



IS ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS DEVASTATING FOR FAVOURABLE EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES?

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship of employees' perceptions of organizational politics and employee outcomes (turnover intentions, employee engagement, job satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviours) in an important yet neglected service sector-the higher education institutes. For the purpose of this study, data were collected from 678 faculty members working in the higher education institutes (HEIs) through self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation and regression analysis were applied for data analysis. Results revealed that POP was negatively related with job satisfaction, employee engagement whereas it was positively related with employee turnover intentions and counterproductive work behaviours. Further, policy makers are advised to design and implement clear policies and procedures to reduce the influence of politics in order to enhance the performance of faculty members. Results and implications of the study are discussed in the end.

KEYWORDS: Perceived organizational politics, Higher education, Employee outcomes, Organizational identification, Service sector

I. INTRODUCTION:

In current rapidly evolving geo-economic climate, competency and efficiency of diverse workforce are the most critical workforce characteristics for the organizations across the globe. The retention of competent and efficient employees is a matter of immense importance for organizations worldwide in the era of high competition. Thus, it is to be said that not only retaining but engaging workforce productively is pertinent for business success and long-term survival. Employees who are highly engaged are found to have positive influence on the favourable outcomes whereby they contribute to overall organizational outcome which is coveted by the businesses for the attainment of its goals (Xiong and Wen, 2020; Arciuli, Emerson, and Llewellyn, 2019; Al-Dalahmeh, Khalaf, and Obeidat, 2018; Tuna, Ghazzawi, Yesiltas, Tuna and Arslan, 2016).

Organizational politics can be illustrated as a chain of actions that are self-centered, intentional to malign others, and contrastive to the organizational goals (Russo, Miraglia, and Borgogni, 2017). Organizational politics comprises of activities that are deployed in the service of self-interest at the expense of other people and/ or organization (Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu, 2018). The unfavourable and harmful attributes of organizational politics have unfavourable impact on the employee outcomes such as anxiety, employee turnover intention (ETO), job satisfaction (JS), counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) and organizational commitment (Iqbal and Tahir, 2020; Priesemuth and Bigelow, 2019; Frimer and Skitka, 2018).

Perceived organizational politics (POP) may be taken as an obstructive factor that has a potential to disrupt employees' constructive organizational behaviour, although, the variable of POP has been ignored in the past but the last decade has seen POP literature growing in terms of academic importance (Choi, Johnson, Moon, and Oah, 2018; Chen, Li, Xia, and He, 2017). Many theoretical contexts such as transactional theory, conservation of resources theory, effort-reward imbalance theory, appraisal theory, person-environment fit theory, and demands-control theory have been put forth in a quest to study POP and its likely impact on the employee outcomes (e.g. Cendales and Gomez, 2019; Kinman, 2019; Zhou, Wang and Vancouver, 2019; Brough, Drummond and Biggs, 2018; Young, Glerum, Wang and Joseph, 2018; Goldfarb and Ben-Zur, 2017; Jamieson, 2017).

Employees are core assets of an organization; this paradigm calls for considerable focus in that if an organization wants to excel then it should consider employees as an asset rather than cost or liability (Sheng, Wang, Hong, Zhu, and Zhang, 2019). This issue becomes even more serious for service providing companies like higher education institutions where highly qualified academic staff plays a pivotal role in delivering quality education (Kinman and Johnson, 2019). Furthermore, the critical role of EE and JS in achieving the organizational goals through meeting the performance expectation standards by the employees which has to be incorporated for achieving the broad range of goals of an organization (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). In doing so, organizations should try to emphasize more on employee related outcomes, such as, how to reduce employee turnover intention (ETO), how to make employees more productive and in term of creativity and innovation. Role of organizations is important in this regard because of their ability to provide adequate resources and developing an alignment between personal and organizational goals.

