Challenges and Effects of Organizational Politics on the Performance of Employees at Public Institutions in Pakistan

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Abstract

Organizational internal political perception impacts employees differently due to variations in personality features and Public institutions which are considered as back bone for any country. The goal of this study is to examine the relationship between organizational political perception (OPP) and employee performance (EP) in public sector organizations (PSOs) in Pakistan. For this purpose, primary data is collected through a questionnaire that was structured and sent to respondents via email to gather information on employees' perceptions of organizational politics and performance. Among the sample of 400 full-time employees from Pakistani PSOs, 228 respondents from 15 organizations completed the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using STATA software and multiple linear regression technique. The results showed that employees' perception of organizational politics does not affect their performance and there is a modest but statistically significant link between perceptions of organizational politics and the production of conflict, and there is no link between power and employee performance. These findings support the challenge stressor hypothesis of OPP and pronounce that an employee's opinion of politics determines whether they see it as beneficial or detrimental. Politics can be seen as challenge and even a chance for gaining additional resources to enhance performance for those who are actively involved in their jobs. So, the training of government officials should be done on these grounds to perceive organizational politics as a challenge and perform better to cope with it. The research presented in this paper adds to our understanding of how politics and performance interact at the workplace, particularly in the public sector.

Keywords: Employee performance, Organizational political perception, Public institutions, Motivation, career planning and civil services reforms.

Introduction

Public sector organizations must achieve service delivery aims and objectives such as development and reforms for people at the national and the international level (Bhuiyan & Francis, 2011). The sheer responsibility of public sector organizations is the facilitation and service delivery to bring comprehensive policies, and regulatory frameworks, to improve infrastructure for common people, and businessmen and social development (PSDP, 2022). Pakistani public sectors are not showing satisfactory performance due to factors like mismanagement, political instability, organizational corruption, misuse of power, and conflicts (Zaidi, 2012). Ahmed et al. (2018) found that organizational virtue was associated with affective well-being and work engagement, both of which improved job performance among bank employees in Pakistan. There are strong financial disorders have been observed in the public sector organizations of developing as well as developed countries (Rana et al, 2022). The public sector of Pakistan can be classified into three major sectors; the services sector, social and infrastructural manufacturers and; the miscellaneous sector (ADB, 2008).

Employee behavior that strategically uses power to achieve goals and maximize self-interests—which may or may not coincide with corporate objectives is known as organizational politics. (Atnic et al., 2010). Politics are widely recognized to permeate all social entities today, it controls the majority, if not all, organizations,   whether   they   are   public   or   private.   Studies   on

organizational politics have multiplied in recent decades. It has been examined from various perspectives, largely from a behaviorist point of view. The detrimental behavioral characteristics of organizational politics are connected to deceit, conflict, misuse of power, self-interest, and other subversive actions (Al-Madadha et al., 2021) (Jain & Ansari, 2018).

The prevailing belief about organizational politics is that it frustrates all types of workers, and reduces their motivation level and ability to perform well. All these factors play a crucial role in the success of any organization because employee performance is directly connected to productivity and prosperity (Safayat & Sazzad, 2021). Employee motivation, efficiency and performance are viewed as a force that drives workers toward achieving particular organizational goals and objectives (Winarsih and Hidayat, 2022). It is not enough to rely solely on the number of people employed, their education, experience, or competence. To get the best performance from the staff, they must be efficient workers (Khassawneh et al., 2022).

Typically, researchers have concentrated on the negative effects of organizational politics on workers' performance. But the question arises here; does political interference always impede the efficacy of organizations? Could there be a positive, beneficial aspect to it as well? A careful consideration of the term "organizational politics" indicates that this phenomenon has many different interpretation that can also challenge and excite employees. Organizational politics sometimes increase the employee's engagement in his/her organization. Employee engagement will be most apparent and frequently evoked when workers feel that their effort and energy will be rewarded in a meaningful way during uncertain times. Therefore, when organizational politics are prevalent, motivated individuals may take it as advantage of the chance to actively change their working environment. They may improve information sharing, innovation, proactivity, and adaptability. However, in both ways, whether the employee's perception is positive about organizational politics or negative, it may impact the productivity and profitability of the organization. The same is true for public sector organizations.

