# The Influence of Organizational Justice on Organizational Politics: A Quantitative Study

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**[Abstract]** There are many precursors to the perception of politics in an organization. This study aimed at testing the influence of organizational justice on organizational politics empirically. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires from 150 non-executive employees from various organizations. Three dimensions of organizational justice; distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were explored for their effects on perception of politics. Confirmatory factor analysis was done to explore the validity and reliability of the standardized tools. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the possible relationship between the variables. The influence of interactional and distributive justice on the dimensions of organizational politics was empirically tested in this research.

**[Keywords]** organizational justice, organizational politics, distributive justice, interactional justice

## Introduction

To cultivate and sustain an autonomous workforce and promote teamwork and organizational development, organizations must transmit a sense of justice to their employees and abstain from negative politics. Literature reveals that organizational justice is linked to positive organizational consequences, such as trust (Chen et al., 2015), job satisfaction (Al Zu'bi, 2010), organizational citizenship behavior, and work performance (Wang et al., 2010). In contrast, organizational politics negatively impacts employees, leading to low job performance and organizational commitment (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010). The arguments on the potential of political capabilities to reinforce individual and organizational growth and success (Ladebo, 2006; Vredenburgh & Shea-Van Fossen, 2010) are also found in academic writings. The interaction of organizational justice and politics are complex, and often contradictory interpretations are found within the literature attempting to explore their relationship.

## Review of Literature

### Organizational Justice

The concept of organizational justice relates to employees' perception of a fair work environment, their understanding of being treated fairly at the workplace, and the role of fairness in determining organizational outcomes (Greenberg, 1987; Alsalem & Alhaini, 2007). Employees' perception of fairness is critically significant for organizations, as it determines their future possible attitudes and behaviors in the workplace; for example, if employees perceive their work environment as fair, they are inclined to be more committed (Tyler & Lind, 1992). The concept of organizational justice stems from equity theory, which explains the relationship between the employees' perception of the work environment and their motivation to work. The equity ratio, which is the ratio of the person's inputs (like expertise and efforts) with the outputs (like pay and promotion), determines whether an employee would perceive the workplace as equitable or inequitable. Further, employees also look for a balance between their output/input ratio with the output/input ratio of others of comparable levels or with the standard reference person or a group. An equitable and just perception of the workplace influence employees' behavior towards the organization.

The capability of organizational justice is well established, and its relation with various job-related attitudes, such as job satisfaction (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt et al., 2001), organizational citizenship behavior (Greenberg, 1987; Gurbez et al., 2016; Özbek et al., 2016), work commitments (Colquitt et al., 2001), trust, and work performance (Colquitt et al., 2001) is evident in research. Organizational justice has

been found to be positively associated with employees' well-being and negatively correlated with work stress, counterproductive work behaviors, and turnover intentions (Rupp et al., 2014).

Various models of organizational justice are found in studies. Traditional research on organizational justice established a two-factor model with distinct constructs of distributive and procedural justice. Further work in this area gave the three-factor model and included the additional dimension of interactional justice. Due to ambiguity and overlap between procedural and interactional justice (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1990), another classification of justice was proposed. This has four categories: systemic (structural/procedure), informational (social/procedure), configurable (structural/distributive) and interpersonal justice (social/distributive) (Greenberg, 1990; Cropanzano et al., 2007). This framework includes structural and social elements with distributive and procedural justice (Greenberg, 1990). The three-factor model of organizational justice is used in the present research, comprising distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice.

Distributive justice refers to the perception of fairness in the allocation of resources, and distributive injustice means a deviation from the equity rule where employees feel that the distribution of work and rewards is not fair in comparison with the co-workers (Greenberg, 1987). Distributive justice is evaluated in terms of the extent to which outcomes, such as wages, promotions, and work positions are dispensed fairly to the employees (Colquitt et al., 2001). Three allocation rules, equality, equity, and need, are considered significant under this dimension (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Procedural justice means adherence to rules, regulations, and fair processes in allocating resources (Cropanzano et al., 2007). The emphasis is on the prominence of the rightfulness of the methods used at the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Two frameworks of procedural justice, namely, instrumental and relational models, have been widely accepted in theory. The instrumental model suggests that procedures providing economic benefits should be perceived as fair (Greenberg, 1990). The relational model states that fairness should be perceived for socio-emotional benefits, like status recognition, self-esteem, and lack of bias. Besides, consistency, lack of bias, accuracy, representation of all concerned, and consistency with ethical norms have been well established as the fundamental hallmarks of procedural justice. Procedural justice has been found to be positively associated with the enhancement of employees' psychological well-being, life satisfaction (Elovainio et al., 2002), work commitment (Elovainio et al., 2002; Cropanzano et al., 2002), trust (Cropanzano et al., 2002), and engagement with work (Kim & Park, 2017).

