



## IS ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS DESTROYING ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION? USING THE LENS OF TRSUT AS MODERATOR

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**ABSTRACT-** In the era of competition where world become a global village and the survival of the fittest is possible only, an important concept perception of organizational politics (POP) has gained prominence and therefore attracted organizational studies researchers and practitioners. In spite of scarce research on the topic of POP, there is a little research on the effect of POP on employee outcomes especially in developing countries. In order to test the hypotheses, primary data was collected from 780 faculty members of higher education institutions (HEIs) with a response rate of 87% (678). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships of the study. The key findings of the study indicated that POP has a significant impact on employee outcomes including employee turnover intention, job satisfaction, employee engagement and counterproductive work behaviors. Study at hand contributes to the existing body of knowledge around the subject POP by investigating the impact of employees' perception of organizational politics on their attitudes and behaviors in their workplace. Particularly, to the best of researcher's knowledge, a few organizational research studies have been conducted in the field of higher education investigating such relationship. The research implications clearly depict that it is useful for academia, industry practitioners and technical experts.

**KEYWORDS:** Perceived organizational politics, Higher education, Counterproductive work behaviors, Job satisfaction, Employee turnover intention, Employee outcomes, Employee engagement, Service sector

### I. INTRODUCTION:

Higher Education Institutes (HEI) plays key role in nations building and highly qualified academicians are foundation stones for the sustainability and progress of any HEI. Pakistan is a developing country and from last two decades Pakistan government is heavily investing in physical and human resources infrastructure of HEIs.

To reap the maximum benefit of this investment, there is a dire need to improve the working environment for academicians and researchers in HEIs. As Asrar-ul-Haq, Ali, Anwar, Iqbal, Suleman and Haris-ul-Mahasbi, M (2019) explained how internal politics can impact employee outcomes. Their study very clearly described the need to reduce politics from HEI in order to enhance their performance by keeping employees satisfied and retained for long-term in their universities. They explained that in Pakistan especially in public sector educational institutes the rules are quite flexible that allow individuals to temper these rules in their self-interest and personal benefits. Educational sector of Pakistan is very much disposed to politics due to intensive competition. Particularly in universities, where people come from diversified background, there is likelihood of politics, as every employee wants to satisfy personal needs or accomplish desired aims without merit.

Employees working in different universities often suffer with politics in different situations that directly affects the performance of employees. In such cases, employee think of switching the organization that left organization suffering from losing a golden employee of an organization. In service sector an important segment is education. Very recently, a study conducted by Asrar ul haq et al., (2019) in Pakistan suggested in key findings of their study that there is a dire need to investigate organizational politics and its influence on subsequent employee outcomes in HEIs of Pakistan if organizations want to achieve better employee related outcomes.

These facts make it obvious that if this situation remains like this, organizations can never be able to perform at their utmost. Thus, based upon above discussion and the gaps highlighted in the literature, current study aims to analyze the impact of perceived organizational politics (POP) on organizational

Identification in HEIs of Pakistan. It also evaluates the role of trust as moderator between the relationship of perceived organizational politics and organizational identification in HEIs of Pakistan.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 Perceived Organizational Politics and Organizational Identification

Literature on the subject of perceived organizational politics has shown that in a work setting, the employees who are identified by their work or their job roles, they are normally less affected by the POP. On the other hand, employees, for whom the job identification does not exist, as such, they are more likely the victims of POP (e.g. Emine, 2014; Witt, Patti and Farmer, 2002).

Organizational politics has negative impact on organizational identification (Wagner, U., Lampen and Syllwasschy, 1986; Skevington, 1981; Lemaine, Kastersztein and Personnaz, 1978). Witt et al. (2002) conducted a study on the relationship between POP and OID and the results suggested that the person's work identity might also affect how he/ she responds towards the organizational politics in an organization. They also elaborated that by applying social identity theory at workplace (e.g., Hogg and Terry, 2000; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Ashforth and Mael, 1989), they believe that work identity effects the relationship between politics perceptions and work outcomes. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been framed.