Therefore, the rationale of this study is to address the missing link between POP and the employee outcomes (i.e. employee engagement, job satisfaction, turnover intention and counterproductive work behaviours) in the context of higher education institutions (HEIs) of Pakistan.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the rapidly evolving geo-economic climate, it comes as no surprise that the paradigm of JS has been studied and investigated most comprehensively which is evidenced by the extensive literature available (Currivan, 1999; Lester, 1987). More specifically, in the research area of organizational behaviour, the concept of JS has been explored from diverse perspectives in order to broaden existing literature in a quest to bring satisfaction to global workforce to ensure efficient productivity (Lee, et al., 2009). From the lens of organizational psychology, the variable of JS is subject to multiple factors pertaining to the interactions between employees and their workplaces. Hence, when an employee observes difference between his inputs based reward and reward of other employees based on the same input then she/ he becomes dissatisfied and disenfranchised from the organization (Amo and Cichocki, 2019; Anthony, Gow, Hinschen and Warren, 2008). It has been also unveiled in the recent research that, in the absence of paternalistic and servant leadership, employees are most likely to have lower level of JS and commitment owing to the POP (Khuwaja, Ahmed, Abid, and Adeel, 2020). Research findings of Park and Lee (2020) also highlighted that, POP has a negative influence on the individual outcomes i.e. JS and organizational commitment.

In this age of fast paced and highly intense organizational culture, numerous employee outcomes may be attached to the perception of politics within the organizations; however, originally suggested three principal employee outcomes still remain to be increased the level of job anxiety, lower level of JS, and a withdrawal behaviour at the workplace – ETO (Ferris, et al., 1989).

Theories pertaining to the organizational behaviour inform that the perceptions of the workplace politics affect employees' outlook, attitudes, and behaviours (Folger et al., 2005). Taking into consideration normative treatment theory, if employees begin to perceive that the organization is an embittered mass of silent hostilities then that perception will probably translate in decreased JS and increased job anxiety. In the same vein, if there are no perceptions of organizational politics then the employees will probably exhibit JS and enhanced job performance (Bicchieri, Dimant and Sonderegger, 2019; Anderson, et al., 2018).

As a matter of fact, it has been proven time and again that the POP has the far reaching implications in terms of employee outcomes within the organizational framework (Glavas, 2016). Therefore, there is a predominant need to examine the employee outcomes through the lens of POP in order to further the understanding of organizational behaviour.

It has been established that the employees' turnover intentions are the results of various factors, for instance, communications, organizational support, motivation, promotion, and rewards (Hu, et al., 2018; Brown and Rayn, 2003). Therefore, the perceived atmosphere of organizational politics instigates demotivation and demoralization in an employee's overall attitude and behaviour (Eldor, 2017). Haider, Fatima and de Pablos-Heredero (2020) investigated the relationship between perception of politics and ETO alongside the role of political skills and job anxiety. The results highlighted that, in the presence of

POP, employees face higher levels of job anxiety which ultimately lead towards turnover intentions. The impact of POP on turnover intention was significant in the presence of job anxiety whereas political skills acted as moderator in this relationship (Haider et al., 2020). Even in case of the faculty serving in the higher education, the intention to leave the employer organization depends in a great deal on the JS and working environment. When faculty perceives that, there is injustice in terms of resource allocation, it results in a decline in their JS and as a result they are more likely to leave the organization upon finding a better job opportunity (Alemu and Pykhtina, 2020).

The theory of reactions to organizational politics promulgates that the POP may result in negative consequences of job dissatisfaction, neglect, and intention to quit due to intense power struggle within an organization (Vigoda, 2000; Chachere, et al., 1994; Leck and Suanders, 1992). Equity theory explains how the existence of politics or the perception of fairness about organization influences the employees' behaviours (Adams and Jacobsen, 1964). In an organization, where employees feel that they are not treated likewise they possibly shows their displeasure through counterproductive workplace related behaviours. Unnecessary politicization of the workplace restricts employees from giving feedback and inputs about possible job improvements consequently limiting their personal growth and career advancement (De Clercq, et al., 2019; Grimland, Vigoda Gadot and Baruch, 2012; Santamaría, et al., 2005); thus, it is no surprise that latest CWB theories state that employees who are not treated with justice are found more engaged in CWB (Hoffner, Fujioka, Cohen and Seate, 2017). In conclusion, based upon the above discussion on the prepositions of the theories, following hypotheses have been developed for empirical investigation:

