The effect of organizational politics on the individual work performance

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A B S T R A C T

The study aimed to examine the effect of organizational politics on the individual work performance of employees. To support the study, literature was reviewed and theories were identified and explained. It was carried out following research methodology in terms of research design, population, the locale of the study, research instruments and statistical treatment of data. The study found that the organizational politics of the institution is at a moderate level and the individual work performance was also at a moderate level. It is further found that there is a significant correlation between organizational politics and individual work performance. Thus, it is concluded that organizational politics is a significant predictor of organizational performance. The study found that a moderate level of organizational politics affects individual work performance positively and therefore it confirms the finding of other studies that organizational politics is not inherently bad or negative.

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Introduction

Politics is part of the nature of human beings and this is the reason why humans are also called “homo politicus or political animal” (Djuric, 1979). Humans are not just “homo politicus” but they are also called “homo economicus” which refers to human behaviour as being motivated by self-interest or “utility maximizers” (Djuric, 1979, Faber, et al. 2002). The term “homo politicus” is coined by Plato to refer to a human being as a political animal. Since this is the nature of human beings, thus, it cannot be denied that political behaviour is existing in different kinds of the organization including schools. Politics is defined by Lasswell (1936, p.8) as “those activities have taken place within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or disensus about choices.” From this definition, one can understand the reason behind the existence of political behaviour which is to overcome resistance to get what one wants to get. Limited resources could be one of the reasons for the causes of uncertainties of getting what one wants to get from the organization. Besides these two reasons, Lencioni (2006) classified two antecedents or backgrounds of political behaviour in an organization which are called personal antecedents and organizational antecedents. Personal antecedents may include political skills, internal locus of control, investment in the organization and expectations of success. Political skills refer to people who can relate well with others, alter their reactions or their behaviour depending on the reactions of others or the environment, inspiring confidence and trust from others. Locus of control
points to people who believe in themselves and can make a difference in the institutional outcomes. Investment in the organization is related to people who have invested in the organization financially or emotionally. Lastly expectations of success. These are people who believe that they will be able to change the outcome or contribute to the outcome. Lencioni (2006) argued that when you do not have an interest in changing the outcome and just go with the usual situation, you are not interested to engage in political behaviour. While organizational antecedents include scarcity of resources, role ambiguity, performance evaluation, promotion and democratic decision making. The scarcity of resources such as financial resources is one of the main reasons why employees are fighting over the limited resources. Role ambiguity happens when there is a clear cut role given to the employees and such a situation allows the employees to negotiate their role. Performance evaluation is also subject to politicking when there are no clear standards/criteria to be evaluated. Lastly, promotion is also another reason for politicking. This is the same with performance evaluation. Unclear guidelines for promotion to be followed allow backdoor negotiation.

These antecedents are existing in all organizations and make organizational politics occur. Schools are not exempted from politics, though it may not be seen clearly by the naked eye, it exists, though the extent may not be so glaring. To a certain extent, political behaviour may be considered good and normal because it can help the organization in some aspects but one cannot be so ignorant to acknowledge or recognize the negative effect of political behaviour within an organization (Jarrett, 2017). This is the purpose of this paper to unmask the political behaviour of the employees and how it affects their job engagement. Detecting the extent of political behaviours that are happening within the organization is important for the management to minimize its activities and prevent its negative effect on the organization as a whole as pointed out by Jarrett (2017).

The paper is divided into five parts. The first part is an introduction that provides a background of the study by explaining the nature of organizational politics and reasons why such a situation exists in all organizations including the school. The second part is a related literature review that investigates previous literature and studies that discuss organizational politics and its effect on job engagement. The third part is the research methodology which discusses the research design, population, locale of the study, research instruments, data gathering procedures, and statistical treatment of data. The fourth is the data presentation and analysis, in which the data gathered through questionnaires are presented and interpreted and analyzed. The fifth is the result and discussion which discuss further the findings and implications and the conclusion of the study.

**Literature Review**

This part reviews the existing literature and studies related to the current study to establish the theories of the study. The theories are formulated based on a different discussion from other researchers. The online Cambridge Dictionary defines politics as “the activities of the government, members of law-making organizations, or people who try to influence the way a country is governed”. While online Collins Dictionary defines it as “the actions or activities concerned with achieving and using power in a country or society”. What do we get from these different definitions? What we get is that there is no common definition of politics. This is also true to different authorities on how they define politics. Political science authorities have defined politics differently. Originally, politics is originated from the work of Aristotle, “Politika” which means the affair of the city (Buhler, 1961) which may refer to how the government is run. Aristotle viewed that politics is the ideal system of government which is a combination of both, aristocratic and democratic features. Along with this concept of politics, Crick (1962, 2000) defines politics as “the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of the rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community”.

