

## *A time-lagged study on the moderating role of overall satisfaction in perceived politics: Job outcomes relationships*

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### **Abstract**

In a time-lagged study with independent measures ( $N = 115$ , paired responses), we examined the interactive effects of perceived organizational politics and overall satisfaction on job stress, interpersonal conflict, job performance, and creativity. The data were collected from a diverse sample of employees from various workplaces in Pakistan. The findings showed that perceived politics had a positive effect on job stress, while overall satisfaction had a negative effect on interpersonal conflict and a positive effect on creative performance. The results also revealed that in the face of high politics, highly satisfied individuals demonstrated higher levels of creativity and job performance. However, in this context of high politics negative effects were also observed, namely that highly satisfied individuals participated in interpersonal conflict and experienced high stress.

**Keywords:** overall satisfaction, perceived organizational politics (POP), job performance, creativity, job stress, interpersonal conflict

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In recent decades, there has been much interest in the domain of organizational behavior (OB) on the impact of perceived organizational politics (POP) on individuals and organizations (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989; Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009; Abbas, Raja, Darr, & Bouckenoghe, 2012). To date, two meta-analytic studies have been conducted on to explore the detrimental effects (if any) on employee outcomes (Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008; Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009). These meta-analytic studies revealed a noticeable inconsistency across different outcomes and settings. For instance, Miller, Rutherford and Kolodinsky (2008) reported variations across local and international settings. The meta-analysis by Chang, Rosen and Levy (2009) also recommended further investigation of the existence of potential moderators between POP and job outcomes, stressing the need for future explorations in diverse cultural contexts. The inconsistent findings in research exploring the relationship between POP and various outcomes has been reported in multiple studies that have also called for future research (Abbas et al., 2012).

In line with affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), we suggest that employees' job satisfaction plays a moderating role in buffering against the detrimental effect of POP on outcomes. Specifically, our study examines the interactive effects of perceived politics and job satisfaction on

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employees' creative performance, job performance, interpersonal conflict, and job stress. As such, in order to resolve previously identified inconsistencies in outcomes within high POP environments, we suggest that job satisfaction mitigates negative outcomes in employees' secondary appraisals of events as described in affective events theory.

Much of the literature on job satisfaction focuses on either generalized satisfaction (respondents' general satisfaction with their jobs) or specific facets, such as satisfaction with one's supervisor or compensation-driven satisfaction. In our research, we focus on a more global measure of overall satisfaction, which is comprised of four dimensions of satisfaction: social; supervisory; security; and compensation. As we explain below, a global measure better captures employees' overall sense of satisfaction within the organization, which we expect will lead to a positive experience at work, even in the face of challenges such as high POP. Consideration of satisfaction facets instead of the traditional, non-nuanced measures of job satisfaction is an advance that provides a holistic view of satisfaction and its impact on job outcomes.

This study considers overall satisfaction as a moderator because we expect that considering all four facets of job satisfaction as overall satisfaction will be more instrumental in capturing all the elements which help individuals cope with negative effects of workplace stressors. We therefore examine the effects of perceived politics and overall satisfaction on job stress, interpersonal conflict, job performance, and creative performance. We also examine the interactive effects of perceived politics and overall satisfaction on these outcomes given that previous theory lacks an understanding of how overall satisfaction works as a buffering mechanism to cope with workplace politics. Moreover, given that most studies conducted in the domains of perceived politics used North America and Western samples (Abbas et al., 2012), testing the applicability and validity of theories outside a Western cultural context as in our study provides evidence for the external validity of such theories (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007). Our study provides an opportunity to test these theories in a Pakistani context, which is somewhat rare in OB literature.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational politics is an intentional action, covert or overt, to protect and promote an individual's self-interest, sometimes at the expense of, and without regard for the well-being of others or their organizations (Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1979; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). Most research on organizational politics relies on Lewin's (1936) idea that measuring individual perceptions is more valuable than measuring reality itself. As such, to gain an understanding of politics' effect on job outcomes, employees' perception of its occurrence is paramount. In fact, given that >90% of employees perceive office politics as common (Gandz & Murray, 1980), POP may be inescapable and have an influence on their behavior at work.