***H1: Perceived organizational politics is negatively related with organizational identification.***

### 2.2 Trust (Organizational and Supervisor) as Moderator

Aggarwal and Singh, (2016) found that organizational trust is an important variable which helps to determine how employees perceive about the organization. Barter et al. (2006) reported that if the employees trust the organization for the acceptance of their work, they believe that organizational politics cannot damage their identification in the organization, thus, they stay motivated.

Organizational trust (OT) is a powerful variable which directly and indirectly influences the organizational identification. Erturk, (2010) found that perception based on trust on supervisor indirectly effects organizational identification. Poon, (2006) also provided that employees who trust their supervisor, organizational politics does not hinder their identification in the work while others believe that when their supervisor is not trust worthy and they also believe that organizational politics is there in the organization, they do not help co-workers on the work due to fear and lack of recognition of their efforts.

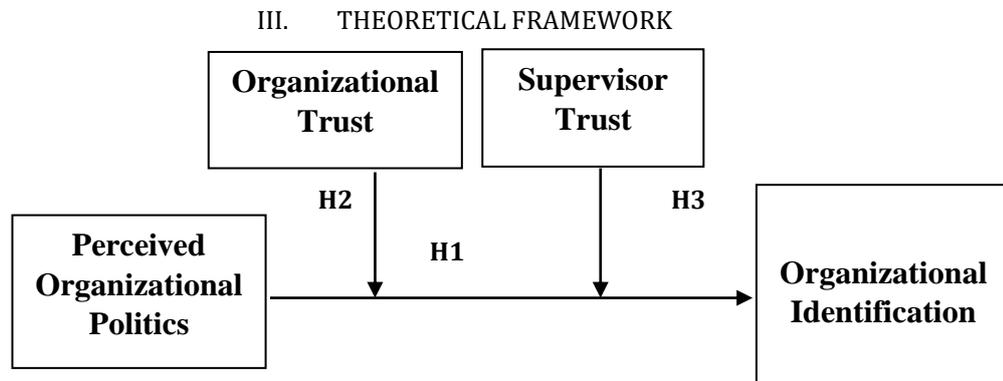
Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud (2010) discussed the study of Cropanzano, et al. (2003) that highlighted the social exchange theory as a potential justification for the justice and fairness within the organizations, thus indicating the usefulness of social exchange variables like trust, social support and helping behaviours in understanding the organizational politics. Therefore, there is a probability that employees use to view the work sphere as least political and more; fair in which strong trust ties are there which support their interests and ambitions. Individuals with gathered social ties may feel more confident that they have a protection against the autocracy or domination of influential employees who might be found more involved into the organizational politics and the power games. Similarly, it can also play a leading role towards the change in job attitudes and work outcomes.

From the view point of social exchange theory (Lawler, 2001; Emerson, 1976), trust is a prerequisite for social exchange (Kessler and Stafford, 2008). Bao and Zhang (2016) explored trust as an ancestor for organizational identification (OID). Empirical researches report that trust in supervisor (Tan and Tan, 2000; Mael and Ashforth, 1992) and trust in organization (Aryee, Budhwar and Chen, 2002; Mael and Ashforth, 1992) are positively related to organizational Identification, either directly or indirectly (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

From the best of researcher's knowledge, no past study presented the relationship of trust and organizational identification. On the basis of these facts and discussion, current study proposes the following hypotheses:

***H2: Organizational trust moderates the relationship of perceived organizational politics and organizational identification.***

**H3: Supervisor trust moderates the relationship of perceived organizational politics and organizational identification.**



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

#### IV. METHODS

##### 4.1 Sample and Subjects:

This is a cross-sectional research where data was collected from the respondents for single point in time. This is the explanatory research because relationships are based on cause and effect. For this purpose, self-administered questionnaires were used as an instrument for data collection (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002). Current study undergo research by choosing the faculty members providing their services to higher educational institutes (HEIs) both private and public universities operating in Lahore enlisted by Higher Education Commission, Pakistan (HEC) as population. The participants selected for the purpose of this study were the faculty members providing their services in higher education institutes (HEIs) registered under HEC, Pakistan. 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.

