

**ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS : CORRELATES WITH JOB SATISFACTION,  
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN SENEGAL**

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**Abstract**

*The paper attempts to improve our understanding of employees' reactions to political behavior in organizations in Senegal. The nature of the subject is quantitative, meaning that the study aims at judging the impact of organizational politics over job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. From a sample of 125 individuals working in diverse organizations in Senegal, the findings from multiple linear regressions indicated that employees perceiving higher level of organizational politics were less satisfied with their job and reported lower level of organizational citizenship behavior and organizational commitment. The study makes a contribution to organizational behavior theory by extending knowledge on the harmful repercussions of organizational politics on employees' job attitudes. The study can also help understand employees' reactions and allow corporate leaders to develop rules and regulations that can prevent the occurrence of organizational politics or lessen its damages.*

*Keywords: organizational politics, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, Senegal*

**INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that all organizations possess some degree of politics (Yang, 2009; Zhou & Ferris, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992). Individuals in organizations often openly or secretly indulge in a variety of behaviors, actions or interpersonal relations for several purposes. The term organizational politics (OP) has been used to refer to a subjective reality (Ferris et al, 2002) which represents specific 'actions by individuals directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard to the well-being of others or their organizations (Kacmar & Baron,

1999). These actions are often neither enacted publicly, or included in the formal rules and regulations of the organizations, nor explicitly prohibited (Farrell & Peterson , 1982). At the heart of OP are actions such as selling ideas, influencing decision, increasing power, or achieving other targeted interests (Brandon & Seldman, 2004) at the expense of others. Politicking individuals may use improper channels or lobby high-level managers to get promoted, raise their status or gain other special favors. Such kinds of actions consume time, obstruct information sharing (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), bring about ambiguity (Muhammad, 2007), raises perceptions of uncertainty in the allocation of organizational resources (Harris & Harris 2007) and may ultimately affect individual job attitudes or behaviors. Even though OP cannot be classified as a solely negative phenomenon (Bacharach, 2005), it has been largely and generally viewed as a perceptual phenomenon with negative consequences for those who perceive it (Poon, 2003; Byrne, 2005; Kacmar & Carlson, 1977). Political actions are often seen as dysfunctional (Katrinli, Atabay, Gunay, & Cangarli, 2010) as they are not always enacted for the well-being of the organization or individuals within the organization. Due to OP, a number of factors are affected that lead to behavioral change in the employees, which negatively affects many of their work and organization aspects.

The Senegalese context is of great importance here. Firstly, there is little work on OP in Senegal. Secondly, Senegal being an undeveloped country has its organizations facing more limited resources. So we expect employees to engage in political behavior to win over organizational scarce resources. As the winning over scarce resources through political behavior contrasts with employees' perceptions of organizational justice and fairness (Vigoda, 2007), it is likely that its perceptions by non politicking actors may engender unfavourable attitudes or outcomes, heightened stress, uncertainty, withdrawal and discouragement and diminished well-being in employees. This is mostly where OP requires more attention as its perceptions could affect different facets of employees' job or work environment.

Finally, due to the pervasive nature of OP in organizations, an understanding of its impact will provide sound insight of this phenomenon and ultimately help promote organizational success. It may also help develop schemes or strategies that could impede the development of undesirable OP and foster desirable employee work outcomes, good organizational work climate and success, and ultimately contribute to society well-being as a whole. For this, organizations in Senegal face a dire need for empirical investigation of numerous organizational social phenomena especially OP. The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between OP and organizational citizenship behavior, OP and organizational commitment, and OP and job satisfaction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

In the conceptualization of how organizational politics was perceived, three dimensions were made by Kacmar and Ferris (1991), which were further validated by Kacmar and Carlson (1997). One dimension is *General Political Behavior*, associated with employee perceptions of their co-workers engaging in political activities, they are also the behaviors of individuals who act in a self-serving manner to obtain valued outcomes. Another dimension is *Go Along to Get Ahead* which represents influence tactics such as placing oneself purposely by agreeing with those in power or a lack of action by individuals (e.g., remain silent) in order to secure valued outcomes. The last dimension is *Pay and Promotion* representing organization behaving politically through the policies it enacts.

