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Perceptions of organizational politics: a meta-analysis of theoretical antecedents

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Abstract:

This study presents a quantitative review of research examining variables thought to influence the development of perceptions of organizational politics (POP). The results provide support for most of the relationships proposed in theoretical models (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris et al., 2002). Job/work environment influences are found to have the strongest and most consistent relationship with politics perceptions (e.g., trust, participation in decision-making, leader-member exchange, met expectations, and opportunity for development). Organizational influences which are found to be related to perceptions of organizational politics include centralization, formalization, and procedural justice. Demographic variables are found to have little or no relationship with politics perceptions, although personality variables (i.e., Machiavellianism, locus of control, positive affect, and negative affect) exhibit moderate to moderately strong relationships.

Full Text:

In the last twenty years, researchers and practitioners alike have become increasingly interested in political behavior within organizations. Although political behavior can have both positive and negative outcomes, most of the research has focused upon "dark side" (Ferris and King, 1991) political behaviors, which are behaviors not sanctioned by the organization (i.e., illegitimate) and characterized by self-interest (e.g., taking credit for others' work, coalition building, personal attacks upon others competing for the same resources, and decisions based upon favoritism). This type of political behavior tends to create a harmful and divisive work environment, reduces organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and has exceedingly harmful effects upon workers (Kacmar et al., 1999; Mintzberg, 1983).

Research on organizational politics has largely focused upon perceptions of organizational politics because of Lewin's (1936, Principles of Topological Psychology) suggestion that individuals act upon their perceptions of reality rather than objective reality (Ferris et al., 2002). Indeed, there is empirical evidence suggesting that perceived reality is the most important factor in determining workers' attitudes and behavior (Breux et al., 2009). Perceived organizational politics "involves an individual's attribution of behaviors of self-serving intent and is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation about the extent to which the work environment is characterized by co-workers and supervisors who demonstrate such self-serving behavior" (Ferris et al., 2000: 90). Perceived organizational politics is sometimes cast as a "hindrance" or threatening form of stressor in that it constrains an individual's belief in their ability to achieve personal and professional goals (Chang et al., 2009; Lepine et al., 2005). Recent meta-analytic reviews provide strong evidence supporting the view that perceptions of organizational politics are related to reduced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, task performance and increased psychological strain (Chang et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2008).

Given the strong evidence linking perceptions of organizational politics (POP) with a variety of negative outcomes for individuals and their employers, it is critically important for organizations to attend to those factors that contribute to the development of these perceptions (Chang et al., 2009). In their extensive review of the literature examining antecedents of politics perceptions, Ferris et al. (2002) conclude that most of the antecedents have been substantiated by research. However, many of the antecedents included in the Ferris et al. (2002) review had only been examined a few times and half of the variables examined had only been investigated one time (see Table 3, pp. 196-197). Further, Ferris et al.'s (2002) literature review indicates inconsistency in findings in some of the cases where there is more than one study, including: centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, job autonomy, feedback, and a variety of personal influences (i.e., age, gender, organization tenure, minority status, and locus of control). Others also note these inconsistencies (e.g., Adams et al., 2008; Kacmar and Baron, 1999; Miller and Nichols, 2008). These types of inconsistencies may be due to low statistical power or may occur because there truly is no relationship between the antecedents and perceptions of organizational politics (Parker et al., 1995). Therefore, because of the small number of studies available for Ferris et al. (2002) to review and because Ferris et al. (2002) use a vote counting procedure to integrate the empirical literature (i.e., counting statistically significant and nonsignificant findings), it is likely that Ferris et al. (2002) may have reached the wrong conclusions in some cases (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004). Further, Hunter and Schmidt state that even "where the voting method correctly leads to the conclusion that an effect exists, the critical question of the size of the effect is still left unanswered" (2004: 446). Indeed, Vigoda notes that the question of which antecedents of perceived organizational politics "are the most significant remains an open one" (2003: 36).

One way to address this shortcoming in the literature is to conduct a comprehensive meta-analytic examination of the relationships proposed in the antecedent model of perceived organizational politics. Because there has been a significant amount of research performed in recent years, a meta-analytic integration of the literature would be based upon substantially more studies than those reviewed by Ferris et al. (2002). Furthermore, because a quantitative integration of the extant empirical research would provide an estimate of the true population effect size for each predictor of organizational politics, the results would indicate the relative strength and consistency of the different antecedents and categories of antecedents proposed in the theoretical model (i.e., organizational influences, job/work environment influences, and personal influences). Additionally, a meta-analytic integration of the extant literature

would provide a quantitative review of the new antecedents Ferris et al. (2002) added to their Revised Model of Organizational Politics Perceptions (e.g., career development opportunities, participation/involvement, person-organization fit, positive affect, negative affect), as well as other antecedents which had only been examined once or twice at the time of Ferris et al.'s (2002) literature review (e.g., job autonomy, skill variety, Machiavellianism, self-monitoring, locus of control, met expectations). In short, a meta-analytic integration of the literature examining antecedents of perceptions of politics would not only update Ferris et al.'s (2002) review of the literature, but also provide new insights into those factors that are thought to influence the development of perceptions of organizational politics.