The third dimension of interactional justice is distinct from the concepts of distributive and procedural justice, as it goes beyond the fairness of job outcomes and organizational procedures. There is some vagueness regarding the concept, and it has been considered a social aspect of procedural justice by some researchers (Greenberg, 1990). Interactional justice is the nature and quality of interpersonal treatment employees receive at the workplace (Bies & Sitkin, 1992). It has been appraised as an inner asset for workers (Gillet et al., 2015), having a significant positive influence on organizational citizenship behavior (Taamneh, 2015) and knowledge-sharing behavior, both at the individual and the team levels (Li et al., 2017).

### *Organizational Politics*

Organizational politics is a broad term characterized as deliberate actions, influences, and tactics in the workplace intended to expand one's interest (Pfeffer, 1992). Literature regarding politics in organizations largely addresses the perception of politics, as it has been suggested that people act upon their perception of reality instead of the actual reality, and, hence, the same aspect of organizational politics might be perceived differently by different people (Ferris et al., 2002; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Consistent with these findings, it was suggested that perception of organizational politics rather than the actual political atmosphere is a better measure (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Measuring perceptions of politics is considered to have certain benefits. It can be more conveniently measured than the actual political behavior, and as people act upon their perceptions, it is supposed to be having more influence on people's intentions and behaviors (Vigoda et al., 2003).

A variety of studies indicate that organizational politics is an essential precursor of both formal and informal performance of the employees (Adams et al., 2002; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Valle & Perrewe,

2000). Many of these studies rely on defining organizational politics as a well-planned and thoughtful behavior intended to augment self-interests and create discord with the collective goals of the organization or the interests of other individuals. It is regarded as a game of power and influence strategies for attaining the best possible outcome for oneself (Pfeffer, 1992).

The present study used the three-dimensional model of organizational politics comprised of general political behavior (GPB), go along to get ahead (GAGA), and pay and promotion policies (PPP). GPB politics is the overall political behavior of employees and how they work for themselves to secure a valuable outcome in the organization (Gull & Aylia, 2012). Politics in organizations involving the "go along to get ahead" dimension shows how employees become inactive, use silence, and apply prudent measures to gain personal advantage and evade conflicts (Gull & Aylia, 2012). Pay and promotion policy refers to politics that exist in the policies entailing pay and promotion, performance appraisal, and related areas (Gull & Aylia, 2012).

The phenomenon of organizational politics is one of the major hindrances to the optimal performance of organizations (Vigoda, 2000). Literature suggests that the perception of organizational politics have a negative impact on both employees and the work environment (Ferris et al., 2002). However, recognizing that politics is so widespread and inevitable in organizations (Pfeffer, 1992), researchers have lately started considering a broader perspective that centers on the positive aspects of politics (Albrecht & Landells, 2012; Hochwarter, 2012).

The present study tried to understand the significance and role of organizational justice in employees' perception of political behavior at the workplace. It investigated relationship and causality between variables by answering questions like "What is the relationship between organizational justice and organizational politics?" and "How does procedural, interactional and distributive justice impact the perception of politics in organizations?" The perception of organizational justice positively relates to satisfaction with the job, supervisor, and work environment (Fedor et al., 2008). It facilitates a rewarding culture in which employees are more likely to be seen as driven and motivated (Simmons, 2009). Organizational justice influences organizational politics, especially when it is associated with the work protocols practiced by employers and with the increment and promotion processes in the workplace (Greenberg, 1987). A fair and just workplace is strategically vital for a corporate entity because the political perception is low if employees perceive a high prevalence of justice (Harris et al., 2007). Further, the perception of justice also removes adverse outcomes of organizational politics (Byrne, 2005).

To examine the impact of organizational justice on organizational politics and to explore the nature of the relationship between these two important organizational constructs, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0-1: Procedural justice will have no significant effect on the "general political behavior" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-2: Procedural justice will have no significant effect on the "go along to get ahead" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-3: Procedural justice will have no significant effect on the "pay and promotion policies" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-4: Interactional justice will have no significant effect on the "general political behavior" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-5: Interactional justice will have no significant effect on the "go along to get ahead" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-6: Interactional justice will have no significant effect on the "pay and promotion policies" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-7: Distributive justice will have no significant effect on the "general political behavior" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-8: Distributive justice will have no significant effect on the "go along to get ahead" dimension of organizational politics.