The success of a country is dependent on the effectiveness of its public sector. Executing government policies and programs is the job of entities in the public sector. In order to effectively handle the many and varied needs of the population, public servants/employees are expected to implement government policies and programs. Across the world, public sector changes have been labeled as such in many ways: restructuring, reengineering, and the incorporation of new employment technology (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). The government-owned institutions are run by trained and proactive employees from a variety of fields who work diligently every day to achieve the aforementioned goals. But sometimes, there are some barriers or restrictions in the way of employees, hindrances hinder goal achievement and progress toward receiving rewards. A specific example of a barrier is organizational politics which often leads to red tape. This red tape differs from formalization in organizations in that it involves more than just having rules and procedures in place (Brewer et al., 2012). Red tape exists when regulations obstruct organizational performance, impose restrictions, and serve no useful function. Bureaucratic red tape, lengthy and strict procedures, and insensitive and inflexible service delivery procedures may be made up by an organization's behavior that does not motivate public servants to go above and beyond in their everyday duties (Vigoda, 2007). It places an unneeded load on the organization and leads to irritations, delays, and inefficiencies. Similarly, politics in the organization may obstruct organizational performance, impose restrictions, demotivate the employees, and serve no useful function. It places an unneeded load on the employees of the organization and leads to irritations, delays, and inefficiencies. Organizational politics influence how employees interact with one another, which has a significant impact on organizational outcomes. Employees in public sector organizations respond to organizational politics differently than others, similar to how they respond to stressors. They may get more engaged with their organization. Because of this, it is crucial to consider the prism through which the circumstances are viewed, making the experience of internal politics a personal one.

Organizational politics are a key factor in many countries of the world, having a big impact on things like resource allocation, bureaucratic performance, managerial decisions, etc., as well as the overall

effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. A large number of countries are making significant efforts to modernize their bureaucratic processes (Ivan, 2019; Ohemeng et al., 2019), but the process has come to a grinding standstill. While researching the history of such changes, we can see that they have been the subject of several different committees and subcommittees throughout the years in Pakistan as well. In Pakistan, it was endured in Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's tenure that the Public Officials Act of 1973 was passed, which created a common training curriculum for all professional groups to provide equitable access to civil servants. This was the most major reform of its sort during his administration. Similarly, a comprehensive set of regulations for recruitment, training, promotion, and assessment were promulgated by the Punjab Provincial Government in 1974, which became known as the Punjab Civil Service Law (Punjab Civil Service Rules (appointment and conditions of service), 1974). Since then, the reform effort has been effectively halted.

Considering the above discussion, it can be reflected that bureaucratic reforms have been largely ignored in Pakistan for several reasons. Although, economic and constitutional changes have been implemented in phases, but political and bureaucratic reforms have not. The reason somehow is that the political parties have given so little attention to bureaucratic reforms. These reforms were crucial for increasing engagement and satisfying the employees with their place in the organization. The rules and regulations of public organizations in Pakistan are flexible, and people might interpret them in favor of or against their own interests. It incites personnel to relax benefit regulations. It also creates the variation in work attitudes and behavior displayed by the employees within the same workplace's identical working conditions may be affected by the employee's perception of the internal organizational politics. Office politics victims frequently adopt bad attitudes toward their jobs and the entire organization, which has an impact on their performance. Employees respond differently to the same conditions due to differences in personality traits. It is also evident from the research literature that organizational politics creates more engagement but some employees in some experiences which has a much greater detrimental impact on employees' behavior and attitude than favorable workplace experiences do.

As, it has been already established that due to variances in personality features, employees react to the same circumstances in various ways. Therefore, this study has been conducted to highlight the employee's perception about organizational politics on their motivation level and performance.
In this context, the research questions of the study are:

1. What is the employees' perception on the organizational politics on their work efficiency in public sector organizations?
2. Does the power mediate organizational politics perception and employee work efficiency relationship?
3. Does any conflict between employees and leadership mediates organizational politics perception and employee work efficiency relationship?

Hypotheses Development

The organizational politics in the public sector to retain powers may create some imbalance on employee's performance. The perception of organizational politics, whether real or imagined, has more impact on people's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses than actual politics have on organizational outcomes. People respond following their perceptions of reality, not actuality. It is evident from the literature that people who view politics at work experience get unfavorable results, such as decreased organizational commitment and work satisfaction etc. Albloush et al. (2020), by using data set of 22 regional directorates in the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), Jordan, studies the effect of organizational politics on the performance of employees. The findings of the research indicated that a large number of employees have subpar performance. To explore the workplace politics on employee's performance, Bushiri (2014) performed a qualitative and quantitative study at the School of Financial Management in Dar es Salaam, and find a positive relationship between employee performance and environmental work. Similarly, by using both qualitative and quantitative data, a study on the impact of

politics on worker performance at commercial banks in the Ghana-Kumasi region was conducted by Owusu (2012).The author concluded that politics and employee performance have positive relationship. Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

Hypothesis 1: Organizational politics perception is significantly related to employee performance.