The perception of organizational politics model was developed by Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989. According to Ferris, Harrell-Cook, and Dulebohn (2000), POP 'involves an individual attribution to the behaviors of self-serving intent, and is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation about the extent to which the work environment is characterized by co-workers and supervisors who demonstrate such self-serving behavior' (p. 90). Previous studies revealed that politics leads toward different stress-related outcomes in organizations (Gilmore, Ferris, Dulebohn, & Harrell-Cook, 1996). The perception of organizational politics has been found to have a generally positive relationship with job stress (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989; Ferris, Frink, Gilmore, & Kacmar, 1994; Ferris, 1996; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Valle & Perrew, 2000; Poon, 2003; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008) and feeling pressure, which may lead to nervous and impulsive behaviors, as well as less tolerance toward others (Vigoda, 2002).

Given that POP increases uncertainty and ambiguity in the workplace (Vigoda, 2002), we expect that it would also lead to a more hostile work environment in which individuals experience more interpersonal conflict. In a high POP context, employees may perceive the rules for advancement as being ambiguous and less contingent on performance, and so they might become more competitive with colleagues in vying for rewards.

Given the effect of POP on job stress and interpersonal conflict, it is not surprising that it would also interfere with employees' effectiveness in performing their job. In fact, job performance is one of the major outcomes affected by the perception of organizational politics, with considerable research identifying a negative relationship between perception of organizational politics and job performance (Drory, 1993; Ferris, 1996; Witt, 1998; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1999; Vigoda, 2000a, 2000b; Bozeman, Hochwarier, Perrew, & Brymer, 2001; Poon, 2003).

We expect that POP will also be detrimental to creative performance. In line with research that has demonstrated the positive role of work support on creative behavior (Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002), we expect that within a high POP context, employees will perceive less support and thus exhibit lower levels of creative performance. This is consistent with meta-analytic evidence of the negative relationship between uncontrollability and creative performance. Given that within a high POP context employees are likely to perceive themselves as less in control of their environment and outcomes (Byron, Khazanchi, & Nazarian, 2010), we expect to find lower incidences of creative performance.

Occupational stress has been explained as most severe factor in organizational context (Nor Intan Shamimi & Ahmed, 2015). Because perceived politics has been categorized as a hindrance stressor, scholars believe that it has the potential to threaten employees' growth and well-being, harm desirable job outcomes, and trigger negative attitudes and workplace behaviors (LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). Therefore, on the basis of the above discussion, we believe that POP will trigger higher job stress and interpersonal conflict among individuals, and will dampen performance and creativity in the workplace. In other words, individuals who perceive high levels of organizational politics will also experience high levels of job stress and engage in high levels of interpersonal conflict. Moreover, these individuals will demonstrate low levels of job performance and creativity.

Hypothesis 1: Perception of organizational politics will be positively related to (a) job stress and (b) interpersonal conflict, and negatively related to (c) job performance and (d) creative performance.

### **Overall satisfaction and job outcomes**

Early research has linked job satisfaction to both positive (e.g., well-being and organizational effectiveness; Luthans & Youssef, 2007) and negative outcomes (exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect; Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Recent research trends in OB have shifted toward the identification of positive psychological resources that can contribute to individual outcomes in the workplace. The theme behind the promotion of positive organizational psychology is rooted in helping employees cope with various negative detrimental influences in the workplace. As an example of positive psychology's influence, during the last decade, job satisfaction facets have gained considerable popularity in human resource management and OB research.

Hoppock (1935) initially defined the term 'job satisfaction' as general satisfaction with one's job. Satisfaction facets have been linked to important outcomes, including their role in enhancing job performance and providing intrinsic motivation and ownership to employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Similarly, previous research found a negative association between workplace stressors and job satisfaction (Locke, 1976; Beehr & Newman, 1978; Hackett, Bycio, & Guion, 1989). Many studies

conducted in a variety of settings and samples suggested a negative relationship between job satisfaction and stress, as satisfied employees seem less prone to a stress response (Chang, Chen, Fong, & Luh, 1990; Burke, Robinson, Richardson, & Bundell, 1991; Kuan, Yang, Roy, Davis, Rakic, & Flavell, 1999; Ahmadi et al., 2006). Overall satisfaction is also expected to be associated with lower incidences of interpersonal conflict. This is in line with research that identified a negative relationship between job satisfaction and decreased levels of perceived violation in workplace (Greenberg & Baron, 2000). According to Hackman and Oldham (1980), increased levels of satisfaction result in decreased levels of workplace misconduct, conflict, and stealing organizational property (Harris & Benson, 1998; Huiras, Uggen, & McMorris, 2005). Based on these findings, a negative relationship may be predicted between overall satisfaction and interpersonal conflict.

