

# Perceived Organizational Politics and Employee Silence: An Exploratory Study with Organizational Trust as a Mediating Factor

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – Within organizations, various departments, teams, groups, and individuals vie for resources that are limited in availability. This competition often gives rise to organizational politics as individuals strive to achieve their objectives at any cost. Unfortunately, this is frequently perceived as a negative phenomenon by employees. Consequently, they may withhold crucial information from the organization, which can ultimately prove detrimental to its well-being. This study's goal was to investigate, in the Indian context, how employees' perceptions of organisational politics affect their propensity to remain silent, with organisational trust serving as a mediating factor.

**Research Methodology**– The present study involves of Indian bank's officer-level employees. The sample consisted of 240 employees. To test the proposed model SPSS v29 was used. In addition, to test mediation effect Andrew Hayes Process 4.2 was used.

**Findings** – Results suggested that officer-level employees of banking sector in India were remain silent or play a defensive mode when they have negative perception regarding their organization's politics. Further, organizational trust, the mediating variable works as a suppressing variable i.e. it reduce the impact of organizational politics which was perceived by officer-level bank employees on their silence.

**Research limitations/Implications**- This research did not examine all sectors of the economy and therefore the research results are tentative. It is advised that the model should also be measured in several other organisations, enterprises and countries.

**Practical implications** – Organizations aspire to outperform their competitors and attain success in the market. However, achieving this goal is impossible without the inclusion of employees' information, knowledge sharing, voices, and opinions. So, there is need to incorporate such policies which reduce the impact of negatively perceived organizational politics and build trust among employees and their organization.

**Originality/value** – This research adds to the existing literature on employee silence by seeking to incorporate both perceived organizational politics and organizational trust, a perspective that has been infrequently explored in the Indian context.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Politics, Employee Silence, Organizational Trust, Indian banking Sector

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations are social entities where individuals interact, collaborate, and navigate a complex web of relationships. In this situation, employee behaviour and attitudes can be greatly impacted by the perception of organisational politics, which is defined by power struggles, discrimination, and clandestine goals. In contemporary organizational landscapes, the dynamics of workplace interactions are profoundly influenced by the presence of organizational politics and the conspicuous silence it often elicits among employees. The term 'organisational politics' describes actions and attitudes that take place inside an organisation when people use their position of authority and influence to their own benefit, frequently at the cost of others. On the other hand, employee silence denotes the deliberate withholding of opinions, concerns, or ideas that employees choose not to express openly within the organizational setting. The intersection of perceived organizational politics and employee silence has become a focal point for scholars and practitioners alike, as understanding the intricate relationship between these phenomena holds substantial implications for organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and overall workplace dynamics. This study enhances the current understanding of employee silence by aiming to integrate perceived organizational politics and organizational trust, a perspective that

has received limited exploration in the Indian context. Organizational trust, representing employees' confidence in the fairness, integrity, and reliability of the organization, stands as a crucial element in shaping the outcomes of workplace dynamics. Examining the relationship between employee silence and perceived organisational politics is important because of the possible implications for job satisfaction, employee engagement, and the organization's overall performance. When employees perceive organizational politics as pervasive, they may opt for silence as a coping mechanism to avoid potential repercussions or conflicts. This silence, however, has the potential to hinder innovation, communication, and collaboration within the organization, leading to long-term consequences for both individuals and the organization as a whole.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Perceived Organizational Politics and Employee Silence**

Perceived organizational politics has a great impact on the various organizational outcomes. Politics is pervasive everywhere and it is an unavoidable aspect of organizational life. The consequences of organizational politics depend upon the view of the affected parties. Those who have been negatively affected by organizational politics perceive it as negative and vice-versa (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Most of the organizational psychology and organizational behaviour studies on politics have looked at it as a self-serving, unreliable, and divisive construct (Ferris et al., 2012). The outcomes of POP depend upon the perception type created by an individual, so it can be positive or negative. The majority of organizational politics literature has concentrated on the dark side, that is, the negative effects/outcomes of organizational politics. In addressing the link between perceived organizational politics and employee silence, only a limited number of studies have been conducted to specifically investigate the relationship between these two factors. (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016) conducted a study in Pakistan to explore the relationship between these two variables.