An organization's primary assets are its human resource, and this paradigm demands intense focus on the fact that, in order to succeed, an organization must view its employees as an asset rather than a cost or liability. In higher education institutions, which offer services and rely heavily on highly skilled academic personnel to provide high-quality education, this problem becomes extremely serious. According to a study by Asrar-ul-Ha et al. (2019) in Pakistan's universities, job stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions are the three most significant outcomes that social capital have moderating relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee outcomes. They provided evidence that employee's job stress and their intentions to leave their jobs are adversely impacted by organizational politics. Along with performance, self-determination and motivation at work enhance other outcomes like creativity. (Lui, Chen, & Yao, 2011), commitment (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009), and retention (Lui et al., 2011). Marton and Bartol (2003) found that a single individual may have an impact on performance, hence enhancing and sustaining the level of performance. Hence, the hypothesis 2 is as follows;

Hypothesis 2: Power significantly mediates organizational politics perception and employee performance relationship.

Most of the research literature is palpable that the performance of employees has been negatively impacted by organizational politics. On the other hand, it is also contended with the perception that organizational politics has advantages in that it can modify the link between employee engagement and actions like sharing knowledge and being creative, proactive, and adaptable. The productivity of knowledge workers is mediated by information sharing in the link between knowledge governance and that helps to improve it (Umar et al, 2021). Employee engagement and their behaviors are more closely linked when there are views of organizational politics. When engaged workers feel that their job is political, they are more proactive, inventive, and adaptable, as well as more likely to educate their peers. The same has been observed in the study conducted by Eldor (2017) employed a dataset from 253 high-tech workers and their managers in Israel. Their results support the hypothesis that employees' perspectives determine whether politics are regarded as beneficial or detrimental. Achieving specific goals is established by this clarity; individuals must be sufficiently positive and clear about their ambitions to achieve them. As stated by Bedeian and Hunt, (2006), there is an inbuilt motivation to fulfill an unmet requirement of earning associate degrees, in addition to a desire to feel fulfilled. Temperament and form differentiation interact with one another to get this result (IRCO). A series of lessons are given to competent youngsters that assist them in increasing their efficiency and achieving their aims.

It has been established through an extensive review of literature that the employees' performance and motivation level is influenced by organizational politics both positively and negatively. The perceived atmosphere of organizational politics instigates demotivation and demoralization in an employee's overall attitude and behavior. However, the positive impact of organizational politics increases employee engagement in the public organization. It has the potential to support the workers to deal with organizational politics because it fosters a strong, resourceful, and contented state of mind. Consequently, it makes sense to hypothesize that it might be one of the elements that organizational politics can impact job performance in both ways.

Hypothesis 3: Conflict significantly mediates organizational politics perception and employee performance relationship.

Figure 1: Proposed Model
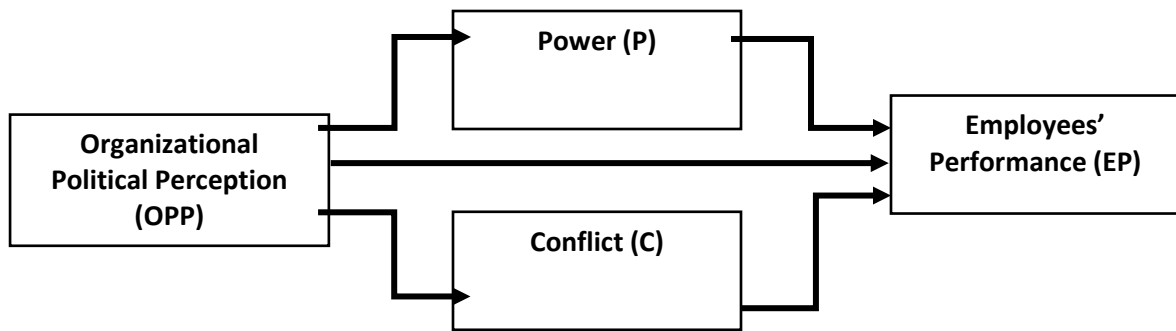
Methodology

Keeping in view the objectives and scope of the study, the scientific survey method approach was used in this study to collect data. The research sample was collected from the employees of 15 different public sector organizations, including autonomous units and ministries. Respondents to the questionnaire work in a variety of roles in management and administration, including CEO, secretary, deputy minister, and assistant secretary positions, as well as chief executive officer, director, chief accountant, and managing director positions. Management, professionalism, and work abilities are among the functions and professional backgrounds and occupations of those who answered the survey questions. People in positions such as personnel managers, assistants, and administrative staff are considered authorized government entities.