Following the idea of Crick (1962, 2000), politics is seen as a way of distributing power equally to different groups to propose their interest to help the community. Each party or unit is given the power to negotiate in advancing its interest. Crick recognized that there will be conflicts of interest between groups but these differences cannot be crushed but to be conciliated. In this context, solving the differences among the parties will be through negotiations, dialogue, and debate to reach a consensus. In a simple word, politics is also an activity to reach compromise and reconciliation. The concept of Crick (1962, 2000) about politics has been criticized and therefore cannot be taken as the basis for a definition of politics. The word “politics” has been defined in different ways by different authors which are resulting in different ways and definitions of politics (Kruschke, 1973). Valeri (2010) even claimed that he had difficulty in defining “politics” due to the wide range of definitions offered by different authors which indicates that many authorities do not have a common agreement of the definition of politics. This reflects the nature of politics because it is born out of disagreement. People disagree on anything such as disagreement on power-sharing, the distribution of resources, how the government is run, how decisions should be made, etc. Hence politics in this scenario is an effort to gain the power to get what one wants to get through the cooperation of the opposing parties. Thus, negotiations and dialogue is part of political tools to get cooperation (Jowett, 1885). Due to different contexts and situations, politics has been defined differently by different authors. For example, Leftwich (2004) define politics as “all the activities of co-operation, negotiation and conflict within and between societies, whereby people go about organizing the use, production or distribution of human, natural and other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of their biological and social life”. Or Heywood (1997) defined politics as “as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation”. Wolfsfeld (2015) defined politics as the behaviour of the “individuals who have obtained at least some measure of political power and/or authority in a particular society who engage in activities that can have a significant influence on decisions, policies, media coverage, and outcomes associated with a given conflict”. 

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The Concept of Politics and Organizational Politics

Before one understands the concept of organizational politics, one needs to know what politics is. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines politics as “the art or science concerned with winning and holding control over a government” or “the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy”.

Though the activities of political organizations and other kinds of organizations are not the same it cannot be denied that politics does exist in any organization whether it is a political organization or other kind kinds of organizations. The political behaviours of the members of the organization are not exclusive which means that political behaviours are also occurring in other organizations. Organizations are considered as political entities because it is composed of a different group with opposing interest in which decisions are made through bargaining process or negotiations (Mayes & Allen, 1977).

After presenting different definitions of politics from the different authorities, we can summarize their definitions into a single definition of what politics is. Politic is an activity of negotiation to reach a consensus to solve differing interests among parties. This definition captures the reason for political activities which is conflicting interest. Harmonizing different interests to reach a consensus is done through negotiation. In the process of negotiation to advance the interest of each group, political tactics are applied. The approach can be different and there can be conflict but these conflicts have to be conciliated to reach a common understanding or agreement. It cannot be avoided that in the process of negotiation, each party tries to exert influence or power over the other party, however, the interest of the community prevails (Crick, 1962, 2000).

From what we have presented above, one can see clearly that the main cause of politics is the differing interest in what and how one can get from the limited resources (Meyes & Allen, 1977). Every member or group of the organization has the interest to pursue which may conflict with the others and unfortunately, not all interests can be accommodated due to the limited resources. Fighting over limited resources is the source of political behaviour. This situation is not just in the political organization but it also happens in any organization which is the reason why organizational politics become a relevant issue to be discussed and given the special interest in the research. However, measuring organizational politics is quite broad because there is no agreement on the definition and dimensions to be measured, though Zhou and Ferris (1995) proposed three dimensions to be measured such as the existence of dominant groups, organizational reward practices and workers’ political behaviour. However, there have been no other researchers pursuing these dimensions in later research. Abun, et.al. (2018) only identified different types of political behaviour such as blaming others, impression management, and ingratiating. These are the behaviours that are often employed by individuals or groups in getting the approval of the higher-ups and getting what one wants to get.

Just like the concept of politics in which the authorities have no common concept or definition and dimensions to be measured, the same case is with the definition of organizational politics (Drorry & Romm, 1990). Brandon and Seldman (2004), Hochwarter, Witt, & Kacmar, (2000) define politics as “an informal, unofficial and behind the scenes effort to sell ideas, influence an organization, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives”. Or as Hochwarter and Thompson (2010, p. 1372) considered politics as “self-serving, contradictory to organizational objectives and pre-mediated to cause individuals, groups or entities harm”. These definitions refer to organizational politics as political behaviour. In such definition, authors have been pointing out the reason for organizational politics which is conflicting self-interest among the parties. As pointed out by Allen, et.al. (1979) that politics is an “intentional act of influence to enhance or protect the interest of individual groups”. The effort to get what one wants to get would determine the kind of political strategy/tactics that one has to deploy. Again, such a definition points to organizational politics as political behaviour. Further, Harvey and Mill (1970) defined organizational politics as “actions that claim the organization's resources sharing system”. This definition still relates to political behaviour which is only considered one dimension of organizational politics according to Zhou and Ferris (1995). This definition captures one of the reasons for the political behaviour which limited resources is. People are trying to influence the decision-makers to favour the influencers in distributing the resources. Negotiations and behind the door or even the table deal can always be used to influence. Thus, along with this concept, Meyes and Allen (1977) defined organizational politics as “the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non-sanctioned influence means”.

The above definitions seem limited because they do not capture the organizational politics as a whole because politics in the organization are not only by individual or group of employees but it is also done by the organization and therefore, Meyes and Allen (1977) contended that defining organizational politics in terms of conflict of interest may too narrow without the inclusion of politics of policy implementation and policy determination. The idea of Meyes and Allen (1977) is captured in the research of Zhou and Ferris (1995) which measured dimensions of organizational politics, not only in terms of political behaviour but also includes the existence of a dominant group that may influence policy determination of the organization and organizational practices or policies. Organizational practices, for example, performance appraisals can be politically motivated in a certain sense. Tziner, et.al. (1996) found that political considerations may affect performance appraisals. However, conflict among groups/individuals is triggered by a conflict of interest over limited resources and objectives which lead to conflict over policy preferences (Wildav, 1968). Gaining control over the policy determination of the organization is a way of gaining the power to control the organization and of people. Thus, concerning this view, I propose a new definition of organizational politics. It is an activity or behaviour of the organization that individuals/groups gain power, control and influence to get the desired sanctioned and non-sanctioned objectives. This definition
is similar to the definition of Martin and Sims, (1974). In other words, politics are actions initiated by individuals or groups to further their interests (Kacmar & Baron, 1999).