The link between job satisfaction and performance has received much interest in the literature, with various approaches providing complementary insight concerning their relationship. While earlier research identified a weak relationship between the two constructs at the individual level (e.g., Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Locke, 1976; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985), research at the unit level identified a stronger relationship (Whitman, Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010). Researchers have also considered the joint effects of employee attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and commitment) as accounting for greater variance in employee performance outcomes (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). In line with this previous research, we expect that employees who are satisfied with their jobs will also manage to achieve higher levels of overall job performance. Multiple empirical studies provide evidence that employee creativity reaches its peak when employees are strongly intrinsically motivated as well as satisfied with their work, driven by their own interests, curious, and engaging in challenging work (Amabile, 1983, 1988; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996, p. 1158). Kay, Bryman, Dainty, and Soeta (2008) argued that job satisfaction is necessary for individuals in terms of creativity, future development, and resource availability. Furthermore, Baloch (2009) also found that there is a positive association between job satisfaction and employee creativity.

Because overall satisfaction encompasses a variety of dimensions (satisfaction with security, satisfaction with compensation, social satisfaction, and supervisory satisfaction), we believe that individuals whose overall satisfaction is high will experience low job stress, demonstrate low interpersonal conflict, and exhibit high job performance and creativity. Thus, a positive relationship is expected between overall satisfaction and employee creative performance. Hence, based on the above literature and argument, we expect similar findings in a Pakistani context, which will advance the theoretical generalizability of satisfaction facets. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Overall satisfaction will be negatively related to (a) job stress and (b) interpersonal conflict, and positively related to (c) job performance and (d) creative performance.

### **Overall satisfaction as a moderator between pop and job outcomes**

Perception of organizational politics is known as a hindrance stressor that negatively influences job performance, goal achievement, and growth (LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). In the presence of environmental stressors such as organizational politics, employees strive to minimize negative consequences (Hobfoll, 2002). Employees who possess higher levels of satisfaction are better equipped to cope with the detrimental effects of environmental or hindrance stressors (Treadway, Ferris, Hochwarter, Perrewé, Witt, & Goodman, 2005; Abbas et al., 2012). In line with this earlier work, we expect job satisfaction to play a moderating role in the relationship between POP and previously established negative outcomes (i.e., stress, conflict, overall performance, and creative performance) in the secondary appraisal process of affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Hence, we argue that overall satisfaction mitigates the negative outcomes associated with a high POP context.

In line with the important role of autonomous motivations within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), we expect that in a highly political environment, overall satisfaction will provoke ownership and affiliation among employees in the workplace, resulting in higher intrinsic motivation while helping them to cope with the negative effects of POP. We argue that in a highly political environment, employees with higher levels of overall satisfaction will be less likely to engage in interpersonal conflict.

As stated in previous paragraphs, POP is considered to have harmful effects on desirable job outcomes. When individuals perceive high levels of politics at their workplace, they are more likely to engage in interpersonal conflict, experience high job stress, and demonstrate poor performance and creativity in the workplace. However, the effect of perceived politics on these outcomes may depend upon the level of overall individual satisfaction. Overall satisfaction is considered to be a key source of intrinsic motivation and is a psychological resource that may help individuals cope with environmental stressors like perceived politics. Employees who experience overall satisfaction likely possess the necessary psychological resources to cope with stressful situations, and thus be less affected by them. Therefore, we argue that while perceived politics will have a harmful effect on desirable job outcomes, the strength of this effect will depend upon the level of overall satisfaction and individual experiences. When faced with perceived politics, employees who have a high level of overall satisfaction will experience less job stress and engage in less interpersonal conflict than those who experience low levels of overall satisfaction. Similarly, when faced with perceived politics, employees who have high levels of overall satisfaction will experience a weaker corresponding negative effect on their job performance and creative performance compared with those who experience low levels of job satisfaction. Consequently, we expect that:

Hypothesis 3: Overall satisfaction will moderate the relationship between perception of organizational politics and (a) job stress, (b) interpersonal conflict, (c) job performance, and (d) creative performance. The positive relationship between POP and job stress and interpersonal conflict and the negative relationship between POP and job performance and creative performance will be weaker when overall job satisfaction is high.

## METHOD

The data were collected from a diverse sample of employees from two customer service offices of a large telecommunication company, a local branch of a private commercial bank, a manufacturing plant for a packaging firm, and a local office of a multinational engineering company in Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan. The previous studies in similar context reported English as a suitable language for survey research (Butt, Choi, & Jaeger, 2005; Khan, Akbar, Jam, & Saeed, 2015). Once allowed access by these organizations, we emailed all employees to invite them to participate in the study. We then visited each of the locations and administered the paper and pencil surveys to the 300 potential respondents. The questionnaire contained a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study, assured them of confidentiality, and explained that participation was voluntary.

Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 250 were returned completed, an initial response rate of 83.3%. At Time 1 responses for self-reported POP and overall satisfaction were recorded. Six months after the first wave of data collection, we invited all 250 respondents to take the Time 2 survey, which measured job stress and interpersonal conflict. At this time, we also contacted each participating employee's supervisor to request that they rate the job performance and creativity of their subordinates. We received 115 completed and usable paired (self and supervisor reports) responses, an overall response rate of 38.33%.

The average age of the respondents was 29 (SD = 3.50) years and ranged from 24 to 42 years. All respondents possessed a university education; 58% held an undergraduate degree and 42% had a graduate-level degrees. They served in lower management (44%) and middle management (56%) positions. Average tenure was 2.30 (SD = 1.27) years, and each respondent spent at least 6 months with the supervisor who reported his or her performance and creativity.

## Measures

All variables were measured using self-reports except for job performance and creative performance, which were measured using supervisory ratings to avoid self-report bias issues. Similarly, temporal separation of responses (a 6-month gap) helped to avoid common method bias and enhance our confidence in the predictions involving causality.

### *Perception of organizational politics*

Perception of politics was measured with a 15-item scale developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997). The sample items were 'People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down' and 'There is no place for yes-men around here.' Responses were taken on a Likert scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = disagree strongly' to '5 = strongly agree.' The reliability of this measure was 0.74. We conducted second-order confirmatory factor analysis to see whether these three dimensions of perceived politics – i.e., general political behavior (two items), go along to get ahead (seven items), and pay and promotion policies (six items) load on a single latent factor. The results revealed a good fit for a single latent-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 36$ ,  $df = 30$ ; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.99, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.96, incremental fit index [IFI] = 0.99, normed fit index [NFI] = 0.93, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.04). We calculated the additive measure for perceived politics by combining all three dimensions and using its mean for further analysis. Higher response was considered indicative of a perceived high level of politics. This practice was reported and widely used in previous literature (Abbas et al., 2012; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006).

### *Overall satisfaction*

Overall satisfaction was measured through self-reports, with 10 items from the scale developed by Hackman and Oldham (1974). This measure is more comprehensive and provides a broad and holistic measure of overall satisfaction. Sample items included: 'I am satisfied with'; 'The amount of job security I have'; 'The degree to which I am fairly paid for what I contribute to this organization'; 'The people I talk to and work with on my job'; and 'The overall quality of the supervision I receive at my work.' The responses were taken using a seven-point scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '7 = strongly agree.' The  $\alpha$  reliability for this measure was 0.87. Results of CFA revealed an acceptable fit for a single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 78.3$ ,  $df = 41$ ; CFI = 0.96, GFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.08). According to MacCallum, Browne and Sugawara (1996), for RMSEA value an excellent fit value is 0.01, best fit value is 0.05, and acceptable fit value is 0.08; several other studies reported 0.10 as a cutoff point for a poor fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). For NFI value according to Bentler and Bonnet (1980) should be minimum required NFI > 0.90 to indicate a good fit (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008). For CFI value according to Hu and Bentler (1999) should be minimum as CFI > 0.90 to indicate a good fit. However, the value CFI > 0.95 is considered to indicate an excellent fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). For IFI value according to Hu and Bentler (1999) should be minimum as CFI > 0.90 to indicate a good fit. However the value CFI > 0.95 is considered to indicate an excellent fit. (McDonald & Ho, 2002; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). We used additive measure for job enrichment by combining all dimensions and using their mean for further analysis. Higher response here

was considered to indicate an individual with a highly enriched job and high levels of derived satisfaction outcomes.

### ***Job stress***

Job stress was measured with 13-item scale developed by Parker and Decotiis (1983). Sample items included 'I sometimes dread the telephone ringing at home because the call might be job related' and 'Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest.' The responses were taken on a five-point scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree.' The  $\alpha$  reliability of this measure was 0.83. Results of CFA revealed an acceptable fit for a single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 54.5$ ,  $df = 29$ ; CFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.94, IFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.08). We used additive measure for job stress by using the mean of all items for further analysis.

### ***Interpersonal conflict***

Interpersonal conflict used a four-item scale developed by Spector and Jex (1998). Sample items included 'How often do you get into arguments with others at work' and 'How often do other people do nasty things to you at work.' The responses were taken using a five-point scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = never' to '5 = a lot.' The  $\alpha$  reliability of this measure was 0.81. The results of CFA revealed an acceptable fit for a single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 11.9$ ,  $df = 2$ ; CFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.95, IFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.08). We used additive measure for interpersonal conflict by combining all dimensions and using their mean for further analysis. Higher response was considered indicative of an individual with high interpersonal conflict.