The sample size was drawn by convenient sampling technique and 400 respondents from 15 organizations were selected to participate. The data was collected from the respondents between October 15 to November 15, 2021. The survey tools utilized for the study's purposes received careful consideration from the authors. The required information was accurately and meticulously defined in the questionnaire. To ascertain whether the first draught of the questionnaire was appropriate for obtaining the necessary information from respondents, it was pre-tested in hypothetical circumstances. After pre-testing, the questionnaires underwent further revision and were used for data collection. The tool/questionnaire was developed in both English and Urdu versions so that respondents can find it simpler to react to inquiries if they can communicate in their language. The information that was gathered about how employees felt about organizational politics was examined using statistical methods.

Among 400 questionnaires, 228 were correctly filled out and were of use to the researchers. Examination of the data was carried out by using Pearson correlation. Multiple regression has also been used in order to estimate the results. Where is the information about all measurement scales? a) Organizational Political Perception, b) Power   c) Conflict   d) Employee Performance

Results

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics. The mean value implies that the responses to the study variable-related items are consistent. The desired range is also occupied by the Kurtosis and skewness and values (skewness=+1, -1; kurtosis=+1, -1). The numerical data on the display is normal.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the variables (perception of organizational policies and performance of employee) have a weak but statistically significant correlation, according to the Pearson correlation analysis. Thus Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational politics perception	3.2781	.83811	-.332	-.411
Power	3.1640	.91811	-.225	-.558
Creating Conflict	3.3158	.78258	-.136	-.477

Employee Performance	3.8759	.58267	-.439	.014

Table 2. Correlations (variables)

	EP	Organizational politics perception
Employee Performance	1	
Organizational Politics Perception	.237(**)	1

** There is a significant Correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relevant data correlated to organizational politics dimensions and employee performance are shown in Table 3. The findings demonstrate that there is a modest but statistically significant link between perceptions of organizational politics and the production of conflict, and there is no link between power and employee performance.

Table 3. Correlations (Dimensions)

	Organizational politics perception	Power	Creating Conflict	Employee Performance
Organizational politics perception	1			
Power	.575(**)	1		
Creating Conflict	-.018	.123	1	
Employee Performance	.184(**)	.049	.286(**)	1

** There is a significant Correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For the composite variable of organizational politics and employee performance, linear regression analysis was carried out. The result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression for OP-EP Model

Description	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F- Stats	Sig	Beta	t-Stat	Sig.
Dependent Variable: Employee Performance								
	0.237	0.056	0.52	13.443	0.000			
Constant						3.122	14.941	0.000
Organizational politics perception						.232	3.666	0.000

Table 4 shows the regression results, which demonstrate a weak relationship (R 0.237). The model's fitness is represented by the F statistic. The R^2 score implies that organizational rules are to blame for the 5.6 percent shift in employee performance. According to the Beta coefficient, organizational politics have a 23.2 percent effect on employee performance.

Table 5. Multiple Regression for Dimensions of Organizational Politics

Description	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F- Stats	Sig	Beta	t-Stat	Sig.
Dependent Variable: Employee Performance (EP)								
	0.363	0.132	0.120	11.361	0.000			
Constant						2.782	12.882	0.000
Organizational politics perception (OPP)						0.191	3.586	0.000
Power						-.093	-1.906	0.058
Creating Conflict (CC)						0.230	4.903	0.000

The impact of the personal component of organizational policy on employee performance is investigated using multiple regression analysis. Table 6 summarizes the findings. The multiple R-value is 0.363, indicating that there is a 36.3 percent connection between the various elements of organizational policy and the dependent variable employee performance. R^2 implies that 13.2% of variations in employee performance can be attributed to organizational politics. The population-adjusted variation of the dependent variable is 12.0%, according to the adjusted R^2 value. The F statistic has a value of 11.361 (p0.01). This confirms the model's applicability (R^2 0).