Dimensions of organizational politics

The existence of a dominant group of individuals

Before explaining the concept of a dominant group of individuals and to appreciate the concept, one needs to define the word, "group" from dictionaries and different authors. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word, "group" as "several individuals assembled or having some unifying relationship". The word "unifying relationship" signifies that there is a unifying cause that calls the individual people to come together and form a group. This can be related to Collins Dictionary definition of a group. It defines a "group" as "a set of people who have the same interests or aims, and who organize themselves to work or act together". These definitions lead to the definition of Monique & Michael, (2015) who defined a group as "several people who come together and interact with each other to pursue a certain objective. This definition indicates that there are unifying norms, goals and feelings that join the people together. It is a social unit in a society that is united by its norms and develop certain behaviour and interact with each other through communication (Saim, et.al. 2015). This definition is similar to the definition of Kreitner & Kinicki, (2012) who view a group as "a community of individuals which is in interrelation with each other regularly and has the common values or norms regulating their behaviours in the various status or role".

From the definition of "group", now we understand what the dominant group of individuals is. Open Education Sociology Dictionary (n.d) defines a dominant group as "Any group that has more power in society than any subordinate group. This definition is similar to what Winters (2015) has defined about the dominant group. It refers to a group with power, privileges and social status or it is related to "a social group that controls the value system and rewards in a particular society". This definition is related to the concept of Rosenblum and Travis (2000) that a dominant group points to a group of people who have greater access to wealth, power, status and privileges as compared to minority groups that are not given privileges. In this case, according to Rosenblum and Travis (2000), the dominant group is ascribed, master status. This is a group that is favoured by the institution or society. In the context of organizational politics, the dominant group refers to those who are most favoured and listened to by the management in terms of decision making and access to the resources of the organization. This is a group of people who get their way to the management and no one can challenge them, and even they can influence the policy direction of the organization (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991).

Organizational reward practices

A reward is an important element to be considered in motivating the employee to perform well their given task. Rewards are often related to greater effort and performance, attendance and retention, and employees' commitment to the organization (Mowday, et.al. (1982). Usually, employees will develop a behaviour showing their love and commitment to the organization when they feel that the organization is concerned with their welfare. Their love and concern for the organization are often translated into their behaviour through job performance and commitment. Job performance is also a reflection of their job satisfaction (Lawler, 1976). The rewards system of the organization is often considered one of the factors that influence people to apply for a job. This is to indicate that the reward system has greater implications for the attraction of people to apply for a job, which will consequently later translate into job satisfaction, performance and organizational effectiveness (Sauer, 2018).

The concern of how the rewards system is designed become a very important issue in any organization. The case here is if the reward has something to do with the performance and the scope of work. The issue of how does the organization distribute the available reward to the employees equally and fairly? Is there any objective and transparent standard to be used in determining the distribution of rewards? Is the reward based on performance and the content of work? Lack of objective and transparent standards for reward systems is often time leading to the political behaviour of management and employees. Pay or reward secrecy is often affecting the motivation of employees to work (Lawler, 1976). Lawler (1976) argues that when reward information is open to the employees and the standards are clear and unbiased toward a group of employees, it will motivate the employees to improve their performance.

Political behaviour

As Lasswell (1936) defines politics as “those activities have taken place within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or disagreement about choices.” From this definition, political behaviour is a result of uncertainties of getting the resources that one needs to get. The uncertainty is caused by the limited resources provided by the organization to fulfill the needs of the individuals or groups within the organization. Based on this definition, thus, political behaviour refers to activities to influence the decision-maker to grant the request for the needed resources of the individuals or group. Taylor (2017), Godin (2017) and Miles (1980), identified five possible sources of political behaviour such as ambiguous goals, scarcity of resources, non-routine technology and complex external environment, non-programmed decisions and organizational changes. Political behaviour can also be triggered by other factors such as interdepartmental coordination, promotions and transfer, and delegation of authority (Gandz & Murray, 1980). Madison, et.al. (1980) contended that all the five reasons of political behaviour that are identified are existing in the current organizations and therefore, they concluded that organizations are highly political. Reducing political behaviour is important through the establishment of the standard operating procedure through clear policy guidelines.
Sussman, et.al (2002) as cited by Abun (2018) identified several forms of political behaviour such as blaming others, impression management and ingratiation. Blaming others is a form of image building in front of management and co-workers. Some people have the perception of a good image in front of others and they would like to maintain such an image. When they are committing a mistake, instead of accepting the blame. They usually assign the blame to other people. They are interested in being right in front of anyone, instead of taking the responsibility for the mistake but they blame others (Soфи, 2013) and they are always right in front of the management. Even impression management is similar to blaming others behaviour or image building behaviour. In the case of impression management, people tend to protect their image. They are interested in managing their impression in front of others and want to appear as a nice person in front of others and management (Allen, 1979). They are always pleasant in front of anybody and often favours are given to them. According to Drory and Zaidman, (2006), in a certain culture, this kind of behaviour is acceptable because it helps in career advancement. After all, often time merit alone does not guarantee promotion (Abun, et.al. 2018). They preserve their self-esteem and appear to be very cooperative with the management and thus easily get the cooperation of the management and the resources (Abun, et.al. 2018). Certain culture has accepted such practices because it is one of the ways in getting reward and avoiding punishment. Besides impression management, people also engage in ingratiation as a strategy to get what they wanted. It is one of the political behaviours that is commonly used to achieve one’s objective. It is a behaviour that one performs to get the approval of the management. Jones (1964) had identified three kinds of ingratiation such as other-enhancement (flattery), opinion-conformity (agreement), and self-presentation. Other-enhancement is expressed through praising or admiring their achievement and others' achievement. Praising the management for what they have accomplished. They tend to over-state their accomplishment and the accomplishment of others even in reality it is not. In the case of opinion-conformity is usually political behaviour that can be seen through a yes-men behaviour. This person never contradicts or disagrees with the other's opinion. Lastly is self-presentation in which the person presents himself/herself to be liked by others. They behave or dress to impress people around them including the decision-makers.