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.

##### 4.2 Measures

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

a. Perception of Organizational Politics: Following 12-item scale of perceived organizational politics by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) which was also used in Kacmar and Carlson's study (1997) and Luqman et al. (2015) and reported the reliability of .87 was used to gauge employees' perceptions of politics. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

b. Organizational Identification: A five-item scale developed by Smidts et al., (2001) will be used to measure employees' organizational identity. The scale was developed based upon the concept of social

identity (Tajfel, 1978) with a reliability score of 0.84. It was further validated by Walumbwa et al., (2011) with the consistent reliability of 0.84. The scale ranged from 1(never) to 5 (always).

c. Supervisor Trust: The scale designed by Podsakoff et al., (1990) with a reliability score of 0.96 was be used to gauge supervisor trust. Reliability is further reported as 0.90 in another study of Podsakoff et al. (1996). The scale ranged from 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

d. Organizational Trust: Huff and Kelly’s (2002) 4-items scale was used to measure trust in organization with a reliability score of 0.79. Therefore four-item trust in organization measure focuses on employee perceived trust in their relationship with their employing organization. The scale ranged from 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 4.3 Control Variables

In order to test the proposed model of this study, multiple regression analysis was used for regressing the variables. These variables are POP, OID, Trust. According to Witt et al., (2000), 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 research used age, gender, tenure in organization and qualification as control variables.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 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)	
<b>Gender</b>			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
<b>Age group (Years)</b>			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	<b>Stay in Current Organization</b>	
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
<b>Designation</b>			13-16years	29 4.3
Professor	45	6.6	17 years or above	20 2.9
Associate Professor	47	6.9	<b>Type of Institute</b>	
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
<b>Qualification</b>				
Masters	89	13.1		
MPhil/MS	466	68.7		
PhD	117	17.3		

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, Pearson 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 OID ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ); POP and OT ( $r = -0.16$ ); POP and TS ( $r = -0.07$ ).

**Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations and Pearson's Correlation**

Sr. No.	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Gender	----	----	1							
2	Age	3.00	1.21	-0.23**	1						
3.	Qual	----	----	0.08	0.23**	1					
4.	Stay_Org	1.62	1.01	-0.00	0.50**	0.03	1				
5.	OID	3.63	.43	-0.27**	0.07	-0.02	-0.03	1			
6.	POP	3.74	.49	0.23**	-0.05	-0.04	0.04	-0.50**	1		
7.	OT	3.43	.68	-0.10*	0.06	-0.06	0.04	0.07*	-0.02	1	
8.	TS	3.38	.58	-0.07	0.08	0.03	0.05	0.05	-0.07	0.45**	1

Note: POP= Perceived Organizational Politics, OID= Organizational Identification, OT= Organizational Trust, TS= Trust in Supervisor

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

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

N=678

## 5.2 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**

Hypotheses	Paths	B	C.R	P	Supported
H1	POP-ETO	0.44	9.73	.00	Yes
H2	POP*OT-OID	.042	6.350	.00	Yes
H3	POP*TS-OID	.067	9.248	.00	Yes