ANTECEDENTS OF PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

The variables included in this quantitative review of the literature are those antecedents identified in the general theoretical model presented in early POP research efforts as well as variables identified in later research (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Ferris et al., 2002). As noted by Parker et al. (1995), the antecedent model is largely based upon theoretical models of conditions thought to contribute to political behavior (e.g., ambiguity, uncertainty, the belief that political behavior is instrumental in gaining advantage or rewards, and workplace norms for political behavior) (Parker et al., 1995).

Organizational Influences

According to early theoretical models (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Parker et al., 1995), there are a variety of organizational influences upon perceptions of organizational politics including centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, and span of control. Centralization, the extent to which power and control is concentrated in the upper echelons of the organization, is thought to influence perceptions of organizational politics because it may foster perceived lack of control and high levels of political behavior aimed at influencing key decision-makers. Research tends to support this view (e.g., Andrews and Kacmar, 2001; Chang, 2008; Muhammad, 2007). Formalization refers to the extent to which instructions, rules, and standards are written and clearly expressed to employees. Organizations with a high degree of formalization tend to have employees who have high role clarity and increased knowledge and control over their environment which should lead to lower perceptions of politics (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Research supports this hypothesized negative relationship (e.g., Andrews and Kacmar, 2001; Aryee et al., 2004; Chang, 2008; Liu, 2002; Muhammad, 2007; Vigoda, 2001; Yang, 2009). Hierarchical level within the organization is also thought to influence perceptions of organizational politics because political behavior is traditionally perceived to be an upper management phenomenon, or even part of the job for high level managers (Drory, 1993). Although research has produced mixed results for this hypothesis, with correlation estimates ranging from positive (e.g., Chang, 2008; Miller and Nichols, 2008) to negative (e.g., Valle and Perrewé, 2000), Ferris et al. (2002) concluded that hierarchical level should remain in the model as an organizational influence upon politics perceptions. Ferris and Kacmar (1992) also hypothesized that span of control would be positively related to perceptions of organizational politics. The assumption is that as the number of employees reporting to a supervisor increase, the supervisor will devote less time to each individual, which may increase employees' sense of uncertainty and ambiguity. However, research has found no relationship between span of control and politics perceptions (e.g., Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Valle and Perrewé, 2000).

Procedural justice, or the perceived fairness of the procedures to allocate resources, has also been discussed as an organizational influence upon perceptions of politics (e.g., Doucet et al., 2009). When the procedures used to make decisions are perceived to be "fair" (i.e., consistent, free of bias, correctable, and ethical in nature), individuals tend to believe that there is less room for ad hoc decision-making due to the presence of decision-making guidelines and increased transparency. Consequently, when individuals perceive there to be procedural justice, they tend to feel they have a greater degree of control (Thibaut and Walker, 1975), which should reduce the perception of politics within the organization (Doucet et al., 2009). Research consistently reports a negative relationship between procedural justice and perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Andrews and Kacmar, 2001; Aryee et al., 2004; Muhammad, 2007).

Job/Work Environment Influences

Some early research efforts show that job-related factors such as autonomy, feedback, interaction with supervisor/coworkers, and opportunity for advancement are more strongly related to perceptions of organizational politics than either organizational or personal influences (e.g., Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Ferris and colleagues (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992) originally proposed several job design characteristics as effective ways to reduce uncertainty in the workplace and, consequently, perceptions of politics. A lack of autonomy or skill variety would imply that an employee would be subject to the control of others, leading to feelings of powerlessness and increased perceptions of organizational politics (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Most researchers have reported negative relationships between autonomy and perceptions of politics (e.g., Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; O'Connor and Morrison, 2001; Shin and Yuan, 2009; Valle and Perrewé, 2000), although some have reported no relationship between the two variables (e.g., Vigoda, 2001; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2003). Research examining skill variety has largely reported negative relationships with perceptions of politics (Lin, 2003; Liu, 2002). Similarly, employees who are the recipients of constructive feedback are more likely to experience higher role clarity and increased control over their work environment which ultimately leads to substantially lower politics perceptions. Researchers have reported negative correlations between feedback and politics perceptions across a variety of settings and occupations (e.g., Kacmar et al., 1999; Lin, 2003; Liu, 2002; Yang, 2002), while others have reported no association between the two variables (e.g., Howell, 2005).