Employees who face discrimination may become dissatisfied with their jobs, as well as organization may suffer with the serious threats of CWBs. Therefore, based upon above discussion, following hypotheses have been developed for empirical investigation:

- H1: Perceived organizational politics has positive influence on employee turnover intentions.**
- H2: Perceived organizational politics has negative influence on employee engagement.**
- H3: Perceived organizational politics has negative influence on job satisfaction.**
- H4: Perceived organizational politics has positive influence on counterproductive work behaviours.**

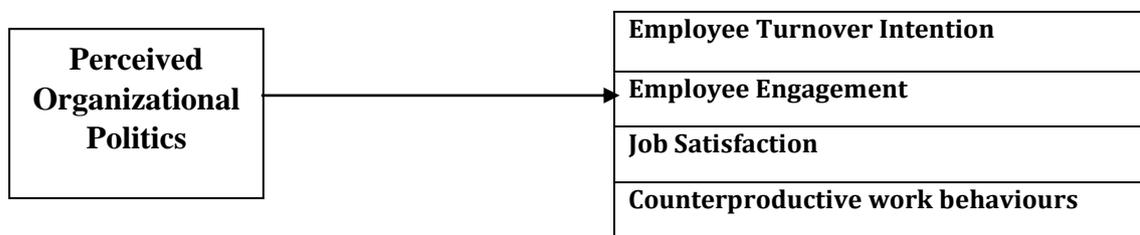


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the study

III. METHODS

Sample and Subjects

The participants selected for the purpose of this study were the faculty members providing their services in higher education institutes (HEIs). In this quantitative research study, 780 faculty members were contacted and finally data obtained from 678 full time faculty members of these HEIs were used in this study. According to Kothari (2004, p.62, 63), stratified sampling technique is used when sample needs to be drawn from two groups that are not homogenous. So, this technique was used to get a demonstrative sample. For this purpose, a total of 204 HEIs recognized by HEC Pakistan were divided into public (n=123) and private sector (n=81) strata. In order to have an appropriate sampling size, proportional allocation of sampling was applied from each stratum. Proportional allocation method was used to select universities from each stratum through random sampling. In this way, the public universities stratum comprised of 60% of HEI in Lahore and private universities accounted for 40% in Lahore. A self-administered survey was used to collect data from targeted faculty members. Almost 64% (435) respondents were from public sector and 34% (231) belonged to private sector HEIs. The respondents were requested to share their demographical characteristics, which included their gender, age,

designation, qualification and tenure with their current employer. Majority of the respondents were female (n=381). With reference to their qualification, majority of the respondents (466) holds MS/ Mphil degree. The detailed demographic description of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Measures

In order to collect data for the variables used in this study, following, already validated from previous studies, scales were used.

Perceived Organizational Politics: A 12-item scale of perceived organizational politics (POP) by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) was used to gauge employees' perceptions of politics. The responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Employee Turnover Intentions: For measuring ETO, a 3-item scale was used developed by Landau and Hammer (1986). The scale ranged from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (exactly true).

Employee Engagement: Engagement level of the participating employees was measured by an 11-item scale developed by Saks (2006). The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction of the employees was measured by using a 4-item scale developed by Jun et al., (2005). The scale ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Counterproductive Work Behaviours: An 11-item scale of counterproductive work behaviours was used developed by Luqman et al., (2015). The items comprises of five organizational deviance items and six interpersonal deviance items. Selected items from each dimension were among those which had maximum reported occurrence in Fox and Spector's (1999) work. Response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Control Variables