OP researchers have pointed at a number of factors that promote political behavior. A large number of the antecedents of OP resolve around the research of Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989). Factors contributing to the development of OP have been mainly classified into *organizational factors* (e.g. centralisation, Welsh & Slusher, 1986; formalisation and hierarchical level, Fedor et al., 1998; span of control, Ferris et al, 1989, scarcity of resources, Poon, 2003; organizational's evaluation, promotions and democratic decision making, Vigoda & Cohen, 2002 ); *job level factors* (e.g. job autonomy, job variety, and feedback, Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; job ambiguity, Poon, 2003; career development, Madison et al., 1980; person-organizational fit, Molm, 1997; participations in or freedom to making decisions , Witt, Andrews, & Kacmar, 2000; interactions with or relationship to supervisors and peers, Ferris et al., 1989) and *personal factors* (e.g. Machiavellian , Valle & Perrew, 2000; negative affectivity, Adams, Treadway & Stepina, 2008; locus of control, O'Connor & Morrison, 2001; political skill, Ferris et al., 2005; age , sex , self monitoring, Ferris et al., 1989).

OP is characterized by self-interest actions such as taking credit for others' work, influencing or attempting to influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within an organization (Froman, 1962), using impression management, ingratiation and coalition building with powerful members of the organization in order to avoid threat or to achieve desired outcomes (Hochwarter, 2003), or taking decisions based upon favoritism. Such types of behaviors negatively affect organizational workers, work environment, efficiency and effectiveness (Kacmar et al., 1999) and impede achievement of desired individual and organizational goals (Chang, Rosen & Levy, 2009). It is in this perspective that most research has focused on the dark side of OP.

A larger number of studies have frequently associated OP with a host of outcomes. Employees with higher perceptions of OP may decide to quit or have the intention to leave their organization (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999) or display lower positive affectivity

(Karatepe, Babakus, & Yavas, 2012). They may respond through absenteeism (withdrawal), low job involvement and job anxiety (Valle & Perrewé, 2000), reduced organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, task performance and increased psychological strain (Chang et al., 2009; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008). Higher perceptions of OP was associated with lesser job satisfaction (Witt, Andrews & Kacmar, 2000), greater job stress and organizational deviance (Haq, 2011); lesser workplace friendship (Yen, Chen, & Yen, 2009), lower pay satisfaction (Harris & Harris, 2007), reduced performance and negligent behavior (Vigoga, 2000); lesser affective commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Randall, Cropanzano, Borman, & Birjulin, 1999) lower organizational loyalty; lesser organizational belief of valuing integrity, challenging work, and higher work standards; and lack of support of innovation (Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995).

Self-interest and manipulative actions that are said to characterize OP (Ferris et al., 2002) raise feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty. Experiencing ambiguity will result in undesirable outcomes (Perrewé, Ferris, Frink, & Anthony, 2000). Rusbult, Zembrogh, and Gunn (1982) noted that what employees experience, observe or perceive in the work environment may determine their behaviors. For individual who adheres to proper procedures or who do not resort to political actions to meet their own objectives and goals, seeing others using politics to gain favors may raise feelings of jealousy and resentment largely due to the perception of unfair distribution of organizational resources such as rewards, recognition, promotion (Parker et al., 1995). Employees sometimes join organizations with a myriad of goals. As such employees may dedicate all their time and efforts to working hard to reach their objectives which maybe to be recognized as the company best worker, to get promoted to a higher status or be rewarded with increased pay. Political actions from others may jeopardize their objectives as they may think that their efforts won't be rewarded based on merit. Randall et al. (1999) supported that political environment makes room for risky investment which may ultimately lead employees to perform little effort to an organization. Employees may build ties, remain, and are loyal to non-political organizations where they are confident their needs will be met, and invested resources fully returned. Individual perceiving OP may consider it unfair, evil, irrational and unhealthy (Vigoda, 2007). Such feelings may reduce employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and citizenship behavior. As such, we are tempted to hypothesize that:

***H1: OP will be negatively associated with job satisfaction in organizations Senegal***

***H2: OP will be negatively associated with organizational commitment in organizations in Senegal***

***H3: OP will be negatively associated with organizational citizenship in organizations in Senegal***

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants, Procedure, and Design

A total of 680 pen-and-pencil survey questionnaires were distributed in a four-month period, and 125 usable surveys were returned. The low return rate was due to the unwillingness of most employees to participate in the study. Of the 125 returned valid questionnaires, 124 of the respondents were Senegalese and 1 was Congolese. We found that 28% of the respondents were female, 55.3% male, and 16.7% did not mention their gender. 79.2% of the respondents were aged between 15 and 47. Participants were workers from both private and public organizations located in Dakar, Senegal. To conduct the study, we first asked permission from managers in the targeted organizations. Each participant received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study along with a copy of the survey questionnaires. Participants were assured that their personal information would be strictly confidential and not exposed to anybody. Participants were also asked to leave their contact information such as email address if they wish to read the subsequent findings of the study.

### Sampling technique

Convenient sampling method was used to conduct the survey. Participants were found in their working places. Questionnaires were immediately collected from those who could fill them on the spot. But due to the extensive number of the questions, most of the questionnaires were collected one or two weeks later. Participants were each handed a questionnaire accessing their demographic information, their perceptions of OP, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

### Measures

#### *Organizational politics*

We resorted to the 12 items from the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997) measuring the degree to which employees see their workplace as political. This scale has been used in Ferris et al. (2005) and Rosen, Levy, & Hall (2006). Items to respond included (1) 'Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in this organization', (3) 'People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others'. Respondents reported how much they agreed with all 12 items. The answers were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), so that a higher score means a superior POP. The scale yielded an acceptable reliability estimate ( $\alpha = .792$ ) slightly higher than 0.71 reported in Haq (2011).

### ***Job satisfaction***

Job satisfaction refers to the general attitude an individual has toward his or her job (Robbins, 2001). Given its popularity as one of the most widely studied topic in organizations and psychology, many scales have been developed to measure job satisfaction. We assessed the variable here using the six-item scale borrowed from Schriesheim and Tsui (1980). The scale contains such items as: 'How satisfied are you with your current salary?' and 'How satisfied are you with your current job?' Employees were asked in a five-point scale format to report how pleased they were with totally six aspects of their job. The scale ranged from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), with high score indicating a high level of satisfaction. The alpha reliability for this scale was 0.889.

### ***Organizational commitment***

The term commitment represents a mental state that bonds employees to an organization and (Allen & Meyer, 1990). We used Allen and Meyer's (1990) 21-items to measure organizational politics. Allen and Meyer's (1990) OC scale has won widespread acceptance and has been used in many studies (e.g., Atak & Erturgutb, 2010). Of the sample items were questions such as (11) 'It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to' and (3) 'I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own'. Respondents rated their commitment in a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 = Strongly Agree to 1= Strongly Disagree to indicate how much they agree with the items. The alpha reliability for this scale was 0.818.

### ***Organizational citizenship behaviour***

This term refers to individual behavior that is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, discretionary, and collectively promotes the efficient functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988, p. 4). William and Anderson's (1991) 12-items were used to measure this construct. A sample item from this scale is (5) 'I take personal interests in others' and (1) 'I help others who have been absent'. The anchors for these scales were never (1) to always (5). The alpha reliability coefficient estimate for this scale was 0.70.

### **Data analysis**

The analyses are based on first computing the descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of the research constructs. Multiple linear regressions are then performed to determine the extent to which perception of OP will explain the variances in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior.