Advancement opportunities are also thought to have a negative influence upon perceptions of organizational politics. When opportunities for promotion or advancement are limited, this may foster political behavior aimed at securing this valuable reward. Consequently, employees may perceive that there are limited opportunities due to the political nature of advancement within the organization (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Reported research results are largely consistent with this hypothesis (e.g., Harris and Munyon, 2009; Kacmar et al., 1999; Valle and Perrewé, 2000).

Quality of interaction with others in the workplace was also included in Ferris et al.'s (1989) model of antecedents. Employees that have positive trusting relationships with their supervisors and/or co-workers tend to perceive lower levels of political activity in the organization. Interaction with one's supervisor has been assessed by some researchers using the leader-member exchange (LMX) construct (e.g., Kacmar et al., 1999). LMX theory suggests that leaders develop closer relationships with some subordinates (i.e., the

"in-group" or cadre) and less close relationships with others (i.e., the "out-group" or hired hands) (Graen, 1976). Subordinates with lower-quality exchange relationships with their supervisor tend to believe that the favoritism shown to in-group members is based upon political factors rather than merit, while in-group members tend to believe they are less subject to political or unfair treatment (Miller and Nichols, 2008). Research has consistently supported the view that LMX has a negative influence upon perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Collins, 2008; Innes, 2004; Kacmar et al., 2007; Poon, 2003, 2006).

Cooperation is also considered to be an indication of relationship quality within the organization. Cooperation refers to the extent to which co-workers actively support each other (Chatman and Barsade, 1995). To the extent that individuals tend to actively support each other, there is likely to be less competition for scarce resources and less reason to suspect that people are acting in their own self-interest (Parker et al., 1995). Conversely, a lack of cooperation among employees is likely to create competition for scarce resources and promote political behavior in pursuit of said resources. Research findings generally support a negative relationship between cooperation and perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Andrews and Kacmar, 2001; Harris et al., 2005).

Trust in one's coworkers is another important indicator of the quality of one's relationships at work (Parker et al., 1995). The authors based this assumption upon the idea that people who believe their coworkers are trustworthy are less likely to believe they would act in ways which would be detrimental to others. Conversely, workers who believe their coworkers are untrustworthy are more likely to attribute political (self-interested) motivations to co-worker behavior. Research findings appear to generally support a statistically significant negative relationship between trust and perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Howell, 2005; LaCost, 2005; Parker et al., 1995; Poon, 2006).

A new antecedent proposed by Ferris et al.'s (2002) Revised Model of Organizational Politics is employee participation in decision-making (PDM). The addition of PDM to the antecedent model is based upon the idea that as one's participation in decision-making increases, perceptions of organizational politics should decrease because participation reduces ambiguity and increases one's sense of control and fairness (Ferris et al., 2002; Vigoda and Cohen, 2002).

Another variable added to Ferris et al.'s (2002) model reflects one aspect of person-organization fit: met expectations (Vigoda, 2001). Met expectations reflects the incongruence between employee job expectations and what they have actually encountered in the workplace. Employees with high met expectations tend to feel more positively about their organization and are more likely to attribute their success within the organization to be based upon their own performance or qualifications rather than political influence (Vigoda and Cohen, 2002). Accordingly, empirical research supports the view that met expectations are negatively related to perceptions of politics (e.g., Vigoda, 2001; Vigoda and Cohen, 2002, 2003).

Ferris et al. (2002) also added career development opportunities as another job/work environmental influence upon perceptions of organizational politics. This addition to the model is based upon the idea that the lack of opportunities for growth and development would increase politics perceptions because the perceived linkage between skill development and success within the organization would be weak (Parker et al., 1995). Kacmar et al. (1999) report development opportunities to be much more strongly related to organizational politics than promotion opportunities.

Personal Influences

Most of the research examining personal influences upon political perceptions has focused upon demographic variables (Adams et al., 2008). Early theoretical models propose that women, older individuals, minorities, and those with longer tenure tend to experience the negative impacts of political behavior and, therefore, are more likely to perceive the environment as more political (Ferris et al., 1989; Parker et al., 1995). Conversely, individuals with higher education are thought to experience lower job ambiguity and higher control, and consequently, perceive lower levels of political activity (Parker et al., 1995). More recent research suggests that demographics such as age, gender, and race may also contribute to the creation of political sub-climates within organizations (Treadway et al., 2005b). However, results have been mixed and a variety of competing hypotheses have been developed to explain the different results (Ferris et al., 1996a). Consequently, some researchers refuse to even offer any directional hypotheses (e.g., Ferris et al., 1996b) while others continue to suggest that strong linkages exist between demographic variables and perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Rosen et al., 2009b). Therefore, one of the goals of the present study is to resolve these inconsistencies.