The Effect of organizational politics on the organization

It cannot be denied that unhealthy and uncontrolled political behaviour can affect the organization. Though one hand organizational politics is needed in any organization because it can help improve motivation and morale, produce greater efficiency and output and consensus building, however, it has also a negative side because it leads to increase the cost of operation, difficulty in distribution of workload, affects the concentration and focus on the work (Jarret, 2017). Therefore Jarret (2017) contended that there is a need to balance between the pros and cons of organizational politics. In other words, there is a good and bad side to organizational politics and both sides are in co-existence. Ferris, et.al. (1996) argued that no organization exists without politics.

Thus, unhealthy organizational politics may affect the organization negatively. Landells and Albrecht (2019) in their study confirmed the negative side of organizational politics which can affect individual work engagement and organizational outcome. Similar research output was also presented by the study of Venugopal (2013) about the negative effect of organizational politics on job performance. The same finding is presented by Talmud, however, the result of the study of Talmud pointed out that the negative effect of organizational politics on organizational performance can be controlled or reduced by social capital such as trust and social support. Though Landells and Albrecht (2019), Venugopal (2013), Gadot (n.d) pointed out the negative effect of organizational politics, however, Gadot and Cohen (1998) pointed out the positive effect of organizational politics on organizational performance. Their study indicated that organizational politics positively affect the employees’ performance and organizational performance as a whole. This finding is somehow related to the finding of Olorunleke (2015). His study pointed out that organizational politics is negatively related to organizational achievement and achievement of harmony among the functional departments of an organization.

The conflicting findings of research on the effect of organizational politics on the performance of individual employees and organizational performance indicate that organizational politics is not necessarily bad or good. It suggests that there is a need to maintain a certain level of political environment to improve the level of competitiveness among organizational members (Drory & Gadot, 2010, Gotsis & Kortez, 2010). Others also argue that the political environment is also important because it can improve an individual's and organization's success and can facilitate organizational changes and introduce new changes (Ladebo, 2006, Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010 ). Though its positive effect on organizational performance is recognized, however, it is also true that organizational politics harm the organization. Many people perceived organizational politics negatively because it is one of the main causes of injustice or inequality (Gotsis & Kortez, 2010). It is also pointed out further that organizational politics may suppress the opinion of the minority groups or individuals and create uncertainty (Vince, 2001, Harris, 2009).

Based on those conflicting findings, they suggest that there is a need to manage the political environment of the organization to maintain it at a healthy level. As suggested by Soares (2018) that management need to find ways how to mitigate the negative implications of organizational politics on the organization and enhance the positive elements of internal politics. Eldor (2016) even suggest to those who are working to perceive organizational politics as a challenge and opportunity to improve performance.

The Concept of Work Performance

The concept and definition of work performance have been confusing because there is no common consensus on the definition of work performance. The problem of definition causes some problems to determine the elements or dimensions to be measured or investigated. The question here is what constitutes a work performance? For example, Patro, (2018) defined work performance in terms of “accomplishment of assigned task for achieving organizational goals”. This definition refers to the result or output of a given
task. Or Orta (2017) defined work performance as "how well an employee is executing the given task". This definition refers to task performance. While early on, Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmidt, (1997) defined work performance as "the overall expected value from employees' behaviours carried out for a set period". Work performance in this definition refers to the value of an employee to the organization. The value of an employee to the organization refers to the behaviour of the employee which is either helping or hindering the organization. In the earlier definition of Motowidlo, Borman and Schmidt (1997), only task performance and contextual performance were identified as the dimensions of work performance. Later, Motowidlo and Kell (2012) revised slightly their earlier definition of work performance. The new definition defines job performance as "the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioural episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period". Though they have revised their definition of work performance, however, these definitions still indicate that work performance is a property of behaviour or sets of behaviours performed by the individual employees at a different time or over some time.

The behaviours to be measured is in terms of how much the behaviour contributes or hinder the organization. Therefore, following these definitions, performance is a multidimensional construct that includes task performance and contextual performance. Though Borman and Motowidlo (1993) had not included counterproductive behaviour in the identified dimension of work performance, looking into their definition, it is already included as part of the work performance dimension. However, Sacket (2002) added to these two dimensions counterproductive behaviour. It refers to “any intentional behaviour on the part of the organizational member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests.” Unlike the definitions offered by Orta (2017) and Patro (2018) in which performance refers to the task performance and output or result, however, the definition of Motowidlo and Kell (2012) and even Sacket (2002) do not include result as a part of the performance because if the result is included, then the value of employee or set of behaviours of employees will not be considered in the performance evaluation. Why should results be excluded from the evaluation? Performance is referring only to behaviour, not result. Often time employee exerts effort to perform in their work but the outcome may not be achieved because of other factors or circumstances. Based on this definition, there are only three dimensions to be measured which is task performance and contextual performance and counterproductive behaviour. Task performance is the actions carried out by the employees to produce the outputs. While contextual performance refers to the behaviour that helps produce the output (Bullock, 2013) and counterproductive behaviour is a dysfunctional behaviour that is carried out intentionally against the interest of the organization (Sacket, 2002).