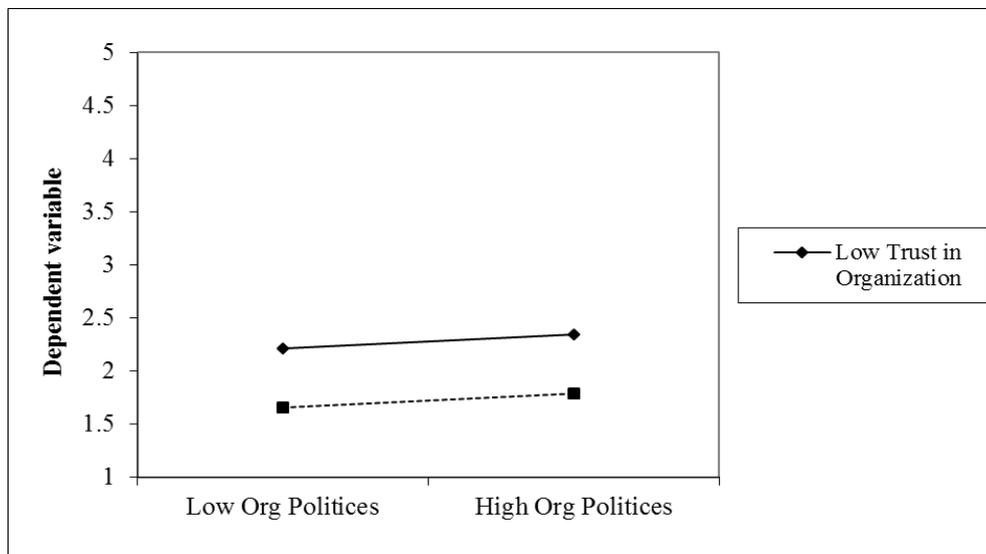
Note: POP= Perceived Organizational Politics, OID= Organizational Identification, TS=Trust in Supervisor, OT= Trust in organization

Regression results revealed that hypothesis 1 of the study states a negative relationship between POP and OID ( $\beta = -0.42, p < 0.01$ ), i.e. the relationship is significant and the variables are negatively associated with each other. It means that with one variable moving up will cause an opposite move in the other variable. These results provided empirical support for the H1.

### 5.3 Moderation Analysis (POP-Trust- OID)

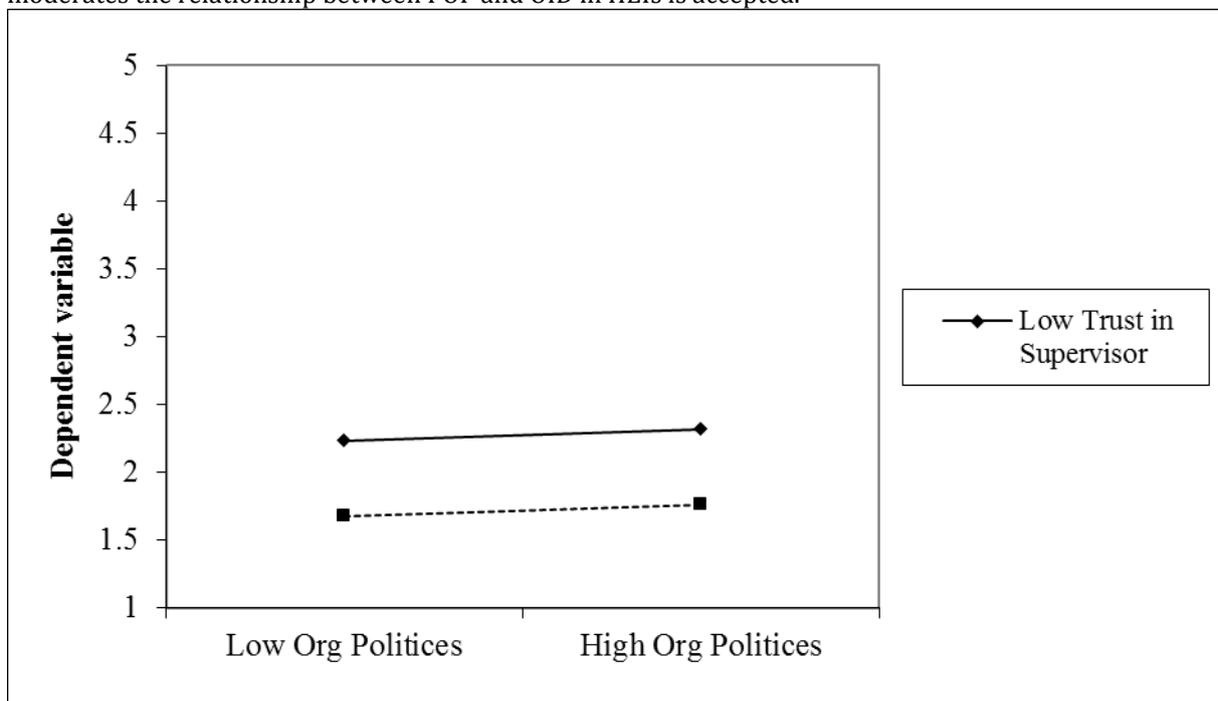
The OT is used as the moderating variable between POP and OID. Modgraph and regression analysis is used to analyze the moderation among variables. The calculated regression weight of the interaction terms reflects the existence of moderation among POP\*OT-OID which is shown in Table 3 as  $p < 0.01$ .