In general, personality characteristics have been ignored as antecedents of perceptions of organizational politics (Adams et al., 2008). However, research has shown that personality characteristics may account for substantially more variance in perceptions of organizational politics than demographic variables (Adams et al., 2008). In general, personality characteristics are thought to be important because they influence how individuals perceive and interpret organizational politics (Adams et al., 2008). Machiavellianism, for example, has long been thought to be related to perceptions of organizational politics because high Machs tend to be cynical about human nature and are willing to do virtually anything to enhance their self-interests (O'Connor and Morrison, 2001; Valle and Perrewé, 2000). Research in both the United States (e.g., O'Connor and Morrison, 2001; Valle and Perrewé, 2000) and Asia (e.g., Chang, 2003; Chang, 2008; Lin, 2003; Tseng, 2002; Yang, 2002; Yang, 2003) has consistently found positive relationships between Machiavellianism and perceptions of politics. Self-monitoring was also predicted by Ferris et al. (1989) to be related to perceptions of organizational politics since high self-monitors are skilled in political behavior and very sensitive to social cues. However, research has not supported this hypothesis (e.g., Howell, 2005; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Valle and Perrewé, 2000). Locus of control has also received some attention in the perceptions of politics literature. Individuals with an external locus of control believe their fate is dependent on forces outside of their control, while individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they are in control of their environment. Locus of control has a significant impact on POP because those with a higher sense of control over their workplace are not as likely to feel as helpless as those with less control, and therefore should experience lower levels of perceived organizational politics (Ferris et al., 1993). Research has generally reported a statistically significant relationship between locus of control and perceptions of politics (e.g., Andrews and Kacmar, 2001; Miller and Nichols, 2008; O'Connor and Morrison, 2001).

Ferris et al. (2002) also added positive and negative affect to their revised antecedent model because a tendency to view the work environment positively or negatively is likely to influence perceptions of politics. Researchers suggest that individuals with high positive affect tend to be enthusiastic, upbeat, and view their environments positively (e.g., experience high job satisfaction, Connolly

and Viswesvaran, 2000) while individuals with high negative affect tend to be more anxious, angry, and view their environments negatively. Because positive affect may serve as a coping mechanism or reduce political attributions as explanations for behavior in organizations, positive affect should be negatively related to perceptions of organizational politics (Adams et al., 2008). On the other hand, negative affect tends to make individuals more attuned to inequities and inflate negative attributions about events in organizations, which suggests negative affect should be positively related to perceptions of organizational politics (Adams et al., 2008). Research has generally supported these hypotheses (e.g., Breux et al., 2009; Byrne et al., 2005; Kiewitz et al., 2009).

METHODS

Study Sources

First, a search of refereed journal articles reporting POPS relationships was conducted using computerized sources (ABI/Inform, Business Source Premier, Google Scholar, PsychInfo). Next, key journals in the organizational sciences were investigated such as Academy of Management Journal, Journal of management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Public Personnel Management, Journal of Managerial Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology, Organizational Analysis, Human Relations, Policy and Politics, The Journal of Social Psychology, Journal of Managerial Issues, and Organizational Analysis. In addition, references cited in recent POP meta-analyses (Chang et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2008) were also checked for any missing studies in our analysis. A total of 93 independent samples from 82 individual studies were included in the analyses.

Initially, 29 variables were chosen for analysis based on constructs assessed in the correlation tables of the collected articles. For the sake of a more robust and generalizable study, the variable list was subsequently reduced to 25 variables based on the number of articles assessing each variable. Consequent deliberations with researchers in the area ensured that the inclusion of the assigned variables to the model were inter-subjectively certifiable.

Meta-analytic Procedures

The methodological procedures used in the current study are based upon meta-analytic techniques proposed by Hunter and Schmidt (1990, 2004). The authors suggest that the superiority of meta-analysis over individual studies lies in the fact that no individual study is capable of fully addressing a scientific question. Each individual study serves as a data point which contributes to an integration of research findings. Generally, researchers tend to discount or discard the results of individual studies which have inadequate statistical power. However, meta-analytic research overcomes this obstacle by obtaining point estimates of effect sizes and confidence intervals which leads to more precise results due to an integration of research findings across studies. Moreover, meta-analysis has proven to be a highly effective tool in the development of theory in the behavioral and social sciences (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004).