Many different definitions of work performance result in difficulty in measuring work performance. The concern is the dimensions of work performance to be measured. What constitutes work performance? As a result of those definitions, there is no consensus among researchers about the dimensions of work performance. Koopmans, et.al. (2014) included four dimensions such as task performance, contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), adaptive performance (Allworth & Hesketh, 1999) and counterproductive work behaviour (Sacket (2002). Adaptive performance is included because the environment is changing or dynamic (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003) and the ability of the employees to adapt to changing environment in performing their task should be considered in the evaluation of job performance.

While Campbell (1990, as cited by Motowidlo and Kell, 2012) identified eight (8) behavioural dimensions of performance such as job-specific task proficiency (the ability of the employee to perform the task), non-job-specific task proficiency (but the ability to perform another task that is not unique to the job but required), written and oral communications (the ability to communicate in writing and verbally), demonstrating effort (refers to the commitment of the person to the job), maintaining personal discipline, supervision, management and administration (refers to how well an employee can perform supervisory functions in terms of monitoring progress of his/her work, controlling expenses, finding other resources, etc.). While, Borman, Buck, et al. (2001) introduced different dimensions of work performance namely personal support in terms of helping others to perform their job, organizational support which means the employee represents or projects a good image of the organization such as by speaking well about the organization, expressing satisfaction toward the organization despite the problems, etc., and conscientious initiative which means taking the initiative to perform another task to accomplish the objectives.

In summary, based on the different dimensions offered by different researchers, the current research pursues the three dimensions of work performance such as task performance, contextual performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993, Motowidlo and Kell, 2012), and counterproductive behaviour (Sacket, 2002). The current researcher argues that the three dimensions are representing a set of behaviours in performing a job. According to Motowidlo and Kell (2012), these three dimensions are considered well-established dimensions of work performance. Though adaptive performance seems to be an interesting element to be included, however, adaptive performance is still part of a set of behaviour. Thus, adaptive performance and other dimensions offered by different researchers are already included in the three dimensions.
Conceptual Framework

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 1:** The conceptual framework indicates the correlation between organizational politics and individual work performance.

Organizational politics affect work performance; *Source: Kacmar and Ferris (1991), Koopmans, et.al. (2011)*

Statement of the Problems

The study aims to examine the effect of organizational politics on individual work performance. It specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

i. What is the organizational politics of the institution in terms of:
   a. The existence of a dominant group of individuals
   b. Organizational reward practices
   c. Political behaviours in terms of blaming others and impression management?

ii. What is the individual work performance in terms of:
   a. Task performance
   b. Contextual performance
   c. Counterproductive behaviour

iii. Is there a relationship between organizational politics and individual work performance?

Assumptions

The study assumes that organizational politics influence individual work performance and it can be measured.

Hypothesis

Landells and Albrecht (2019) found in their study that organizational politics affect job commitment. Based on their study, the current study hypothesizes that organizational politics affects individual work performance.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The current study limits its investigation only to the employees of Divine Word College of Laoag and delimits its discussion on three dimensions of organizational politics namely dominant group of individuals, organizational reward practices and political behaviours and individual work performance in terms of task, contextual performance and counterproductive behaviours.

Research and Methodology

As scientific research, it needs to follow the prescribed research method in its investigation. It applies certain methods to determine, select, and analyze the data related to the concerned topic (Wilkinson, 2000, Leedy, 1974). Therefore, the current study uses a certain research design, data gathering instruments method, the population of the study, the locale of the study, data gathering procedures, and the statistical treatment of data.

**Research Design of the study**

The research design of the study is the descriptive assessment and descriptive correlational research design. Ariola (2006, cited by Abun, et.al, 2021) argued that a descriptive correlation study is intended to describe the relationship among variables without seeking to establish a causal connection. While descriptive research is simply to describe a population, a situation, or a phenomenon. It is also used to describe profiles, frequency distribution, describe characteristics of people, situations, or phenomena. In short, it answers the question of what, when, how, where, and not why question (McCombes, 2020).

**The locale of the Study**

The locale of the study was Divine Word College of Laoag. The college is located in Laoag City, the capital of Ilocos Norte.

**Population**

The respondents of the study are the employees of the college. Since the number of employees is limited, therefore, the total enumeration sampling was used and thus all faculty and employees of the college were taken as respondents of the study. A total of 150 employees were the respondents of the study.
Data Gathering instruments

The study adopted validated questionnaires of Koopmans, et.al. (2011) on work performance, Kacmar and Ferris (1991) on organizational politics particularly on the existence of dominant group/individuals and organizational reward practices and Abun, et.al. (2018) on political behaviour.

Data Gathering Procedures

To preserve the integrity of scientific research, the data were gathered after the approval of the Presidents of different colleges. The researcher sent a letter to the president and after the letters were approved, the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher's representative. Then the researcher's representative from each institution collected the data and submitted it to the researcher for tabulation.