Output of Modgraph is shown in Figure 2 which further validates that in the presence of POP there is a weaker bond between OT and employees' sense of OID in HEIs. It can also be said that OT (moderator) weakens the relationship between POP and OID in HEIs. Therefore, H5 of the study is accepted.



**Figure 2: ModGraph Representation- Moderator (Trust in Organization)**

The TS is used as the moderating variable between POP and OID. The moderated effect was analyzed through the interaction term of TS and POP. Modgraph and regression analysis are used to analyze the moderation effects of OID. The calculated regression weight of the interaction terms reflects the existence of moderation among POP\*TS-OID which is shown in Table 3 as  $p < 0.01$ . Output of Modgraph is shown in Figure 3 which further validates that if there is less POP then there is a stronger bond between TS and employees that helps in developing strong sense of OID in HEIs. It can also be said the TS (moderator) weakens the relationship between POP and OID in HEIs. Therefore, the hypothesis claimed that TS moderates the relationship between POP and OID in HEIs is accepted.



**Figure 3: ModGraph Representation- Moderator (Trust in Supervisor)**

## 5.4 Discussion of the Results

Hypothesis H1 has been developed to investigate the direct relationship between POP and OID. In this research study, it was aimed to examine if POP in the HEIs of Pakistan tend to negatively affect the OID of employees. It has been argued that, when employees perceive that politics prevails in the organization, they are deprived of OID. The results of data analysis also revealed that, H1 is supported and a negative relationship exists between POP and OID. Here, it is interesting to discuss the research study of Witt et al., (2002) who investigated the relationship between POP and OID, and they also advocated that, the identity of employees in the workplace could also affect their attitude or behavior towards politics in the organization. Moreover, they signified the relevance of social identity theory which also explains role of job identity on the relationship between POP and work-related outcomes. Thus, our research findings also validate the results of Witt et al., (2002) and it was also confirmed that a negative association exists amongst POP and OID. It is worth mentioning that, some research studies argued that employees who tend to have job identity i.e. they like to be identified by their job roles in their respective organization pay less attention to the politics in organization. Thus, employees who do not like to be identified by their job roles in organization are mostly the victims of politics (Emine, 2014). Discussion on the results of the study also confirms the postulation of the theories.