Witt et al., (2000) suggested that the effects of demographic variables like age, gender, tenure in organization and education are required to be controlled in order to get unbiased results. Therefore, current study used these variables (age, gender, tenure in organization and qualification) as control variable in this study to control their effects while examining the impact of independent variable(s) on dependent variable(s).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The detailed demographics of the participants of current study are presented in Table 1. Among the participated approached, 6.6% (45) employees were Professors, while 48.1% (326) were Lecturers. Likewise, 29.9 % (203) were Assistant Professors and 6.9 % (47) mentioned them as Associate Professors. Further, participants were asked to mention their age where 34 years was the average age for the participants of the study. Majority of the participants were female i.e. 56.2 % (381) whereas 43.8% (297) were male.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Experience (In Years)	
Gender			1-5 years	343 50.6
Male	297	43.8	6-10 years	165 24.3
Female	381	56.2	11-15 years	108 15.9
Age group (Years)			16-20 years	26 3.8
22-27 Years	155	22.9	20 years or above	36 5.3
28-33 Years	175	25.8	Stay in Current Organization	
29-34 Years	216	31.9	1-4years	427 63.0
35-40 Years	67	9.9	5-8years	148 21.8

41 Years or above	65	9.6	9-12years	54	8.0
Designation			13-16years	29	4.3
Professor	45	6.6	17 years or above	20	2.9
Associate Professor	47	6.9	Type of Institute		
Assistant Professor	203	29.9	Public	435	64.2
Lecturer	326	48.1	Private	231	34.0
Other	51	7.5	Other	12	1.8
Qualification					
Masters	89	13.1			
MPhil/MS	466	68.7			
PhD	117	17.3			
Post Doc	6	.9			

Reliability, correlation and regression analysis were conducted with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-22) to analyze data. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of already developed measures used in this study. The reliability values are presented in Table 2. Further, Pearsons correlation was used for the assessment of the inter-relationships between the variables of the study. The value of correlation coefficient gives a clear picture of the association between the variables, correlation values are represented in Table 2. Correlation results showed a significant correlation between POP and EE ($r = .54, p < .001$); POP and ETO ($r = .59, p < .001$); POP and JS ($r = .56, p < .001$) and POP and CWB ($r = .64, p < .001$). All these correlation values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Scores and Correlation Analysis

Sr. #	Variab les	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Gender	----	----									
2	Age	2.56	1.21	- 0.23**								
3.	Qual	----	----	0.08	0.23* *							
4.	Tenure	1.62	1.01	-0.00	0.50* *	0.03						
5.	POP	3.74	.49	0.23**	-0.05	-0.04	0.04	(0.87)				
6.	CWB	4.12	.54	0.30**	- 0.11*	-0.01	0.01	0.64**	(0.84)			
7.	EE	4.34	.02	- 0.26**	0.14* *	0.02	-0.01	- 0.54**	-0.84**	(0.82)		
8.	JS	4.39	.02	- 0.30**	0.15* *	0.02*	-0.02	- 0.56**	-0.68**	0.73**	(0.77)	
9.	ETO	3.88	.66	0.29**	- 0.11*	-0.00	0.01	0.59**	0.70**	- 0.68**	0.73* *	(0.77)

Note. ** correlation is significant at .01; * correlation is significant at .05; reliabilities are given in parentheses.

Qual = Qualification; POP = Perceived Organizational Politics; CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviour; EE = Employee Engagement; JS = Job Satisfaction; ETO = Employee Turnover Intentions

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The regression analysis was used to examine the influence of the independent variable(s) on the dependent variable(s). In the case of this study, the regression analysis demonstrates the influence of

perceived organizational politics (IV) on organizational identification and on employee outcomes (DVs). The results of regression analysis for all the direct relationships are reported in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of Regression Analysis

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Paths</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C.R</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H1	POP-ETO	0.44	9.73	.00	Yes
H2	POP-EE	-0.10	-7.40	.00	Yes
H3	POP-JS	-0.20	-8.34	.00	Yes
H4	POP-CWB	0.40	12.15	.00	Yes

Note: POP= Perceived Organizational Politics, JS= Job Satisfaction, ETO= Employee Turnover Intention, EE= Employee Engagement, CWB= Counterproductive Work Behaviours