Hunter and Schmidt's (1990, 2004) random effects model was utilized to conduct the meta-analysis and corrected studies individually for artifacts because of its predominance in the literature and research supporting its accuracy (e.g., Hall and Brannick, 2002). This method corrects for sampling error and attenuation due to unreliability in both the predictor and criterion and generates sample-weighted estimates of the population correlation. When no reliability estimate was provided, average reliability of the other studies in the overall sample was used. With regard to maintaining the statistical independence of studies, strict adherence to the guidelines provided by Hunter and Schmidt (1990, 2004) was maintained. Inputs into the meta-analyses included reliability estimates for independent and dependent (POP) variables, correlations between the variables obtained from correlation tables, and sample sizes. For studies that reported identical variables that were assessed with multiple measures (e.g., cross-cultural studies in which subjects from each country were measured separately), the correlations were averaged and one composite correlation was used. This technique has been shown to improve both reliability and construct validity (Hunter and Schmidt, 1990, 2004).

The two-step procedure discussed by Hunter and Schmidt (1990) and Whitener (1990) was utilized. First, a decision was made on whether the group of studies in the meta-analysis represented one population (i.e., homogeneous group of studies) or more than one population (i.e., heterogeneous group of studies). The proportion of variance accounted for by sampling and measurement error was used to assess sample homogeneity. The generally accepted rule of thumb is that when sampling and measurement error accounts for more than 75% of observed variance, then the remaining variance should be accounted for by other artifacts and the sample population should be considered homogeneous. This provides a better indication of homogeneity than significance tests (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004). Ninety-five percent credibility intervals were calculated to provide another indication of sample population homogeneity, as suggested by Whitener (1990). Credibility intervals indicate sample heterogeneity (i.e., the presence of moderators) when they either include zero or display wide intervals.

Based upon the indication of sample homogeneity/heterogeneity provided by the proportion of variance accounted for by artifacts and the 95% credibility interval, a 95% confidence interval was calculated (Whitener, 1990). Given the observed data, confidence intervals provide an indication of the "range within which the population is likely to be" (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001:114). If the 95% confidence interval does not include zero, the population mean effect size is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Avoiding Publication Bias. In addition to seeking out unpublished studies, a "failsafe N" statistic was generated to address the "file drawer problem" often encountered in meta-analytic studies (Hunter and Schmidt, 1990). The fail-safe N provides an estimate of the number of studies hidden in a file drawer (i.e., missing from the literature search) with a null effect size that would be required to reduce the estimated populated correlation to a non-significant statistical level.

Main Effects Coding. Coding for variables was completed and cross-verified by team members, then verified by an independent evaluator. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensual agreement by the research team. When dichotomous variable coding was not clearly detailed in the original research, an attempt was made through analysis of the sample mean and sample size/composition to define the coding. When no definitive agreement could be reached, the sample was excluded for evaluation of the variable in question.

RESULTS

Internal consistency is an important aspect of the construct validation process (Netemeyer et al., 2003); therefore, an investigation of the reliability estimates of the POP scale was conducted. Internal consistency estimates were used to measure perceptions of organizational politics. Kacmar and Ferris (1991) originally developed 40 items to assess perceptions of organizational politics, but ultimately created a 12-item scale to measure. A variety of other measures have been developed, largely based upon the original 40 items. For example, Ferris and Kacmar (1992) used both a five-item scale ($[\alpha] = 0.74$) and a 31-item scale ($[\alpha] = 0.91$). More recently, Kacmar and Carlson (1997) developed a 15-item measure with a reported reliability of 0.87 and Parker et al. (1995) used a six-item measure with a reliability score of 0.76. However, the literature review revealed that the most commonly used scale for assessing perceptions of organizational politics is the 12-item scale originally developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). In the studies included in this meta-analysis, the reliability scores for this scale ranged from 0.77 to 0.93 with an average score of 0.88. Since the 12-item measure appears to meet the benchmark for established scale reliability suggested by Nunnally (1978), this scale appears to be an acceptable alternative to longer scales and can be used with some degree of confidence.

Twenty-four variables were extracted with four or more studies available for the meta-analysis, although span of control ($K = 3$) was also included because of its prominence in early theoretical models. Based on the seminal early theoretical studies (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Parker et al., 1995) and more recent literature reviews (e.g., Ferris et al., 2002), each variable was placed under different antecedent categories. Out of these 25 variables, five were organizational antecedents, ten were job/work environment antecedents, and ten were personal antecedents.