H0-9: Distributive justice will have no significant effect on the "pay and promotion policies" dimension of organizational politics.

# Method

### Participants

The sample for this study is comprised of 150 non-executive employees of various organizations. This study is descriptive, and standardized tools were used to collect the data.

*Table 1*
*Sample Characteristics: Frequency and Percentage of Demographics (n=150)*

| Variables | | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | 25-30 | 81 | 54.0 |
| | 30-35 | 32 | 21.3 |
| | 35-40 | 17 | 11.3 |
| | 40-45 | 20 | 13.3 |
| Gender | Female | 56 | 37.3 |
| | Male | 94 | 62.7 |
| Tenure in the organization (years) | 5-10 | 117 | 78.0 |
| | 10-15 | 19 | 12.7 |
| | 15-20 | 8 | 5.3 |
| | 20-25 | 6 | 4.0 |
| Educational qualifications | Graduation | 71 | 47.3 |
| | Post-graduation/MBA | 70 | 46.7 |
| | PhD/M.Phil. | 7 | 4.7 |
| | Others | 2 | 1.3 |

Table 1 presents the profiles of respondents. Of 150 respondents, 81 participants were in the age group of 25-30 years (54%), 32 were 30-35 years (21.3%), and 17 participants were 35-40 years (11.3%), and 20 participants were 40-45 years (13.3%). Fifty-six participants were female (37.3%), and 94 were males (62.7%). Regarding respondents' tenure in organizations, 117 participants were in the category of 5-10 years (78%), 19 were in 10-15 years (12.7%), 8 were in 15-20 years (5.3%), and 6 were in 20-25 years (4%). Further, 71 participants were graduates (47.3%), 70 held post-graduation/MBA degree (46.7%), 7 had PhD/M.Phil. Degrees (4.7%) and 2 participants had other educational degrees (1.3%).

### Measures

**1. Organizational Justice:** For measurement, this study has taken a 20-item scale of Organizational justice measuring distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Neuhoff & Moorman, 1993). Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One of the items is negatively coded in the scale. In order to explore the validity and reliability of the scale, the study employed confirmatory factor analysis. The indices for organizational justice scale were acceptable ($\chi2/df$ = 1.820, RMSEA = 0.074, CFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.84, AGFI = 0.80, IFI = 0.91). The use of construct reliability (CR) was proposed in conjunction with structural equation modeling models rather than the traditional coefficient alpha (Hair et al., 2010). The composite reliability of the scale was found to be 0.90 (> 0.70) with AVE 0.76 (> 0.50) and CR >AVE (0.90 > 0.76). Second-order convergent validity for organizational justice was found to be as CR >AVE, 0.905 > 0.761.

**2. Perception of organizational politics (POPS):** Perception of organizational politics was measured using the perceptions of politics scale (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they view their working environment as political on a scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree." The 12- item scale tends to capture three dimensions of POPS: (a) individual's general political behavior (GPB), (b) go along to go ahead (GAGA), and (c) pay and promotion

policies (PPP). The scale items are positively coded for the GPB dimension and negatively coded for GAGA and PPP dimensions. Thus, higher scores on the scale mean high general political behavior and fewer politics in the dimensions of "go along to go ahead" and "pay and promotion policies." Fit indices for organizational politics scale were determined using CFA ($\chi2/df$ = 1.922 <3, RMSEA = 0.079, CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.91, AGFI = 0.86, IFI = 0.90). The composite reliability of the scale was found to be 0.73 (> 0.70) with AVE 0.53 (> 0.50) and CR >AVE (0.73 > 0.53). CR is near to 0.70 for two dimensions- GPB and GAGA and is greater than 0.70 in PPP. Second-order convergent validity for organizational politics with CR > AVE; 0.73 > 0.53.

*Analyses*
IBM SPSS & AMOS Statistics software (version 25.0) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to find the frequencies and percentages of the participants' demographic details. Pearson's product-moment correlational analysis was performed to find the correlation between organizational justice and organizational politics and their sub-dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to explore the internal reliability and validity of scales. Overall, the scales were found to be reliable and valid. To test the proposed hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of the dimensions of organizational justice on the components of organizational politics (general political behavior, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies). The statistical assumptions for the model (normality, linearity, absence of multicollinearity) were all met.