Regression results revealed a significant positive relationship between POP and ETO, CWB as depicted in H1, H4 ($\beta = 0.44, 0.40$ respectively, $p < 0.01$), therefore, H1 and H4 of the study are empirically accepted. The positive sign shows that if POP is increased in the organization, ETO and CWB would also increased and if POP is decreased, ETO and CWB will also decreased as shown in Table3. Whereas in the case of POP's relationship with EE and JS, as expected, significant negative relationships were found in the case of both the direct relationships ($\beta = -0.10, -0.20$ respectively, $p < 0.01$), these results reflected a significant negative association between the variables, consequently the hypotheses (H2, H3) are also accepted. However, the negative sign shows that POP has negative relationship with EE and JS which means that if POP is increased, EE and JS will be decreased and conversely, as shown in Table 3.

Discussion of the Results

The results of study supported the relationship proposed in H1 which depicts POP was found to have positive effect on the turnover intentions of the employees working in the HEIs of Pakistan. The findings of this relationship are in line with the research results of Abubakar and Abdullahi, (2017) who also validated that, a positive relationship exists between employee's POP and their intention to quit the organization which also leads to other negative organizational outcomes (Priesemuth and Bigelow, 2019; Frimer and Skitka, 2018).

The empirical results of data analysis also support H2 which indicates that, POP in the HEIs of Pakistan leads to a decline in employee's engagement which is very important and useful employee's outcome. The research findings are in line with that of the Eldor (2016) who is of the view that, a high rate of POP in an organization often make employees demotivated about their job and they are less inclined to engage (Wang, et al., 2019).

Third hypothesis based on the idea that, POP has negative effect on the JS. The results of data analysis also validate that, in case of POP prevalent in the HEIs of Pakistan, employees are not usually satisfied with their job. Our research findings support the research results of Kodisinghe (2010) and Harris and Boonthanom (2005) who are of the view that, employees tend to compare their benefits with those of colleagues and in case they experience less benefits, they get dissatisfied. Moreover, it can also state that, in case of POP employees feel discrimination which ultimately lead to negative employee's outcomes most significantly job dissatisfaction (Bodla and Danish, 2009; Sheng, et al., 2019). The empirical findings of our research study also support the inverse relationship between POP and JS of employees in HEIs of Pakistan.

The last hypothesis proposed the impact of POP on the CWB imply that, organizations where employees face political environment and face discrimination tend to exhibit CWB which reflects that, how important it is for the organizations to develop a work climate where justice prevails. The findings of current research study make contribution towards the equity theory which holds the assumption that employees who face discrimination may become dissatisfied with their jobs, as well as organization may suffer with the serious threats of CWB. Research study conducted by Kacmar et al., (2013) also revealed that, POP is negatively related to positive work-related behaviours such as promotability and helping others. The results of H4 are supported and thus it can be stated that, POP in the HEIs of Pakistan tend to have a positive effect on the CWB.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

The study at hand has attempted to fill the literature gap by expanding the literature around POP, OID and employee outcomes by utilizing the innovative instrumentation (JS, OT, CWB, etc.) via which the effect of POP on a broad spectrum of employee's attitudinal (ETO, JS and EE) and behavioural (CWB) outcomes has been thoroughly investigated. In doing so, mediating impact of OID has also been investigated for the relationship of POP with various employee outcomes, mentioned already. The findings highlighted the need to align the organizational goals with that of an employee is of paramount importance.

This study investigates the effect of POP on the employees' attitudes and behaviours in HEIs which indeed is the 1st of its kind in Pakistan's service sector due to the fact that previous studies concentrated upon other sectors. Therefore, the results of this study offer forward looking approach to the research community active in the field study of the education sector of Pakistan, advances the extant literature on the variable of POP and its effect on the employees' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes mainly in a diverse sector of HEIs.

Last, current study findings further reinforce the "social exchange theory" that defines the organizational concern and support for the stakeholders' comfort, creates a sense of reciprocity amongst the employees' which additionally inculcate positive outlooks and behaviours in the employees which they channelize in the direction of their organizational performances (Knippenberg and Hogg, 2018).