Ethical Procedures

The study was carried out after the research ethics committee examined and approved the content of the paper if it does not violate ethical standards and if it does not cause harm to human life and the environment.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistic was used. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of organizational politics and political behaviours of employees, work performance, and the Pearson r was used to measure the correlation between organizational politics and the work performance of employees.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

| Statistical Range | Descriptive Interpretation |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4.21-5.00         | strongly agree/ Very High   |
| 3.41-4.20         | Agree / High                |
| 2.61-3.40         | somewhat agree/ Moderate    |
| 1.81-2.60         | Disagree/Low                |
| 1.00-1.80         | Strongly disagree/Very Low  |

Empirical Data and Analysis

This part presents the data that was gathered through research questionnaires and have been tabulated. The results are presented in the following tables.

Problem 1: What is the organizational politics of the institution in terms of (a) the existence of a dominant group of individuals, (b) organizational reward practices, (c) political behaviours in terms of blaming others and impression management?

Table 1: The existence of a dominant group of individuals

| Indicators                                                                 | Mean | Descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 1. There is a group of people in this institution who always gets things  | 3.16 | SWA/M        |
| their way because no one wants to challenge them                           |      |              |
| 2. There has always been an influential group in this department that no  | 3.14 | SWA/M        |
| one ever crosses                                                          |      |              |
| 3. The decisions are often influenced by the ideas of a certain group of  | 3.38 | SWA/M        |
| people                                                                   |      |              |
| 4. Policies often serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work  | 3.02 | SWA/M        |
| unit or the institution                                                   |      |              |
| 5. People in this school attempt to build themselves up by tearing others | 2.58 | D/L          |
| down                                                                     |      |              |
| **Composite Mean**                                                        | **3.05** | SWA/M    |

Source: Kacmar and Ferris (1991)

Based on the data presented in table number 1, shows that as a whole, the existence of the dominant group of individuals obtained a composite mean of 3.05 which is interpreted as "somewhat agree or moderate. This indicates that employees somewhat agree or moderately agree that the dominant group of individuals exists in the institution. Even when the indicators are taken singly, all items are rated within the mean range level with the interpretation of “somewhat agree of moderately agree” specifically employees moderately agree that there is a dominant who gets things done their way because no one challenges them or no one even crosses them. The decisions are often influenced by such groups and even policies serve their purpose and also moderately employees agree that people build themselves up by tearing down others.
Table 2: Organizational reward practices

| Indicators                                                                 | Mean | Descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 1. Promotions in this school generally go to top performers                | 3.46 | A/H          |
| 2. Rewards come only to those who work hard in this institution           | 3.47 | A/H          |
| 3. Pay and promotion policies are not politically motivated               | 3.27 | SWA/M        |
| 4. When it comes to rewards/recognition, policies are followed            | 3.64 | A/H          |
| 5. Promotions are based on merits, not favouritism.                      | 3.62 | A/H          |
| **Composite Mean**                                                       | 3.49 | A/H          |

Source: Kacmar and Ferris (1991)

When it comes to rewarding, the data on the table reveals that as a whole the organizational reward practices obtained a mean rating of 3.49 which is understood as "agree or high". This rating suggests that employees highly agree that there is no politicking in the practice of giving rewards to the employees. Even when the indicators are taken separately, employees highly agree that the promotions are given to the performers, hard workers, and employees also highly agree that promotions are not politically motivated but based on merits and the policies are followed and not favouritism.

Table 3(a): Political behaviours in terms of blaming others

| Indicators                                                                 | Mean  | Descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Often time management does not take responsibility when things go wrong.  | 3.02  | SWA/M        |
| 2. Instead of taking the blame, the management looks for scapegoats.       | 3.08  | SWA/M        |
| 3. The management never admits mistakes but blames his/her subordinates for the mistake. | 2.89  | SWA/M        |
| 4. It is also common among employees that they are not taking responsibility when things go wrong but blaming the management. | 2.97  | SWA/M        |
| 5. It is more often than not those employees blame each other when they fail to achieve their objectives. | 2.98  | SWA/M        |
| 6. Some employees are always blamed, while others are not blamed even if they are doing wrong. | 3.12  | SWA/M        |
| **Composite Mean**                                                       | 3.01  | SWA/M        |

Source: Abun, et.al (2018)

As pointed by the data on the table, it appears that as a whole, political behaviours in terms of blaming others gained a composite mean of 3.01 which is interpreted as "somewhat agree or moderately agree". This mean rating suggests that as a whole, employees somewhat agree or moderately agree that there is blaming game in the institution in which management is not taking responsibility when things go wrong. Even if the indicators are taken separately, all items are falling within the same mean rating level with the interpretation of "somewhat agree or moderately agree". Moderately employees agree that the management and even employees do not take responsibility when things go wrong and have the tendency to look for a scapegoat. The management never admits his/her mistake and often blames the employees. It is also the same with the employees. The employees do not take responsibility when things go wrong but blame the management and the others. Sadly, some employees are always blamed and some others are not blamed even if they are doing wrong.