### ***Job performance***

Job performance was measured through supervisor reports using a seven-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The sample items included 'Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description' and 'Fails to perform essential duties.' The responses were taken on a five-point scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree.' The  $\alpha$  reliability of this measure was 0.86. The results of CFA showed a good fit for a single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 10.8$ ,  $df = 8$ ; CFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.05). We used additive measure for job performance by combining all dimensions and using their mean for further analysis. Higher response was considered indicative of an individual with high job performance.

### ***Creative performance***

Creative performance was also measured through supervisor reports using a six-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Sample items included 'Creates new ideas for improvements' and 'Transforms innovative ideas into useful applications.' The responses were taken on a seven-point scale, with anchors ranging from '1 = never' to '7 = Always.' The  $\alpha$  reliability of this measure was 0.72. CFA results supported a single-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 5.3$ ,  $df = 4$ ; CFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.05). We used additive measure for creative performance by combining all dimensions and using their mean for further analysis. Higher response was considered indicative of an individual with high creative performance.

### **Control variables**

The one-way analysis of variance statistic was used to check the control variable. The sample and data collection shows three key demographic variables: age was significant with creative performance ( $F = 2.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ); qualification was significant with interpersonal conflict ( $F = 7.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ),

and job performance ( $F = 4.90, p < .05$ ); and supervisor as a grouping variable was significant with creative performance ( $F = 2.01, p < .05$ ). Thus, age, qualification, and supervisor were controlled during analysis. The remaining demographic factors did not explain significant differences for job outcomes. Controlling for supervisor in regression and moderation analysis for job performance and creative performance eliminated the potential variance explained in analysis as a grouping variable.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability estimates for all the study variables. All zero-order bivariate correlations supported the directions proposed in the study.

We conducted moderated multiple regressions to test our hypotheses. In the first step, qualification was entered as a control variable, followed by POP and overall satisfaction in the second step. In the third step, we entered an interaction term of perceived politics and satisfaction, which, if significant, confirmed moderating effects. The results of moderated multiple regressions are shown in Table 2. The second step in this table shows the main effects of the independent and the moderator variables, while the third step shows the combined effects of both variables. We mean-centered all independent variables in the moderated regressions and plotted the significant interaction for the +1 SD and -1 SD values of the moderator. We also measured colinearity statistics (variance influence factor and the tolerance statistics) among predictors that affected the regression model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1998; Tabachnick, Fidell, & Osterlind, 2001). We found that in all analyses variance influenced factor scores (1.23) below 5 and tolerance scores (Tolerance = 0.82) above 0.10 (Chatterjee & Price, 1991; Hair et al., 1998), which showed that multiple colinearity was not a problem.

Step 2 in Table 2 shows that POP was positively related to job stress ( $\beta = 0.41, p < .001$ ), but its relationship with interpersonal conflict ( $\beta = 0.05, ns$ ), job performance ( $\beta = -0.08, ns$ ), and creative performance ( $\beta = 0.10, ns$ ) was not significant. These results provide support for Hypothesis 1a, predicting a positive relationship between POP and job stress. Hypotheses 1b–1d were not supported. Overall satisfaction was negatively related to interpersonal conflict ( $\beta = -0.28, p < .001$ ) and positively related to creative performance ( $\beta = 0.22, p < .01$ ). However, overall satisfaction was not related to job stress ( $\beta = 0.10, ns$ ) and job performance ( $\beta = 0.04, ns$ ). These results support only Hypotheses 2b and 2d.

TABLE 1. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, CORRELATIONS, AND RELIABILITIES

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Qualification	3.42	0.50							
2 Perceived organizational politics	3.24	0.51	0.10	(0.74)					
3 Overall satisfaction	4.56	0.92	-0.02	0.11	(0.79)				
4 Job stress	3.25	0.73	-0.01	0.42**	0.14	(0.83)			
5 Interpersonal conflict	2.79	0.98	0.13	0.02	-0.30**	0.11	(0.81)		
6 Job performance	3.46	0.70	0.03	-0.07	0.05	0.12	0.11	(0.86)	
7 Creative performance	4.87	0.90	0.01	0.13	0.22*	0.22*	0.06	0.05	(0.72)

Note.  $n = 115$ . For qualification, 3 = undergraduate degree and 4 = graduate degree.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .



TABLE 2. RESULTS OF MODERATION REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Predictors	Job stress ( $\beta$ )	Interpersonal conflict ( $\beta$ )	Job performance ( $\beta$ )	Creative performance ( $\beta$ )
Step: 1				
Qualification	0.03	-0.25**	0.24**	-0.11
Step $\Delta R^2$	0.00	0.06**	0.06**	0.01
Step: 2				
Perceived organizational politics (POP)	0.41***	0.05	-0.08	0.11
Overall satisfaction (OS)	0.10	-0.28**	0.04	0.22**
Step $\Delta R^2$	0.19***	0.08**	0.01	0.07*
Step: 3				
POP $\times$ OS	0.28**	0.39***	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.30**
Step $\Delta R^2$	0.06**	0.12***	0.02 <sup>†</sup>	0.06**

Note.  $n = 115$ . For qualification, 3 = undergraduate degree and 4 = graduate degree. All predictor variables were mean-centered for moderator analyses.  
<sup>†</sup> $p < .1$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

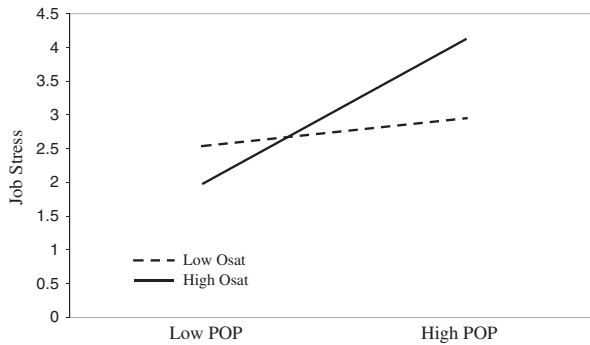


FIGURE 1. INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS (POP) AND OVERALL SATISFACTION (OSAT) ON JOB STRESS

Step 3 in Table 2 shows that the POP  $\times$  overall satisfaction term was significant for job stress ( $\beta = 0.28, p < .002$ ), interpersonal conflict ( $\beta = 0.39, p < .001$ ), job performance ( $\beta = 0.15, p < .08$ ), and creative performance ( $\beta = 0.29, p < .003$ ). We plotted significant interactions of high and low (mean  $\pm$  SD) values of the moderator. These plots are shown in Figures 1–4. Figure 1 and the simple slope analysis results shows that perceived politics was more strongly positively related to job stress ( $\beta = 0.87, p < .001$ ) when overall satisfaction was high, but not related to stress ( $\beta = 0.17, ns$ ) when overall satisfaction was low. Figure 2 shows that POP was positively related to interpersonal conflict ( $\beta = 0.87, p < .001$ ) when satisfaction was high, and negatively related ( $\beta = -0.87, p < .001$ ) when overall satisfaction was low. Figure 3 shows that POP was strongly negatively related to job performance ( $\beta = -0.32, p < .02$ ) when overall satisfaction was low. However, simple slope analysis showed that the slope was not significant when overall satisfaction was high. Figure 4 shows that the POP–creativity relationship was marginally negatively significant when overall satisfaction was low ( $\beta = -0.32, p < .07$ ) and strongly positive when overall satisfaction was high ( $\beta = 0.57, p < .001$ ). These results provide good support to Hypotheses 3c and 3d. Hypotheses 3a and 3b were not supported.

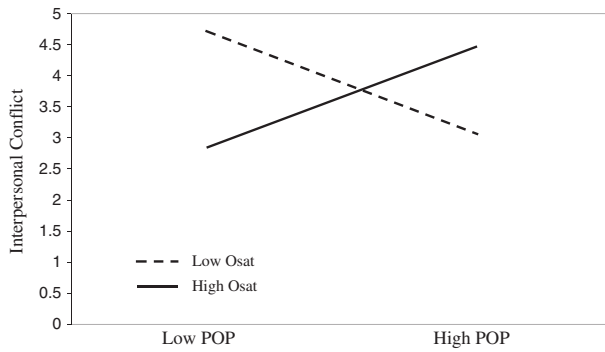


FIGURE 2. INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS (POP) AND OVERALL SATISFACTION (OSAT) ON INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