The study also includes trust in supervisor to know the impact on the relationship between these two variables. For the data collection, seven universities in two metropolitan cities were selected. The questionnaires were distributed among 280 research associates, lecturers, assistants, associate professors, and professors. The study's findings showed that POP was significantly related to employee silence and its dimensions, but trust in the supervisor was not found significantly as a moderator between these two variables.

Liang & Wang (2016) conducted a research in the Chinese industries which were owned by the state. The research revealed that leader-member exchange was negatively correlated with organizational politics and POP plays a partial mediating role in social exchange (i.e., communication between leader and member) and silence Kwon & Kim (2017) conducted a study to find out the POP on silence and turnover intention. The study was conducted in the food service industry. The study's findings demonstrated that POP had a positive impact on both acquiescent and defensive silence. The study's findings also revealed a partial moderating impact on the relationship among these variables (Kwon & Kim, 2017).

Another study was conducted by Chintakananda (2018) to justify employee silence from organizational politics. In the study, the author tried to find how perceived organizational politics (POP) increases the preference for employees to remain silent. According to their study, one dimension ('Go along to get ahead') of perceived organizational politics was found most influential in contributing to the silence. From the study, two main results were found. The first one was due to POP; employees feel a sense of estrangement which ultimately demotivates them to remain silent. Secondly, employees were found inclined towards self-interest due to POP, resulting in opportunistic silence. Another study was also conducted by (Sun & Xia, 2018).on perceived organizational politics and employee silence. The sample of the study was collected from different types of companies from different countries and the sample size was 270. The result of the study after the analysis demonstrated that POP has significant impact on the silence of employees. Also, the result shows a significant impact of general political awareness on employee silence ( $r = 0.567$  and  $p < 0.001$ ).

Organizational politics can be perceived in both way i.e., positively and negatively. If it is perceived positively by employees, it improves the performance of the organization as well as the employee. On the other hand, if it is perceived as a negative phenomenon, it can have an adverse impact on organizational efficiency. There is a lot of research related to perceive organizational politics and its outcomes related to the organization, but nominal studies have been done on employee silence. From the above findings, any organization operating in any sector must pay close attention to the negative impact of organizational politics, especially the negative ones, to maintain its long-term goals of development and growth. As the convincing evidence relating POP to several negative consequences for people and their employers suggests, organizations need to pay attention to and reduce organizational development. So, the following hypothesis was postulated as:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational politics and silence of officer level employees in select Indian banks.

**Perceived Organizational Politics and Organizational Trust**

Organisational trust is characterised by a readiness on the part of one party to expose itself to the possible consequences of another party's actions, motivated by the expectation that the latter will carry out a specific action that is essential to the party that is trusting (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). According to the intensive review of literature there was only two studies were found which show the relationship between POP and organizational trust. Abubakar et al. (2014) conducted an empirical investigation involving 175 nurses in Nigeria. The findings indicated a negative association between POP and organizational trust. Therefore, organizational trust appears to act as a mediator in the relationship between the perceived organizational politics and employee silence. Thus, organisational trust was considered a mediating variable between the relationship of perceived organisational politics and employee silence in order to bridge the gap in the existing literature review.

**Employee Silence and Trust**

Numerous investigations have identified a robust connection between the likelihood of expressing opinions or choosing silence and how well leaders and members communicate, as well as the individual's perception of their supervisor in that relationship (Detert & Burris, 2007; Gaines, 1980; Liu et al., 2010; Read, 1962; Roberts & O'Reilly III, 1974). Another facet highlighted in the same body of literature emphasizes that when employees perceive support from their organization's management (Miceli et al., 2008), they begin to believe that expressing their opinions could have an impact. High efficacy, solid relationship quality, and psychological safety are correlated with these views of employee trust in the company. In the end, these elements assist staff members in overcoming their reasons for remaining silent (Edmondson, 1999; Milliken et al., 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Karimi et al. (2015) carried out a similar study to explore the correlation among organizational trust, organizational silence, as well as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The results of the study indicated that organizational trust had negative correlation with organizational silence. (Helmiati et al. 2018) conducted a study on organizational trust and organizational silence within the academic community in Indonesia. The study involved the participation of 309 respondents from private sector higher education institutions. The findings indicated a negative impact of organizational trust on organizational silence. Jan & Jan (2020) also discussed the Social Exchange theory and norms of reciprocity in their study. Trust in the supervisor determines that employees rely on the actions of the supervisor. If a supervisor breaches the trust by using abusive behaviour, then employees behave negatively and it affects their trust in the supervisor (Ji & Jan 2020).