## Results

Table 2 reports the Pearson's product coefficients between all the variables of the current study. It indicates that there exists a significant negative correlation between the general political behavior dimension of organizational politics and organizational justice (r= -.264, p< 0.01) and its sub-dimensions: distributive justice (r= -.236, p<0.05), procedural justice (r= -.191, p<0.01), interactional justice (r= -.255, p<0.01). Results found a significant positive correlation between the "go along to get ahead" dimension of organizational politics and organizational justice (r=.630, p< 0.01) and its sub-dimensions: distributive justice (r= .515, p<0.05), procedural justice (r= .489, p<0.01), interactional justice (r= .616, p<0.01). It is also indicated that there exists a significant positive correlation between the "pay and promotion policies" dimension of organizational politics and organizational justice (r=.624, p< 0.01) and its sub-dimensions: distributive justice (r= .478, p<0.05), procedural justice (r= .427, p<0.01), interactional justice (r= .660, p<0.01).

*Table 2*
*Pearson Correlation between Organizational Justice and Organizational Politics and Their Dimensions (n=150)*

|  | General political behavior | Go along to get ahead | Pay and promotion policies |
|---|---|---|---|
| Distributive justice | -.236[**] | .515[**] | .478[**] |
| Procedural justice | -.191[*] | .489[**] | .427[**] |
| Interactional justice | -.255[**] | .616[**] | .660[**] |
| Organizational justice | -.264[**] | .630[**] | .624[**] |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Multiple regression analysis was done to explore the causal effect of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice on dimensions of employees' perception of organizational politics. The influence of three types of organizational justice was tested separately on three dimensions of organizational

politics (general political behavior, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies). The results in Table 3 show that the selected independent variables explained 7.4 percent of the variance in general political behavior, 40.5% variance in go along to get ahead, and 44.5 percent of variance with pay and promotion policies dimensions. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) of multiple regressions was significant in all three models, though the percentage of variance was low for the dimension of general political behavior.

*Table 3*
*Model Summary: Regression Analysis of Organizational Justice on Organizational Politics (n=150)*

| Dependent Variable | Argument | Beta | p-value | R | $R^2$ | $R^2_{adj}$ | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General political behavior | Distributive Justice | -0.123 | 0.247 | | | | |
| | Procedural Justice | 0.004 | 0.975 | 0.272 | 0.074 | 0.055 | 3.878** |
| | Interactional Justice | -0.178 | 0.158 | | | | |
| Go along to get ahead | Distributive Justice | 0.189 | .028* | | | | |
| | Procedural Justice | 0.068 | 0.464 | 0.637 | 0.405 | 0.393 | 33.159** |
| | Interactional Justice | 0.446 | .000** | | | | |
| Pay and promotion | Distributive Justice | 0.106 | 0.2 | | | | |
| | Procedural Justice | -0.105 | 0.241 | 0.667 | 0.445 | 0.434 | 39.044** |
| | Interactional Justice | 0.666 | .000** | | | | |

  ** Significance at < 0.01 level.
  * Significance at < 0.05 level.

    The value of beta coefficients was calculated to test the functional relationships between independent and dependent variables. The results revealed that all three predictor variables had an insignificant impact on the general political behavior of employees. Further, distributive and interactional justice had a positive and significant influence on the go along to get ahead dimension of organizational politics (Distributive justice: $\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.005$, $R^2 = 0.405$ and Interactional justice: $\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.405$). Interactional justice also had a positive and significant impact on the pay and promotion policies dimension ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.445$). Thus, the proposed hypotheses –H0-5, H0-6, and H0-8 – are rejected and the results are statistically significant for these hypotheses. Further, there is not strong evidence to reject the hypotheses –H0-1, H0-2, H0-3, H0-4, H0-7and H0-9 – and the results can be considered inconclusive for these hypotheses. Overall, the results show that interactional justice has the greatest influence on the employees' go along to get ahead and pay and performance policies of the organization.

