0.054$. The findings exhibited that each of the model fit indices had values that were higher than the threshold condition for model fit indices (Hair et al., 2014). This demonstrates that the model has good match to the data.

Table 2
Model Fit Measure

CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	PClose
779.337	366	2.129	0.932	0.042	0.054	0.092

Path analysis by Structural Model

The structural model as seen in **Table 3** above illustrates the direct effect couple with the moderating analysis and the summary confirmation of the hypothesis. The results revealed negative effect of POP on JS. Through the use of SEM in the analysis of the results, it is realize that The SEM analysis showed a ($\beta = -.691$, $p = 0.01$, $LL = -.763$, $UL = -.584$) which demonstrates that POP is significantly and negatively associated to JS. Hence, the hypothesis 1 was supported. Further, the moderation results indicated ($\beta = .485$, $p = 0.001$, $LL = .318$, $UL = .536$) that showed the significant impact of PS.

Table 3
Regression Weights

Variable	β	Standard Error	P- value	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
POP----->JS	-.691	.042	.01	-.763	-.584
POPxPS----->JS	.485	.045	.001	.318	.536
PS----->JS	.635	.076	.001	.549	.725

Further, the figure demonstrated that the association between POP and JS is negative for the lines, as evidenced by their negative slope. The slopes of the higher and lower indicator lines are both negative. The higher arrow, representing a high level of the PS, has a nearly flat slope, whereas the lower arrow, indicating a low degree of PS, has a sharper slope, with a positive interaction impact. Altogether, these findings show that PS has a greater effect in dampening the negative connection between POP and JS. As a result, there is lower effect of POP and JS, the higher the PS techniques.

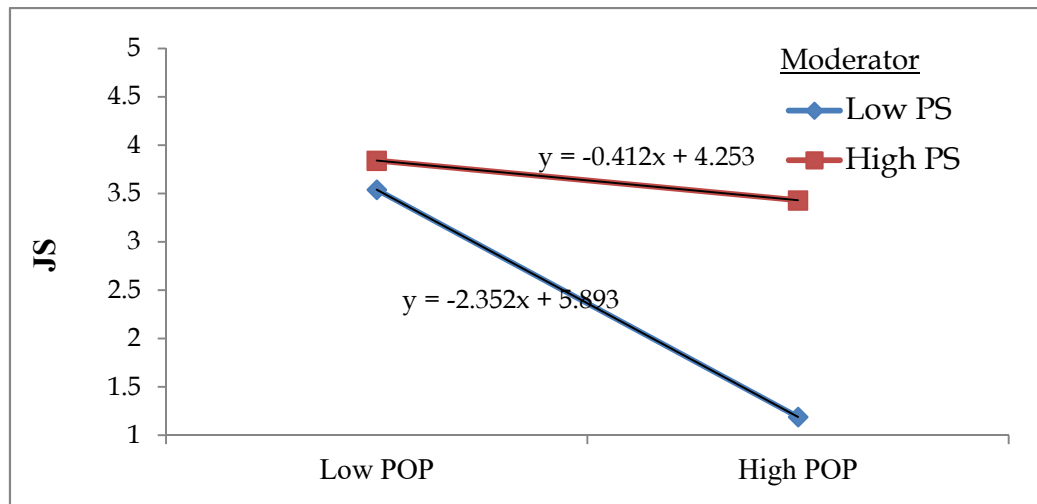


Figure: Moderating role of Political Skill

Discussion

The major objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between POP and JS in organizational contexts. Moreover, the present study assessed the moderating effect of PS in the above mentioned direct link in the higher education of Pakistan. BY employing the JD-R theory, the current research elaborates the impact of Job demand (POP) and its effect on job outcomes. Further, how job resources (PS)

mitigates the negative impact of POP on the JS of employees in the Pakistan's higher education sector. In view of this, H1 demonstrates that POP has negative effect on JS, supporting researchers' contention that POP has a negative impact on work attitude and behavior (Chang et al., 2009; Jabeen, Siddiqui, & Khan, 2021; Miller et al., 2008). According to the findings of the study, the cause for the negative harmful effect is due to attitudes that are based on self-centered in the organization, which can adversely affects or lowers the employees' energy levels (Crawford et al., 2010; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Khan et al., 2017).

According to the findings, PS has a substantial influence in decreasing the connection between POP and the job outcomes i-e., JS. Scholars elaborated that workforce with high level PS are more likely to be stressed since such employees are fast to respond to social upheavals (Ferris et al., 2009; Nikoletta & Petros, 2015). Furthermore, they take use of whatever benefit that POP provides for their self-interest and growth (Khuwaja et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that employees with a high PS level are completely satisfied with their jobs (Ferris et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2016). As a result, employees who are high in PS are less affected by POP as well as any other factors that restrict their output.

Accordingly, the study's findings show that PS has a strong moderating function. According to JD-R theory, which states that toxic work atmosphere reduces positive job outcomes. Employees, on the other hand, will be prompted to gloss over unfavorable inclinations that may emerge as a result of pressures due to a lack of resources. As a result, it has been established that positive job characteristics such as PS can be helpful to an entity.

Conclusion

The major objective of this study is to determine how POP impacts JS and how PS moderates the POP – JS relationship in Pakistan's education sector. As a result, the study adds to the current literature in the field of POP by developing a study framework. The model captures moderating effect of PS on the POP-JS link that adds to the literature of POP.

Limitations and future studies

It's important to acknowledge that this research has some limitations. The study's domain is one of the study's major limitations. This is because the study's conclusions cannot be generalized to all educational institutions of Pakistan. As a result, the study's conclusions are limited to a few selected higher education institutes in Pakistan; therefore, future research should broaden the field to include elementary and others. Additionally, the current study does not examine the moderating impact

of supervisor support or other resources, thus, future studies must take this into consideration.

Practical implications

This study has a significant practical application in that it emphasizes the necessity for organizational studies practitioners to hone their communication skills with subordinates.

This will go a long way toward ensuring that superiors and subordinates have a mutually beneficial relationship. It might also be used as a forum for co-workers to investigate and suggest solutions to the organization's problems. Because there is a friendly climate between superiors and subordinates, this will warrant good working environment for employees as well as increased production.

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