The purpose of *H2* was to investigate if OT moderates the relationship of POP and OID. The empirical results of this study support this hypothesis which is evident from the moderation results presented in previous chapter. Elaborating further, it can be stated that, OT is an important predictor of OID and it can also facilitate to mitigate the negative influence of POP in the HEIs of Pakistan. Current research findings also extend the implications of social exchange theory (SET) towards the literature available in the field of trust as SET explains the fairness and justice procedure in organization and highlights the cruciality of social exchange variables i.e. trust, social support and helping behaviors in understanding the organizational politics (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Vigoda Gadot and Talmud, 2010). Individuals surrounded by the social ties may sense more ease in a way that they have a security against the autocracy or cliques of influential employees who might be found to be more actively involved into the organizational politics and the power games (Lawler, 2001; Emerson, 1976). Therefore, in the presence of OT, the POP from employee's context is less making employees believe that they work in a fair workplace and they tend to exhibit positive job-related outcomes.

The sixth hypothesis i.e. *H3* intends to explore the moderating role of supervisor's trust amongst POP and OID. The results of data analysis support H3 and thus it can be stated that, the supervisor's trust in HEIs of Pakistan tends to moderate the relationship between POP and OID. Current research findings also relate to that of Erturk, (2010) and Wei, et al., (2003) who are of the view that, OID is indirectly influenced by perception based on trust on supervisor. Moreover, Poon (2006) also found that employees who trust their supervisor, organizational politics does not hinder their identification in the work while others believe that when their supervisor is not trust worthy and they also believe that organizational politics is there in the organization, they do not help co-workers on the work due to fear and lack of recognition of their efforts. The findings of this research validate and confirms the preposition of the Discussion on the results of the study confirms the postulation of the theory.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

### 6.1 Theoretical Implications

First of all the study at hand has attempted to fill the literature gap by expanding the literature available by utilizing the innovative instrumentation (OID, TS and OT) via which the effect of POP on the entire spectrum of employee's attitudinal (OID) outcome has been thoroughly investigated.

Second, this study investigates the effect of POP on the employees' approaches and behaviors in HEIs which indeed is the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 outcome mainly in a diverse sector of HEIs.

## 6.2 Practical Implications

This research study was meant to investigate the influence of employees' perceptions of political environment of the organization on OID and moderation effect of organizational and supervisor trust. The study at hand significantly streams fresh knowledge to the pertinent literature and theories together with the range of recommendations for the ministry of education, educational policy boards, organizations, and various other practitioners in the field of academia.

The developed outline 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.

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 attitudinal outcome and impede overall organizational performance.

## 6.3 Conclusion

In today's contemporary organizations characterized by increased competitiveness and diversity, organizational politics has become unavoidable phenomenon. There has been abundant 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 of the POP, the current research study meant to investigate the influence of POP on employee attitude (OID) and moderation effect of organizational and supervisor trust.

Along the same lines, this study confirms that the POP amongst the employee within the higher institutes decreases their sense of OID which is further supported by the social identity theory. More so, the moderator of trust has been shown to moderate the negative element of POP by immediately providing reinforcement of trust from the supervisor and/ or organizational itself for the employee albeit temporarily to counter the employee negative outcomes. In this respect, the trust in organization and supervisor trust are the binding elements which also needs due consideration to mitigate the negative effects of POP. In the environment of trust, employee productivity have observed to be higher among employees of higher education institutes reflected through strong sense of identification. Against this background, this is perhaps the most stimulating finding of this research, this may be taken an indication of diverse institutional culture prevalent in HEIs of Pakistan in terms of public and private sector. However, it has been validated that POP exists in the HEIs of Pakistan.

## 6.4 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 most limiting factor in case of this study was its cross-sectional design. Further, it included only the faculty members providing their services in Lahore, Pakistan premises. This research was conducted in Lahore so a limited data was collected and due to overwhelming majority of the respondents are female, the results cannot be generalized. Moreover, the respondents were not provided the opportunity to explain their views about the perceived organizational politics due to closed ended questionnaire.

This research study can be taken as a template to conduct research into other sectors such as healthcare and law enforcement in Pakistan as well as other developing countries. In addition, there is another fascinating aspect that is of the perceptual difference between public and private employee that can be explored further. To put it simply, the concept and results of this research study demonstrates viability for more research into the relevant variables.

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