Table 1 includes the results for the antecedents of perceptions of organizational politics. With regard to organizational antecedents, the results do not indicate any statistically significant relationship between hierarchical level and POP ($p = 0.05$) or span of control and POP ($p = 0.07$). On the other hand, centralization ($p = 0.53$) and formalization ($p = -0.18$) are related as hypothesized by the original model. In addition, procedural justice ($p = -0.59$) also exhibits a statistically significant negative relationship with perceptions of politics.

The results of the analyses examining job/work environment antecedents show that all ten variables exhibit statistically significant relationships. Although autonomy ($p = -0.27$), feedback ($p = -0.32$), skill variety ($p = -0.18$), and cooperation ($p = -0.32$) exhibit low to moderate magnitude relationships with POP, the remaining job/work environment antecedents exhibit substantially stronger relationships with POP (i.e., opportunity for advancement, $p = -0.50$; trust, $p = -0.64$; leader-member exchange, $p = -0.58$; participation in decision-making, $p = -0.57$; met expectations, $p = -0.61$; and opportunities for career development, $p = -0.65$).

With regard to the results for the final group of antecedents, namely personal influences, none of the demographic variables--age ($p = -0.03$), gender ($p = 0.00$), education ($p = -0.02$), and minority status ($p = 0.01$)--show any significant relationships with POP other than tenure ($p = 0.05$). However, the study finds moderately strong to strong relationships between Machiavellianism ($p = -0.42$), external locus of control ($p = 0.31$), positive affect ($p = -0.31$), negative affect ($p = 0.41$), and POP. The results show no statistically significant relationship between self-monitoring and perceptions of politics ($p = -0.04$).

Overall, the results also suggest that moderators are present in most of the relationships because of the relatively low amount of variance

explained by sampling and measurement error. The only relationships with perceptions of politics that were found to exceed the "75% rule" are span of control, skill variety, met expectations, and self-monitoring.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study confirm many, but not all, of Ferris et al.'s (2002) broad conclusions about the predictive validity of the theoretical predictors of perceptions of organizational politics. However, because the analysis presented here is based upon meta-analysis and substantially more studies than reviewed by Ferris et al. (2002), the results of this study provide a much more informed understanding of the antecedent framework which has guided organizational politics research for the past two decades.

Overall, the results indicate that eighteen of the twenty-five antecedents examined exhibit a statistically significant relationship with perceptions of organizational politics, although one variable has no practical significance (i.e., tenure, $p = 0.05$). Five of these antecedents are new variables which Ferris et al. (2002) added to Ferris et al.'s (1989) original model to guide future research (i.e., participation in decision-making, met expectations, development opportunities, positive affect, and negative affect). Therefore, one contribution of this study is that it represents the first integration of empirical literature examining these newer antecedents and the results. In contrast, the results show hierarchical level, span of control, age, gender, education, minority status, and self-monitoring exhibit no statistically significant relationship with perceptions of politics. These results support Ferris et al.'s (2002) decision to remove demographic variables from the antecedent model. While the results reported here indicate that Ferris et al. (2002) reached many of the right conclusions in revising the antecedent model, they also indicate that Ferris and colleagues (2002) came to the wrong conclusion in some cases. Based upon the results presented here, one variable that Ferris et al. (2002) retained in the revised model should be removed (i.e., hierarchical level), two variables which Ferris et al. (2002) removed from the model should be added back (i.e., job autonomy and skill variety), and two variables that were mentioned by Ferris et al. (2002) but not added to the model (i.e., trust in coworkers and locus of control) should be incorporated into the antecedent model.

Another important contribution of the present study is that it provides new insight into the relative effect size (i.e., magnitude, not character/sign of relationship) of each antecedent variable. Examination of the confidence intervals for each relationship provides a basis for comparison across antecedents. With regard to the three different categories of antecedents, job/work environment variables are more consistently and, in general, more strongly related to perceptions of politics than those in the organization and personal categories. This general finding is new and not mentioned in the last review of the literature (i.e., Ferris et al., 2002). This general finding is important from a managerial standpoint because the job/work environment variables are those which managers should be most capable of changing (Valle and Perrewé, 2000). With regard to job/work environment influences, the most influential variables are leader member exchange, participation in decision-making, trust in coworkers, met expectations, opportunity for advancement, and opportunity for development. The job design variables (i.e., autonomy, feedback, skill variety) and cooperation