Practical Implications

The outcomes of this study offers a consolidated foundation to the policy and decision makers in the higher education system of Pakistan for their knowledge about the realization of the optimum potential of education institutes of Pakistan. The education institutes need to introduce improvements to their existing system of justice in order to eliminate the toxic variable of the POP so as to enhance employee attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Sheng, et al., 2019). In a nutshell, employees feel inclined to support organizations in an act of reciprocation when they are made to believe that their organizations stands to support them in all concerned areas of their well-being.

Consequently, in an interest to maintain brilliant human capital, education institutes should foster culture of accountability, justice, and merit in order to downgrade the element of organizational politics which has a real potential to deteriorate employee outcomes and impede overall organizational performance. In an attempt to optimally engage workforce, results of this research study point toward that JS and trust level of the workforce must be augmented as a way to gain the support of the employees as their negative attitudes and behaviours show capacity to bring decline to the organizational perform, reputation, and overall output. In this increasingly globalized world driven by technology, it is of utmost importance to introduce system of efficient engagement through performance based rewards and benefits to keep the golden employees motivated to remain with the organization.

The findings of this research study can be helpful for the leaders in the HEI's of Pakistan to understand the value of trust at workplace. Leaders can gain lesson from this research study to understand how important it is to develop an organizational culture of trust and reciprocity which will have positive impact on the employee's engagement. Also, the findings of this research provide guideline to the leaders to understand that politics prevails at different level in the organization and how they can gauge their own attitude and behaviour to handle POP among employees in the organization.

Conclusion

The findings of this research study have added some knowledge to the already existing body of literature in the POP and organization behaviour field. It has also extended the discussion on multiple theories that are social exchange theory, reaction to organizational politics theory and equity theory. Study results

revealed that employees' POP have direct positive influence on the ETO and CWB whereas direct negative influence on the JS, EE. Limitations and future directions are also discussed accordingly.

In today's contemporary organizations are characterized by increased competitiveness and diversity, organizational politics has become unavoidable phenomenon. There has been abundance of research which has emphasized on the two facets of organizational politics i.e. positive and negative sides. Due to the never-ending debate among researcher on POP in terms of its positive or negative outcomes, it has become a main subject of scientific inquiry and social observation from the last decade. Considering the research gap identified by past research in the negative direction of the POP, the current research study meant to investigate the influence of POP on various employee outcomes.

The study examined the relationship between perceived organizational politics and various employee outcomes (turnover intention, employee engagement, job satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviours) in the presence of organizational identification as mediator. The aim behind this research was to explore that how perceived organizational politics effect employee outcomes that result in below par performance by the employees and badly affects the consequent organizational performance. Research results demonstrated a significant destructive impact of POP on ETO, EE, JS, CWB in a very important service industry i.e. the higher education institutions (HEIs) operating in Pakistan. The data collected from the faculty members providing their services at different universities of Lahore, Pakistan, were analyzed statistically.

Limitations and Future Directions:

There were some limitations of this study, as all research studies have, taken into account when the results are interpreted. The use of present methodology posed limitation to this research study in that the data collection has been done at two point of time (i.e. predictive research design) as it makes the calculation of path of causality troublesome. As a result of that, the distinction in the answers of the participants over the period of time has been observed, thus, the findings of the study cannot be taken as absolute definite.

In addition to the limitations posed by the constraints of methodology, the socio-cultural context of Pakistan was not given much importance in the course of this study. In the light of aforementioned limitations, it is imperative to make clear that the developed results are only restricted to the HEIs of Pakistan, hence, may not valid for application in other sectors or organizations and in other cultural contexts.

Contrary, this research is first of its kind in that it examined an important yet understudied paradigm from the lens of higher education. Conversely, it is pertinent to suggest propositions for the future research undertakings.

- From the psychosomatic point of view, research must be conducted into the role of the variable of personality in the employee outcomes.
- From the managerial point of view, research must be conducted into the relationships between authentic leadership, behavioural integrity, and employee outcomes.
- From the academic point of view, research must be conducted into the component of strategic knowledge management and its impact on the academic organizational performance.

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