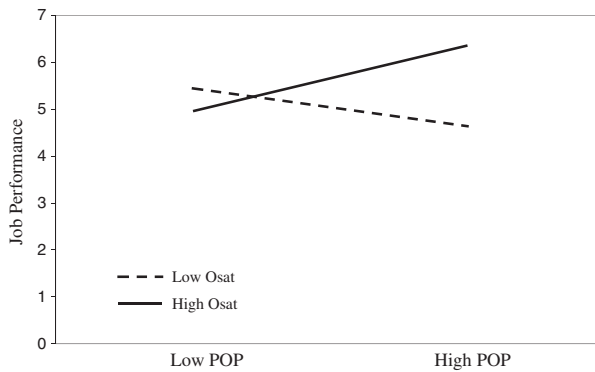


FIGURE 3. INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS (POP) AND OVERALL SATISFACTION (OSAT) ON JOB PERFORMANCE

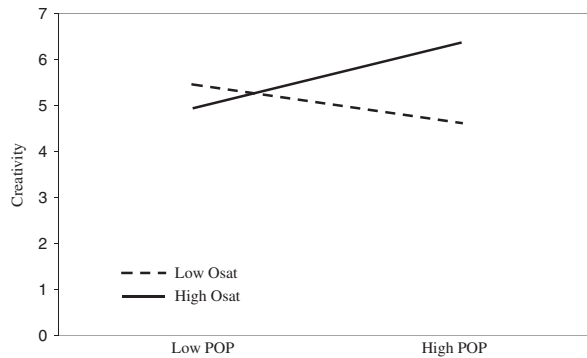


FIGURE 4. INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS (POP) AND OVERALL SATISFACTION (OSAT) ON CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

## DISCUSSION

In recent decades, the detrimental effects of workplace politics on desirable job outcomes has been of interest to OB scholars, particularly in North America and Europe. The majority of these studies,

including two meta-analyses (Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008; Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009), conclude that perceived politics generally has detrimental consequences for both individuals and organizations. In line with the emergence of overall job satisfaction as an important attitude, and accounting for the satisfaction of employees with most of the aspects of their workplace (e.g., satisfaction with salary, supervisor, and with the job itself), we uncovered the mitigating role of this attitude on the detrimental impact of POP on employee outcomes. As such, our work provides additional insight into how overall satisfaction may help individuals cope with stressful situations, such as in high POP contexts. Moreover, sampling employees in an Eastern work setting contributes to the generalizability of our work beyond the more commonly examined Western context.

Our direct-effect analyses revealed that POP triggered job stress among employees. Individuals who perceived a high level of politics reported higher stress than those who perceived low levels. However, in contrast to previous studies, we found that perceived politics was not related to interpersonal conflict, job performance, or creative performance. It appears that while POP does trigger a stress response in employees in Pakistan, these individuals seem not to respond to a high political context with greater conflict or reduced performance. A cultural lens may help explain this outcome. According to Hofstede (1989), Pakistan ranks high on the power-distance dimension of culture, a measure that captures the extent to which individuals are comfortable with hierarchy and strict chains of command. It is therefore possible that in this context employees may experience stress but be less likely to demonstrate its effect behaviorally (i.e., through increased conflict and/or decreased overall and creative performance). This is in line with research that demonstrates that in high power-distance contexts, individuals avoid interpersonal conflict and are more tolerant of politics (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000).

The findings also suggest that overall satisfaction had an insignificant effect on job stress and job performance. However, interestingly, overall satisfaction had a positive effect on creative performance and negative effect on interpersonal conflict. Individuals who experienced overall satisfaction demonstrated creative behaviors at their workplace. These satisfied individuals were less engaged in interpersonal conflict than those with low overall satisfaction. Our research results revealed a significant consistency with results from earlier research, as the POP relationship with job stress was consistent with earlier findings (Vigoda, 2000a; Witt, Kacmar, Carlson, & Zivnuska, 2002). The association of overall satisfaction with interpersonal conflict and creative performance was consistent with prior work (Hackman & Oldham, 1974; Greenberg & Scott, 1996), as well as with the notion that these outcomes are more within the control of the individual and less constrained by organizational standards and expectations relative to overall performance (Johns, 1993).

While not all of our direct-effect predictions were supported, we did find evidence of interaction effects between POP and satisfaction on employee outcomes. Importantly, it appears that high satisfaction better equips employees to deal with high POP, so that their work performance is not adversely affected. Specifically, our results suggest that employees with high overall satisfaction demonstrated high levels of job performance when perceived politics was high. However, those with low overall satisfaction demonstrated low performance when their perceived politics was high. We found the same patterns of relationships for creative performance. These findings suggest that overall satisfaction plays a buffering role against the harmful effects of perceived politics on job performance and creative performance. These results are in line with a more cognitive approach (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) toward understanding employees' reactions to negative events. Those who are satisfied may be better equipped to deploy the necessary resources to maintain and even enhance their performance in the face of high POP contexts. This effect is also possibly enhanced in a high power-distance context such as Pakistan, where individuals are more accustomed to politicized work contexts.