appear to have weaker associations with perceptions of organizational politics than the other job/work environment variables. One interesting result is that opportunity for development is more strongly related to organizational politics than opportunity for advancement. With regard to the organizational influences, centralization and procedural justice appear to be much more strongly related to perceptions of politics than formalization. With regard to personal variables, the results indicate Machiavellianism and negative affect are more closely associated with perceptions of politics than either locus of control or positive affect. However, the Machiavellianism and negative affect relationships are of lesser magnitude than the aforementioned group of influential job/work environment variables (i.e., leader member exchange, participation in decision-making, trust in coworkers, met expectations, opportunity for advancement, and opportunity for development) or centralization. The results for the personality variables suggest that researchers who are interested in isolating the influence of organizational and job/work environment influences upon perceptions of politics should consider controlling for the influence of personality.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest specific means by which managers might act to reduce perceived organizational politics and its detrimental effects. For example, the results suggest increasing the level of employee involvement in decision-making and developing better social exchange relationships between supervisors and subordinates. The results also suggest that human resource management practices might be useful in reducing perceptions of organizational politics. For example, companies interested in reducing perceptions of politics could place greater emphasis on incorporating higher levels of autonomy, feedback, and skill variety into new/redesigned jobs. Placing a greater emphasis on career planning and training is also likely to reduce perceptions of organizational politics. The strong negative correlation between met expectations and perceptions of politics suggests that managers wishing to reduce the level of perceived organizational politics might also fruitfully incorporate realistic job previews into their recruiting and selection process. Further, the magnitude of the correlations for the personality traits suggests that these variables might also be incorporated into the selection process if managers wish to reduce perceptions of organizational politics. Positive affect and negative affect, for example, are both related to job performance (e.g., Kaplan et al., 2009) which supports their use as valid selection tools.

In general, the results are suggestive of new approaches that might yield new insight into those factors that influence the development of POP. First, for most of the relationships, the results indicate that there are moderators present. This suggests that Ferris et al.'s (2002) decision to incorporate moderator variables into their revised model of organizational politics antecedents was an important revision to the model. However, the decision to only incorporate demographic variables as potential moderators is likely to constrain future research; researchers should explore more than just demographic moderator variables providing there is a theoretical foundation for the moderator. Second, many of the variables reported here to be related to POP are associated with key elements of High Performance Work Systems (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Zachartos et al., 2007). For example, autonomy, feedback, promotion opportunities, participation in decision-making, procedural justice, leader-member exchange, and formalization map neatly onto the factors that are generally discussed as comprising a high-performance work system (HPWS). Accordingly, it seems likely that those firms that have adopted high performance work practices will actually reduce the overall level of perceived organizational politics. This is a potentially important insight in that there has been some discussion about the need for developing an organization-level model of POP (e.g., Dipboye and Foster, 2002); however, not much has been done in establishing a theoretical foundation for this research. The authors could find no research examining the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and specific types of HR systems or different "bundles" of HR practices, although Ferris et al. (1998) broadly discuss a potential relationship between organizational politics and human resource management systems. Accordingly, it seems that a focus upon high performance work systems as a potential means of reducing organizational politics might be a fruitful area for future research.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A few of the current analyses are based upon a relatively small number of samples which raises questions about the stability of the results for these analyses. A general rule of thumb in meta-analysis is that any analysis with fewer than five studies or less than 1,000 observations may provide somewhat unstable estimates. In the end, three of the 25 analyses did not meet these minimum criteria (span of control, skill variety, and self-monitoring). However, because these antecedents are all critical components of early theoretical models, they were included in the results. However, these results should be viewed with some degree of caution. Failsafe *N*s also provide some indication of the stability of each analysis. It is important to know that the number of studies reviewed in the analyses presented here is no smaller than the number of studies used in other initial integrations of a literature stream (e.g., Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

In short, the present study is the first with enough power to be considered a basis for managerial action. The results suggest specific courses of action that organizations might take to reduce the perceptions of organizational politics and its deleterious effects. However, this study is only a beginning. As more research is conducted, meta-analysis can be used to examine new variables (e.g., authentic leadership and other personality variables) and thereby identify additional ways for organizations to reduce perceptions of organizational politics.

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Table 1
Meta-Analytic Results for Perceptions of Organizational Politics Relationships