Table 2: Multiple linear regression models on the Relationship between organizational politics and work attitudes

Variables	Model 1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior			Model 2 Organizational Commitment			Model 3 Job Satisfaction		
	B	t-val	p-val	$\beta$	t-val	p-val	$\beta$	t-val	p-val
Income	-0.146	-1.484	0.141	-0.031	-0.319	0.751	0.197	2.055	*
Gender	-0.169	-1.892	0.061	-0.256	-2.888	0.005	-0.146	-1.67	0.098
Age	-0.263	-2.488	0.014	-0.064	-0.609	0.544	-0.159	-1.538	0.127
Contract	-0.089	-0.834	0.406	0.057	0.539	0.591	0.053	0.509	0.612
Position	-0.033	-0.368	0.714	-0.111	-1.265	0.209	0.035	0.406	0.686
Tenure	-0.009	-0.079	0.937	0.025	0.218	0.828	0.063	0.564	0.574
Sector	-0.143	-1.595	0.114	-0.25	-2.81	0.006	-0.118	-1.344	0.181
Educational Level	0.043	0.443	0.659	-0.129	-1.35	0.18	-0.051	-0.541	0.589
<b>Organizational Politics</b>	-0.199	-2.239	*	-0.195	-2.214	*	-0.366	-4.224	***
<b>Statistic Test</b>									
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.173			0.188			0.212		
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.108			0.124			0.151		
<b>F (Anova)</b>	2.676**			2.950**			3.44***		

Notes:  $n = 125$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

R<sup>2</sup> in Table 2 shows that perceptions of OP explain 21.2%, 18.8%, and 17.3% of the variance respectively in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior.

The ANOVA values given by F-statistic were significant at 0.01 for both organizational citizenship behavior and organizational commitment, and at 0.001 for job satisfaction. Significant F shows the existence of linear relationship between the variables in the models.

## DISCUSSION

The rationale for this study was to examine the effects OP might have on organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. For this, we performed multiple linear regressions to test the hypotheses. As predicted, the findings from the regressions were in line with all hypotheses. OP was negatively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Our goal was to extend theory and understanding on the repercussions of OP on employees work /job attitudes or

behaviors at the working place. OP explained an unnegligible percentage of the variance in the dependent variables. OP's contribution to the explanation of the dependent variables was all significant.

The results show that employees in organizations in Senegal experiencing or perceiving higher OP not only tended to be dissatisfied with their job, but they also tended to display lower level of organizational commitment, and citizenship behavior. A possible explanation is that OP actions do not reflect fairness or justice in the eyes of many. When employees perceive unfairness, they may reciprocate it by a host of outcomes (Colquitt, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Another explanation is that self-interests actions by political people may cause threat to employees expected resources (Harris & Harris, 2007) such as promotion or recognition. This may diminish their trust, satisfaction, commitment or attachment toward their organization for fear that their effort won't be rewarded on the basis of merit. Therefore, perceptions of political behavior may push employees to question or have less confidence in their organizations decision making processes.

OP may be an existing real phenomenon in organizations in Senegal. Several factors may cause OP in the Senegalese context. The control over scarce resources and information, the lust to seek or keep power, the dire need to build a power base or exercise social influence, the use of power to advance one's interests and promote ideas, the absence of clear rules and regulations to guide decisions making or to allocate scarce resources, lobbying prior to promotions, and promotion of individuals to a position not based on merit, competency and ability but on mere relationships (called 'bras long' in Senegal) or on their affiliation to the ruling political party are recurrent in Senegal and may represent potential causes of OP especially in public organizations. These factors most of the time crippled organizational success and foster an environment where negative attitudes and behaviors burgeon.

## CONCLUSION

An important finding of this study is that OP was associated with undesirable work attitudes such as lower job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. As such, ongoing monitoring is needed for early detection and eradication of dysfunctional political behavior.