Our moderation analyses revealed two unexpected results. While we predicted that job satisfaction would mitigate the predicted negative relationship between POP and stress and conflict, we found that high satisfaction enhanced this relationship. Given that our measure of satisfaction captures overall

satisfaction with the job and workplace, it is possible that highly satisfied individuals are less accepting of POP and more discerning of its disruptive effect at work, and so are less tolerant of it and experience more stress. Similarly, they may also respond more critically and thus engage in more conflict with sources of POP. Considered jointly, as highly satisfied individuals work harder in the face of high POP contexts to maintain or enhance their overall and creative performance, these same individuals' well-being (i.e., degree of stress and interpersonal conflict) suffers.

Our study revealed several insights for managers and practitioners of OB and organizational psychology. Our study lends further support to POP as a hindrance stressor in the workplace when employees do not experience high overall satisfaction. Given that detrimental effects were observed even in the Pakistani context (characterized by high power-distance), our results suggest that managers should be particularly mindful of employees' perceptions of politics in the workplace.

Alternatively, this study revealed the importance of building overall satisfaction. Managers can design the working environment to promote all four types of satisfaction facets. This would intrinsically motivate and help employees to cope with the detrimental effects of stressors in the work environment.

Human resource managers and organizational development practitioners dealing with increased levels of stress or conflict, or wanting to enhance creative performance of employees at the workplace, may use overall satisfaction as a means to successfully increase overall organizational effectiveness and productivity. Increasing trends of downsizing, restructuring, mergers, and acquisitions, as well as outsourcing the human resource function, have threatened the traditional job design and characteristics of the enriched job environment. This scenario has resulted in enormous long-term costs for the organizations. This study provides insight to human resource managers as to the importance of overall satisfaction as a positive motivator and psychological resource in ambiguous transitional phases of an organizational life cycle.

Our study makes a number of important contribution to the existing body of knowledge. We responded to the call for research combining positive and negative constructs in a single study (Fineman, 2006). This research also responded to the call for testing other moderators in the POP-outcomes relationship (Abbas et al., 2012). Integration of positive and negative theories of OB supported by self-determination theory is a major theoretical contribution in the field. Our study also responded to the call for research testing OB theories in diverse cultural settings. The empirical evidence from a Pakistani cultural context will contribute to overall generalizability and validity of these theories. Major research in the satisfaction domain has considered generalized satisfaction or satisfaction focused on one dimension, such as pay satisfaction, supervisory satisfaction, or security satisfaction. Our research addressed this gap by using a holistic view of all four kinds together as overall satisfaction to advance the literature in the job-satisfaction domain. Moreover, the majority of previous research in this domain are cross-sectional in nature, while our study used a time-lagged design to overcome methodological issues associated with cross-sectional research designs. Additionally, the use of supervisory reporting to determine in-role and creative performance was added to limit the possibility of common method biases.

### Limitations

Our work is not without limitations. First, our sample size may have lacked sufficient power to uncover interaction effects. Similar tests with a larger sample size would be necessary to determine with greater confidence that our non-supported results are not an artifact of our sample size.

Second, and also related to sample size, it is possible that those who self-selected out of the study had characteristics that might have impacted the results if they had remained part of the sample in Time 2. For example, individuals who experienced more stress might have been more prone to feeling overwhelmed with work obligations and unable to take the time to participate in the follow-up survey.

Third, although we tried to prevent common method bias by having supervisors report on employees' performance and creative performance, our attitudinal independent and dependent variables were nonetheless self-reported.

Finally, and related to the previous limitation, while we temporally separated our measures to prevent method bias, it is possible that the 6-month separation allowed other potential factors in the organization to emerge, and they affected employees' stress and conflict beyond that predicted by POP.

### Future research

Future research should work toward creating a more complete framework. Along with in-role and creative performance investigation, extra role behaviors should also be investigated. It is possible that due to the enhanced moderated influence of job enrichment on employee autonomous motivations, employees are most likely to engage in citizenship behavior. Job enrichment characteristics could be added to expand the current model. The same mechanism might also be investigated for the buffering effect of job enrichment between psychological contract breach and outcomes. The role of job enrichment as a buffering mechanism and moderator between different workplace stressors and outcomes should also be considered alongside varying cultural factors. Finally, future research could also qualitatively aim to identify additional moderators and contingency variables in the relationship between POP and employee outcomes.

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