Table 5 also shows how different organizational rules affect employee performance on a personal level. Employee performance is influenced by perceptions of organizational politics, power, and conflict, with beta values of 0.191, -0.093, and 0.230, respectively. 3.586 (p 0.01), -1.96 (p > 0.05), 4.903 (p0.01), and 5.817 (p0.01), respectively, are the t statistics for these variables.

Discussion

Employees in the public sector agree that organizational politics are universal, according to the findings of the survey. This suggests that the organizational policies in the public sector have no bigger impact on the performance of employees. The findings of Burke and Ng's study are supported by organizational policy (2006). Employees have differing perspectives on organizational policy in various areas, including career services and promotion, they pointed out. According to Ram and Prabhakar (2010) and Mosadegh et al. (2006), public sector workers are more likely to use political strategies like personal connections to pursue their benefits and have a strong sense of their own working environment. Organizational politics is the study of how workers engage in ways that advance their personal interests without taking organizational goals into account (Kacmar & Bozeman, 1999). Corporate governance causes interest conflicts among employees and has a negative impact on the workplace culture (Bodla & Danish, 2010).

As explained in Table 2 and Table 3, the Pearson correlation of variables (organizational policies perception and employee performance) depicts that there is a statistically significant but weak relation present between organizational policies perception and employee performance due to which it is concluded that hypothesis 1 is Accepted. Whereas, results show that there is a statistically significant but modest link present between perceptions of organizational politics and production of conflict, there is no link between power and employee performance due to which hypotheses 2 and 3 are rejected.

Conclusion

The impact of OPP on the performance of Pakistani public sector personnel was explored in this study. Organizational politics is prevalent in public organizations, according to studies, although its link to employee performance is minimal. Organizational policies also have a statistically significant but minor effect on performance. These findings are relevant from the standpoint of underdeveloped countries. Employees in the public sector, according to popular belief, use their own political clout and demonstrate their strength to attain their goals, particularly in terms of professional advancement. However, the findings show that this is not the case. Political power exists, but it is limited and contrary to common assumptions. Although organizational politics have historically received a bad rap in our study, it has been identified that it's potential to support organizational objectives and productivity has a minimal role in EP. The same was true in the study conducted by Eldor (2016). Our findings demonstrate that employees in the political environment share more knowledge and are more proactive, innovative and adaptable, which indicates the relationship between employee's perception of politics and their work efficacy.

The study came to the conclusion that organizational politics have minimal impact on employee performance. This may be because in Pakistani PSOs, leadership is seen as more of a watchdog that can quell the negative effect of organizational politics, especially those who are involved into power. Organizational politics, according to Bodla and Danish (2010), is behavior used to persuade people or groups within an organization. According to earlier research (Boerner et al., 2007; Bodla & Danish, 2010), organizational politics negatively affects organizational commitment and the work environment. Employee attitudes and organizational politics serve as helpful indications of how well employees are handling their obligations and planning to leave their jobs. The workers have the ability to advance their own agendas, take part in organizational politics, and make the most of their potential (Bono & Judge, 2003).

In the recent study, employee performance in Pakistani public sector companies was compared with organizational politics. According to the study, organizational politics are common in public companies, but there is no correlation between them and worker performance. Organizational politics also have a statistically meaningful, if little, impact on performance. From the standpoint of developing countries, the results are noteworthy. People often assume that public sector employees use their personal political connections and authority displays to serve their own interests, especially when it comes to professional progress. Results, however, show that this is untrue; while political influence is there, which is modest and does not correspond to popular perception.

Many studies have been done from the perspective of developed nations, but there is limited evidence of how organizational politics affect EP, especially when it comes to the public sector in developing countries.

Limitations of the study and future research

There are certain limitations in this research. To begin with, the research results are precise due to the use of the convenience sampling technique and therefore study's findings cannot be generalized. Future studies should therefore focus on probability sampling techniques. Secondly, Public Sector organizations in the capital region. The results may alter if the study includes a bigger sample size and public agencies based in provincial capitals. Comparative analysis of the public and private sectors, as well as between countries, can help us better understand the politics and performance of organizations in developing countries. Other factors, according to the findings, influence corporate policy and employee performance.

To fully comprehend the relationship between OPP and EP, future research may consider the effects of leadership, human resource practices, corporate culture and demographic traits.

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