Table 3(b): Political behaviours in terms of impression management

| Indicators                                                                 | Mean  | Descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| 1. Commonly, some employees look for personal favour with their superior. | 3.08  | SWA/M        |
| 2. Some employees always present themselves to be competent and knowledgeable in front of their supervisor. | 3.45  | A/H          |
| 3. They praise their supervisor for their accomplishment                  | 3.68  | A/H          |
| 4. Compliment their immediate supervisor on his/her dress or appearance   | 3.43  | A/H          |
| 5. Never pointing out the mistakes of their supervisors but only their good works. | 3.27  | SWA/M        |
| **Composite mean**                                                       | 3.38  | SWA/M        |

Source: Abun, et.al (2018)

The same case with the political behaviour in terms of impression management. As pointed out by the data on the table, it manifests that as a whole political behaviour in terms of impression management obtained a composite mean rating of 3.19 which is equivalent to "somewhat agree or moderately agree". It indicates that employees moderately agree that impression management does exist in the institution. Even if the indicators are taken singly, half of the items or indicators are rated within the same mean rating level which is understood as "somewhat agree or moderately agree". Particularly employees moderately agree that some employees look for personal favour with their superiors, and never criticized their superiors. Another half of the indicators are evaluated as "agree or highly agree" in which the employees highly agree that some employees present themselves to their superiors as competent and knowledgeable ones and often praise and compliment the achievement of their superior.
Based on the data presented in the summary table, reveals that overall the organizational politics of the institution gained an overall mean rating of 3.19 which is equivalent to “somewhat agree or moderately agree”. Overall employees moderately agree that there is a dominant group of individuals and political behaviours in terms of blaming others and impression management. However, in terms of reward practice employees disagree. In other words, employees highly agree that the rewards are going to the top performers and are based on policies and merits.

**Problem 2:** What is the individual work performance in terms of (a) Task performance (TP), (b) Contextual performance (CP), and (c) Counter productive behaviour (CPP)?

### Table 5: Task Performance

| Indicators | Mean | Descriptions |
|------------|------|--------------|
| 1. I manage to plan my work so that it was done on time | 3.90 | A/H |
| 2. My planning was optimal | 3.57 | A/H |
| 3. I kept in mind the results that I have to achieve in my work | 3.84 | A/H |
| 4. I was able to separate main issues from side issues at work | 3.76 | A/H |
| 5. I knew how to set the right priorities | 3.82 | A/H |
| 6. I was able to perform my work well with minimal time and effort | 3.66 | A/H |
| **Composite Mean** | **3.76** | **A/H** |

**Source:** Koopmans, et.al. (2011).

As shown by the data on the table, it demonstrates that as a whole, the task performance of the employees obtained a composite mean of 3.76 which is considered as “agree or high”. This mean rating indicates that as a whole task performance of the employees is high. This is supported by the mean rating of single items. All items of indicators are rated within the same mean rating level which is within the interpretation of “agree or high”. Particularly, employees agree that they plan their work so that it can be finished on time and perform their work with minimal time and effort. They also agree that they set priorities and focus on the result they are going to achieve and can separate main issues of work from side issues.

### Table 6: Contextual work performance

| Indicators | Mean | Descriptions |
|------------|------|--------------|
| 1. I took on extra responsibilities | 3.72 | A/H |
| 2. I started a new task myself when my old ones were finished | 3.84 | A/H |
| 3. I took on a challenging work task, when available | 3.70 | A/H |
| 4. I worked at keeping my job knowledge up-to-date | 3.70 | A/H |
| 5. I worked at keeping my job skills up-to-date | 3.73 | A/H |
| 6. I came up with creative solutions to new problems | 3.70 | A/H |
| 7. I kept looking for new challenges in my job | 3.66 | A/H |
| 8. I did more than was expected of me | 3.72 | A/H |
| 9. I actively participated in work meetings | 3.65 | A/H |
| 10. I actively look for ways to improve my performance at work | 3.84 | A/H |
| 11. I grasped opportunities when they presented themselves | 3.69 | A/H |
| 12. I knew how to solve difficult situations and setbacks quickly | 3.50 | A/H |
| **Composite Mean** | **3.70** | **A/H** |

**Source:** Koopmans, et.al (2011).

Concerning the contextual performance, the data manifest that as a whole, the contextual work performance of employees gained a composite mean rating of 3.70 which is considered as “agree or high”. This rating demonstrates that as a whole they highly agree that they are also doing extra work out of their initiative to help the institution. This evaluation is backed up by the evaluation of different indicators which all are rated within the same level mean range. The employees agree that they took extra responsibilities, took challenging work tasks after the old ones were finished, came up with creative solutions to solve problems, did more than expected, participated in work meetings. They also agree that they kept updating themselves with new knowledge and skills even they are not told to improve their performance, grasped the opportunities when they presented themselves and know how to solve difficult problems quickly.
Table 7: Counterproductive Behavior

| Indicators                                                                 | Mean | Descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 1. I complained about unimportant matters at work                          | 2.73 | SWA/M        |
| 2. I made problems greater than they were at work                          | 2.54 | D/L          |
| 3. I focused on the negative aspects of a work situation, instead of      | 2.38 | D/L          |
| on the positive aspects                                                   |      |              |
| 4. I spoke with colleagues about the negative aspects of my work           | 2.64 | SWA/M        |
| 5. I spoke with people from outside the organization about the negative   | 2.58 | D/L          |
| aspects of my work                                                        |      |              |
| 6. I did less than what was expected of me                                 | 2.82 | SWA/M        |
| 7. I managed to get off from a work task easily                           | 2.72 | SWA/M        |
| 8. I sometimes did nothing, while I should have been working              | 2.64 | SWA/M        |

Composite Mean: 2.63 SWA/M

Source: Koopmans, et.al (2011).