## Discussion
The purpose of the current study was to explore the effects of organizational justice on organizational politics. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires from 150 randomly selected non-executive employees from various organizations.
    Multiple regression analysis results indicate that interactional justice is a significant predictor of the "pay and promotion policies" sub-dimension of organizational politics as it has the highest β value of 0.66. Interactional justice is also a significant predictor of the "go along to get ahead" dimension with β= 0.44. It means that when employees receive quality exchange in terms of relationship and information from their employers/organization, there is a less likelihood of perceptions amongst the employees of the existence of political actions in the organization, especially concerning silent measures with the intent to achieve benefits in the exchange of organizational policies. The dimension of distributive justice also emerged as a

significant predictor of the "go along to get ahead" dimension with the β value of 0.18. It depicts that fair resource allocation practices within an organization will result in less occurrence of silent and discrete political actions by the employees.

In order to understand the predictive role of interactional and distributive justice on GAGA, it will be good to understand how politics at the workplace is expressed through this dimension. People indulging in go along to get ahead politics avoid conflict to gain some benefits (Gull & Aylia, 2012). Such people, at times, end up silently following the authority or influential figures in an organization, which not only appears to be a non-political behavior but is rather seen as a sense of commitment towards the organization. A person's intent is also significant in expressing such political behavior. Lack of action or going along to get ahead can be a reasonable and profitable approach to pursue one's self-interest when working in a political environment. If an individual's silent behavior is non-threatening to others, then it may be considered non-political. Also, a person going along with the organization's decisions is not viewed as a possible threat by those acting politically. Such a person is welcomed by the political group and is rewarded for not interfering in the affairs of the politically motivated group.

The possible explanation behind our findings concerning the predictive impact of two sub-dimensions of organizational justice on "go along to get ahead" could be that when justice is well-practiced in an organization, there will be less likelihood of people indulging in such silent actions. When the employers/organization is not politically motivated, then people with such intent will not have a place to be welcomed. When management follows a transparent culture with a free-flow of information, and everyone gets fair explanations of decisions, employees have less perception of politics. It fosters trust, dignity, and respect among stakeholders in the organization. Effective interpersonal communication enhances the perceptions of interpersonal and informational justice. Further, a fair and equitable approach in distributing rewards, benefits, and resources reduces employees' negative reactions. Workplace fairness enhances employee morale, engagement, and commitment to the work. Thus, ensuring interactional and distributive justice must be a priority for organizations to inculcate a productive and healthy culture.

Next, results suggest that interactional justice is a significant predictor of organizational politics' "pay and promotion" sub-dimension. The dimension of pay and promotion involves the way organizations reward employees and, hence, are seen as exhibiting political or non-political behavior. The findings suggest that if employees are given complete information about organization policies related to pay, rewards, promotion, etc., they are more likely to perceive a just and fair workplace. Contrary to this, inadequate or spurious information is more likely to make employees perceive their organization as a hotspot for political behavior indulging in nepotism or favoritism. Managers should cultivate open communication channels with employees as it builds trust. Employees are more likely to stick to the organization and show greater loyalty towards their work. The results are in line with the previous studies that lack of association between employee and management and absence of fair rules, regulations, and policies will upsurge the levels of organizational politics. Further, organizational justice holds the potential to influence the political behavior related to work procedures practiced by employers.

Results from Pearson-moment product correlational analysis showed that the sub-dimensions of organizational justice were negatively related to the "general political behavior" sub-dimension of organizational politics. This dimension of organizational politics represents employees' political and self-serving behavior to obtain valued outcomes. Though regression analysis did not confirm the predictive relationship between the variables, correlation findings suggest that as organizational justice is enhanced within the workplace, employees' negative perception towards the general organizational politics decreases. It is in line with previous findings that when justice is practiced in the organization with transparent and fair procedures, instructions, communication, and resource distribution, employees avoid working for self-interest (Cheong, 2010; Muhammad, 2007) hence reducing the uncertainty and occurrence of politics in the organization (Vigoda 2000). Thus, procedural, distributive, and interactional justice can counter negative perceptions about organizational politics, with distributive justice having the strongest influence (Harris et al., 2007).

There were some limitations of this study. Both the questionnaires used in the study were self-reports which might have resulted in biased responses. In addition, the data was collected from a heterogeneous

sample that may have influenced the generalizability of the findings. Despite these limitations, present research contributes to existing literature. The findings of our study could be practically implemented in the workplace by establishing fair practices to create a less political environment that contributes to significant positive outcomes from the employees. Future studies can examine the factors that mediate between the two variables.

## Conclusion

The present study investigated the effects of organizational justice on organizational politics. Multiple regression analysis suggested that interactional justice significantly affected "go along to get ahead" and "pay and promotion policies" dimensions. Distributive justice had a significant effect on the "go along to get ahead" dimension of organizational politics.

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