So, it is been assumed that organizational trusts have significant impact on employee silence and the following hypothesis can be postulated as:

H<sub>2</sub>: The impact of perceived organizational politics and silence of officer level employees in select Indian banks mediated by organizational trust.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology refers to the systematic process researchers use to design, conduct, and analyse a study.

**Sample & Procedures**

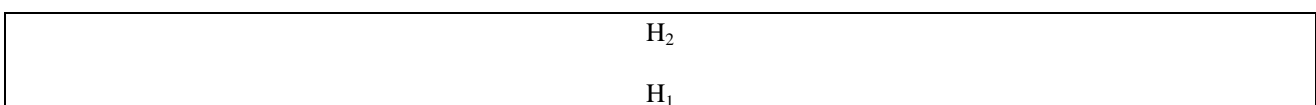
The study conducted on the banking sector of India. A set of 300 questionnaires were distributed among top and middle level employees, and 240 were ultimately chosen for inclusion in the final study. The responses were collected using a convenience sampling method. The respondents were selected only from 4 states i.e. Haryana, Punjab, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. Scale I banking employees such as tellers, clerks was not considered into this study. The questionnaire in bilingual i.e., English and Hindi and administered directly by the researcher.

**Measures**

To measure the independent, dependent and mediator variables, a five-point rating scale was used, with a rating of 1 corresponding to 'strongly disagree' and a rating of 5 corresponding to 'strongly agree.'

Perceived organizational politics: To measure this variable scale developed by (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997) was used which comprised 15 items. The scale demonstrated a reliability measure of 0.80.

**Conceptual Framework**



Source: Author's Own Compilation

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study**

Employee Silence: To measure this, scale developed by (Brinsfield, 2013) was used which comprised 29 items. The scale demonstrated a reliability measure of 0.75.

Organizational Trust: To measure this, 4 items scale developed by (Scott 1981) was used. Items were used to measure organizational trust. The scale demonstrated a reliability measure of 0.76.

### Significance of the Study

Understanding the dynamics between independent i.e., perceived organizational politics and dependent variable i.e., employee silence is pivotal for organizations striving to foster a positive and productive work environment. The ramifications of organizational politics can extend far beyond immediate conflicts or power struggles, influencing employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness. Moreover, the consequences of employee silence, whether driven by fear of reprisal or a desire to avoid the political minefield, can impede innovation, hinder effective communication, and erode the fabric of organizational culture.

The introduction of organizational trust as a mediating factor adds an additional layer of complexity to this relationship. Trust, as a foundational element within organizational culture, has the capacity to mitigate the adverse impacts of perceived politics, offering employees a perspective through which they can interpret and respond to the dynamics within the organization. By exploring the mediating role of trust, this study aims to unravel the mechanisms through which organizational politics influences employee silence and identify avenues for intervention to foster a more transparent and trusting workplace environment.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

For data analysis correlation, regression techniques were used. For checking the mediation effect, Andrew Hayes Process 4.2 was used. The results of the study are shown below:

5.1 Perceived Organizational Politics and Employee Silence: The relationship between independent and dependent variable i.e. perceived organizational politics and employee silence is shown below:

**Table1: Correlations Matrix**

	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	1
1	POP	3.79	.92	1
2	ES	3.73	.87	0.78**

**Significant at 0.01 levels**

Source: SPSS Output

From table 1, it can be seen that perceived organizational politics strongly and positively correlated with employee silence, which is statistically significant ( $r=0.78$ ,  $n=240$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). From the table it can be observed that Perceived organizational politics has 78 percent correlation with employee silence. From the above findings we can conclude that the employees in Indian banks were remaining silent or play a defensive mode when they feel politics as a negative phenomenon in their organization.