In terms of counterproductive behaviour, the data displays that as a whole, the counterproductive behaviour of employees achieves a composite mean rating of 2.63 which is translated as “somewhat agree or moderate”. This suggests that employees moderately agree that a certain level of counterproductive behaviour does exist in the institution. Even when the indicators are taken singly, the majority of the items are rated within the mean range of "somewhat agree or moderate”. Specifically, employees moderately agree that they complained about unimportant matters at work, spoke with their colleagues about the negative aspects of their work, did less than expected, get off from a work task easily and sometimes did nothing while they should have been working. However, they disagree that they made problems greater than they were at work, focused on negative aspects of work situation, and spoke with people from outside the organization about the negative aspect of their work.

Table 8: Summary table- Individual Work Performance

| Indicators                          | Mean | Descriptions |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| Task Performance                    | 3.76 | A/H          |
| Contextual performance              | 3.70 | A/H          |
| Counterproductive behaviour         | 2.73 | SWA/M        |
| Overall Mean                        | 3.39 | SWA/M        |

Source: IBM SPSS

Based on the data in the summary table, it reveals that the overall mean rating of individual work performance attained an overall mean rating of 3.39 which is equivalent to “somewhat agree or moderately agree”. This concludes that individual work performance of employees is not very high or high and it is also not very low or low but is to a moderate extent. But taking them singly, the data demonstrates that employees’ task and contextual performance are high and moderate counterproductive behaviour.

Problem 3: Is there a relationship between organizational politics and individual work performance?

Table 10: Correlation between organizational Politics and Individual work performance

| Organizational politics                  | Individual work performance | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) | Task Performance | Contextual Performance | Counterproductive Performance |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Existence of dominant group of individuals |                            | .132                | .106           | .120            | .557**                 | .000                         |
| Organizational Reward Practices         |                            | .557**              | .000           | .492**          | .089                   | .280                         |
| Political Behavior in terms of Blaming Others |                          | -.024               | .767           | -.072           | .651**                 | .000                         |
| Political Behavior in terms of Impression Management |                | .415**              | .383           | .390**          | .427**                 | .000                         |

N: 150

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

Source: IBM SPSS
Pearson correlation analysis was undertaken to assess the linear relationship between organizational politics in terms of the existence of a dominant group of individuals, organizational reward practices and political behaviour and individual work performance in terms of task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive performance.

Pearson correlation analysis suggests that there was a positive correlation between the organizational politics in terms of the existence of a dominant group of individuals and counterproductive performance, \( r = .523, p = .000 \), which suggests a moderate linear relationship between these two variables. This further implies that counterproductive performance varies directly with the existence of a dominant group of individuals, that is, performance increases with the increase in organizational politics specifically in terms of the existence of a dominant group of individuals.

Similar correlation analysis likewise revealed that there was a positive correlation between organizational politics along with organizational reward practices and individual work performance particularly task performance, \( r = .557**, p = .000 \); and contextual performance, \( r = .492**, p = .000 \). The findings suggest that positive moderate linear relationships exist between said variables, implying that organizational politics along organizational reward practices varies directly with the task as well as contextual performance.

Further, the correlation coefficients obtained from the analysis showed a statistically significant positive correlation between organizational politics in terms of political behaviour in terms of blaming others and counterproductive performance, \( r = .65**, p = .000 \). The finding suggests a positive strong relationship between the said variables denoting that one varies with the other.

Lastly, the analysis showed that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between organizational politics along with political behaviour in terms of impression management and individual work performance in terms of all three aspects, namely task performance, \( r = .415**, p = .000 \), contextual performance, \( r = .390**, p = .000 \), and counterproductive performance, \( r = .427**, p = .000 \).

The findings imply a moderate linear relationship between the said variables which denote that variation in organizational politics related to political behaviour, particularly, impression management performance can be associated with variation in individual work performance.

### Table 11: Summary Table for Overall Correlation

| OrgPol | Perf   |
|--------|--------|
| Pearson Correlation | .605** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| N      | 150    |
|        | 150    |

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

Based on the summary table of correlation, it shows that overall, the Pearson correlation indicates that there is a significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed) between organizational politics and individual work performance. This suggests that organizational politics is a significant predictor of individual work performance.

### Result and Discussion

Organizational performance and success cannot be separated from the individual work performance of employees. Therefore, the management must focus on finding ways how to enhance employees' performance. Enhancing employees' work performance does not have a single solution. Many organizational and individual factors influence or motivate employees to work. Money or salary is only one of those many factors that affect the work of employees. Increasing salary and benefits do not solve the problem and therefore, the management must look into different factors.

The finding of the current study indicates that one of the factors that management must look into is the work environment, particularly organizational politics. The study found that organizational politics and individual work performance are correlated. It just means that organizational politics is a significant predictor for individual work performance. Thus, managing organizational politics to a healthy level may help individual work performance. Though many scholars have discovered the negative effect of organizational politics, the current study indicates that organizational politics is not necessarily negative or is not inherently negative (Cacciattolo, 2015). Organizational politics can be positive and can be negative (Othman, 2008: 44). The current study confirms such a finding. It suggests that certain levels or a moderate level of organizational politics can be positive as well. The current findings also support the previous findings of Gotsis and Kortezi (2010, 2011) and Soares (2018).

### Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the effect of organizational politics on the individual work performance of employees. The study found that there is a moderate level of organizational politics in the institution and overall individual work performance was also moderate, though some dimensions were high.
The Pearson correlation analysis indicates that there is a correlation between organizational politics and individual work performance. A moderate level of organizational politics affects positively individual work performance. Organizational politics is a significant predictor of individual work performance and therefore the hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

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