Other interesting findings were also found between the demographics variables and OP. OP in Senegal was more perceived by low income, less educated and younger employees. Possible explanations are that these categories of employees tend to be less satisfied with their job, so they pay more attention to the political environment. They do not have power, strong incentives (e.g., pay) or experience to face or overlook the political environment. They are mostly people who freshly come to the company with specific goals such as being recognized

as a great worker so as to gain promotion , recognition, high pay or status in the long run. Political actions by other organizational members may prevent them from reaching their desired goals.

It is good to mention that OP cannot be entirely viewed as a negative phenomenon. It can have a functional role (Mintzberg, 1985) for both organizations and individuals. It may help adjust or correct a number of deficiencies and dysfunctions in organizations. When politics is carried out by top individuals who want to lead by example, it can facilitate decision making, promote organizational change, and unblock obstacles to organizational change. It can be an effective tool for leaders to influence followers and get things done. Political skills may also be a necessary element for individual to achieve higher job performance and professional-related rewards.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

While exploring the relationship between OP and employees work attitudes, the study makes a contribution to organizational behavior theory by extending knowledge on the harmful repercussion of this organizational phenomenon. This study has also important managerial contributions. It can be very beneficial to top management and human resources practitioners seeking organizational success. It raises awareness of the destructive effects of OP. This can help understand employees' reactions and allow corporate leaders to develop rules and regulations that can prevent the occurrence of OP or lessen the damages of the perceptions OP. A clear understanding of OP and its consequences can help organizational consultants, administrators, and managers to incorporate policies and strategies that can halt the occurrence of OP and foster positive attitudes in employees. Better pay may be a strong positive incentive that can help diminish the negative effects of OP in Senegal. Yang et al. (2008) found pay as an important aspect for regulating employee's behavior. This study showed that employees in Senegal tended to overlook the political environment when they have higher income.

We suggest organizational leaders to fight political behavior when it is dysfunctional and widely present in organizations. They can try to control the phenomenon by detecting political behavior and political tactics, and combating undesirable political behavior. Vigilant ongoing monitoring of employees attitudes or behaviors is required. They should ensure that information is largely diffused so that all individuals know how limited resources are allocated. This will help prevent the control of information by political agents. They should foster an environment where dysfunctional political actions and favouritism are punished, not tolerated and have no room. This may create an environment where people know that reward is only based on one's own performance, not on one's political manoeuvring. Leaders should act like role models to induce followers to learn from them. They should create an environment where all players share the same goals and allow all political issues to be discussed in public. This will weaken and

discourage the use of political actions as political agents operate secretly and do often not want their actions to be known or revealed to the public.

## LIMITATIONS

The biggest challenge encountered when conducting the research was the reluctance of most targeted participants to fill out the questionnaires. As a consequence, the response rate was too low even though the survey was carried in a four month-period. This was due to the fact that some of the questions were sensitive, and employees feared to fill them out. Participants usually reported that they were not used to such kinds of questionnaires. Additionally, cultural, social and religious beliefs and practices in Senegal may prevent people from revealing some of their work and personal information to strangers. This may significantly impact the sample size and accuracy of the information collected and may have some implications on the overall significance of the findings.

## SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is also important to mention that the findings still cannot be strongly endorsed as strong empirical evidences about the effects of OP in organizations in Senegal. Stronger evidences on the relationships between OP and employees' work attitudes in Senegal would be possible if more studies are conducted. Vigoda and Talmud (2010) noted that 'too little is known about the exact nature, boundaries, development, interpretation, and aftermaths of such politics'. This gives room for more subsequent studies to deepen knowledge about OP and all issues surrounding the concept. There is a sharp lack of literature on the study of OP in Senegal. Therefore, similar research can be conducted by incorporating a larger sample size on a long time span and by targeting participants in places other than their work places. This may help reach more participants into order to collect more accurate information.

New issues can be explored. An interesting one would be to investigate how governmental politics engender OP in organizations in Senegal. Another interesting topic may be to investigate how OP affects job performance or negligent behavior. Many organizations in Senegal have gone bankrupt during the last two decades. A good topic may be to explore the existence of a possible link between OP and organizations bankruptcy or failure.

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