### Results of Regression analysis

Regression analysis was used to find predictive relationship between the two sets of variables. From the Table 2, it has been indicated that perceived organizational politics explained 62 percent variance in employee silence ( $F= 390.64$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that H1 i.e., POP has a positive relationship with silence of officer-level employees.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t	p
.788	.621	.747	19.765	.000

Source: SPSS Output

### Mediation Analysis

The study looked at the relationship between employee silence and perceived organisational politics and how organisational trust affects it. The results supported hypothesis two by showing a significant negative indirect effect (suppressor) of organisational trust on employee silence ( $b= -0.018$ ,  $t = 19.169$ ). Furthermore, it was determined that, even in the presence of the mediator, there was a significant direct impact of perceived organisational politics on employee silence ( $b = 0.765$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the relationship between employee silence and perceived

organisational politics is suppressed by organisational trust. The results of Mediation analysis are shown into the following table 3 and figure 2:

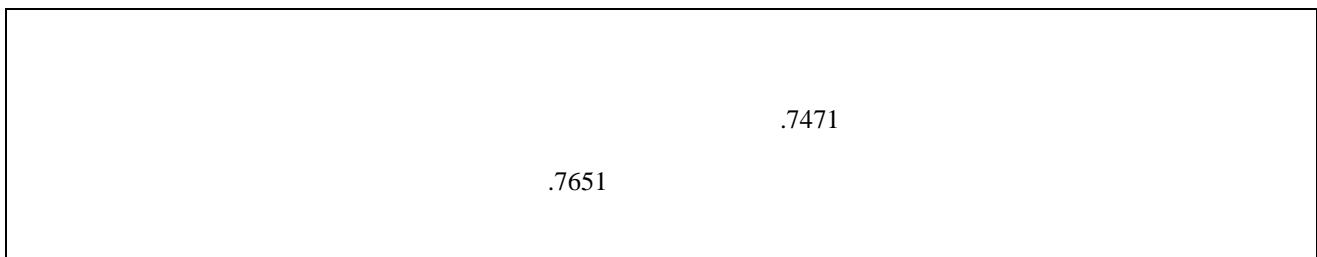
**DISCUSSION**

Information sharing has become an important asset in this competitive era and organizations focus specifically on people who are eager to seek knowledge and willing to learn. Thus leaders and management of the organization motivate workers to express freely at all levels of the company, understanding the fact that information can be generated at any level of an organization.

**Table 3: Mediation Analysis Summary**

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval	t-statistics	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Suppressor Variable
POP-> OT- > ES	.7471	.7651	-0.0180	.6726	.8215	

Source: SPSS Output



Source: Author’s own Compilation

**Figure 2: Direct and Indirect Effect among Variables**

The purpose of this study's conception was to clarify the relationship between employee silence and perceived organisational politics, using organisational trust as a mediating factor. The thorough investigation provides strong evidence in favour of the hypothesis that employee silence is positively correlated with perceived organisational politics. It also implies that the unfavourable impression of organisational politics can be lessened when workers have trust in their organization.

**Managerial Implications**

This research explores the impact of perceived organizational politics on employee silence in select Indian banks. The present study includes perceived organizational politics, which was established and analysed as the significant variable affecting the increasing organization's growth. Employees' perceptions of organizational politics vary from one another. For a manager, it is necessary to understand the negative impact of perceived organizational politics on organization and take corrective measures to convert into positive directions. It is also necessary for the manager to find out the different types of motives behind the silence of the employee. It helps the manager as well as organization to break their employees’ silence and help them to raise their voice. It is necessary for an organization that employees provide their views, feedback to their organization. It will great helpful for organization to develop and make itself stronger from inside. Trust of employees in their organization is also playing a very significant role. Without trust, it is not possible to run an organization in an effective way.

In recent years, ongoing research has focused on perceived organizational politics, garnering significant attention in the organizational literature. The research would connect the alleged organizational dynamics to current literature as: it helps in knowing the cause of silence and understanding about how trust impact the organization health. Thus, the research contributes in the existing literature and theory of perceived organizational politics and silence and organizational trust.

**Limitations and Future Implications**

The study was included only few areas through which this study not generalized to all Indian banks. Further, it includes only Indian private and public sector banks and not included foreign banks. For future research, it is suggested that foreign banks and more state will be also include for better and generalized the results. It is also suggested to explore the relationship and impact of perceived organizational politics with dimensions

of employee silence. The study can be expended to the other sectors such as IT, Pharmaceutical and other Govt. owned subsidiaries.

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