Variable	K	N	r	P	Corrected Observed Variance	Artifact Variance	% Artifact Variance	95% Credibility Interval	95% Confidence Interval	Fail Safe N
Organizational										
Centralization	7	3,062	0.43	0.53	0.011743	0.001547	12%	(0.33 0.73)	(0.43 0.73)	297
Formalization	12	6,358	-0.15	-0.18	0.026626	0.002900	11%	(-0.48 0.12)	(-0.27 -0.09)	162
Hierarchical Level	11	6,216	0.06	0.07	0.015736	0.002073	13%	(-0.16 0.30)	(-0.01 0.14)	NA
Span of Control	3	619	0.07	0.07	0.001690	0.005596	100%	0.07	(-0.01 0.15)	NA
Procedural Justice	13	3,238	-0.50	-0.59	0.011262	0.003217	29%	(-0.77 -0.42)	(-0.65 -0.54)	634
Job/Work Environment										
Autonomy	12	3,874	-0.23	-0.27	0.019200	0.003863	20%	(-0.52 -0.03)	(-0.35 -0.20)	266
Feedback	9	4,907	-0.27	-0.32	0.063231	0.002260	4%	(-0.80 0.16)	(-0.48 -0.16)	230
Skill Variety	4	1,755	-0.15	-0.18	0.003014	0.003105	100%	-0.18	(-0.22 -0.13)	NA
Advancement Opportunity	8	6,685	-0.43	-0.50	0.048772	0.001099	2%	(-0.95 -0.07)	(-0.65 -0.35)	334
Trust	7	1,987	-0.55	-0.64	0.050431	0.002295	5%	(-1.00 -0.21)	(-0.80 -0.47)	380
Leader-Member Exchange	11	4,640	-0.49	-0.58	0.010088	0.001913	19%	(-0.75 -0.40)	(-0.63 -0.52)	529
Cooperation	6	6,039	-0.27	-0.32	0.010861	0.001254	2%	(-0.84 0.20)	(-0.53 -0.11)	133
Participation in Decision-Making	10	5,373	-0.45	-0.57	0.023371	0.001725	7%	(-0.83 -0.25)	(-0.63 -0.45)	438
Met Expectations	5	1,090	-0.50	-0.61	0.004465	0.003855	86%	(-0.66 -0.56)	(-0.65 -0.57)	245
Development Opportunity	5	4783	-0.53	-0.65	0.010737	0.000803	8%	(-0.8 -0.46)	(-0.74 -0.56)	261
Personal										
Age	47	18,229	-0.02	-0.03	0.007822	0.003088	40%	(-0.16 0.11)	(-0.0 0.00)	NA
Gender	35	15,832	0.00	0.00	0.009662	0.002607	27%	(-0.16 0.17)	(-0.03 0.03)	NA
Tenure	42	15,309	0.05	0.05	0.007485	0.003153	42%	(-0.08 0.18)	(0.02 0.08)	135
Education	13	3,979	-0.02	-0.02	0.013890	0.002855	21%	(-0.23 0.19)	(-0.08 0.04)	NA
Minority Status	8	3,058	0.00	0.01	0.004417	0.001920	44%	(-0.09 0.10)	(-0.04 0.05)	NA
Machiavellianism	8	10,796	0.34	0.42	0.009471	0.000914	10%	(0.24 0.61)	(0.36 0.49)	263
Self-Monitoring	5	632	-0.04	-0.04	0.008343	0.011782	100%	-0.04	(-0.1 0.03)	NA
Locus of Control-External	8	8,919	0.26	0.31	0.022067	0.001078	5%	(0.02 0.50)	(0.21 0.41)	202
Positive Affect	14	7,225	-0.27	-0.31	0.003835	0.002159	56%	(-0.39 -0.25)	(-0.34 -0.28)	370
Negative Affect	13	6,802	0.36	0.41	0.014761	0.001895	13%	(0.19 0.63)	(0.35 0.48)	456

Note. K = number of studies; N = total sample size; r = average observed effect size; p = r has corrected for measurement error in both the predictor and the criterion; Corrected Observed Variance = observed variance in corrected correlations; Artifact Variance = variance in corrected correlations attributable to all artifacts.

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Table 1 Meta-Analytic Results for Perceptions of Organizational Politics Relationships Corrected Variable K N [bar.r] P
Observed Variance Organizational Centralization 7 5,062 0.43 0.53 0.011743 Formalization 12 6,258 -0.15 -0.18 0.026626
Hierarchical Level 11 6,216 0.06 0.07 0.015736 Span of Control 3 619 0.07 0.07 0.001690 Procedural justice 13 3,238 -0.50
-0.59 0.011262 Job/Work Environment Autonomy 12 3,874 -0.23 -0.27 0.019200 Feedback 9 4,997 -0.27 -0.32 0.063231 Skill
Variety 4 1,755 -0.15 -0.18 0.003014 Advancement Opportunity 8 6,685 -0.43 -0.50 0.048772 Trust 7 1,987 -0.55 -0.64
0.050431 Leader Member Exchange 11 4,640 -0.49 -0.58 0.010088 Cooperation 6 6,039 -0.27 -0.32 0.010861 Participation in
10 5,373 -0.45 -0.57 0.023371 Decision-Making Met Expectations 5 1,090 -0.50 -0.61 0.004465 Development Opportunity 5
4783 -0.53 -0.65 0.010737 Personal Age 47 18,229 -0.02 -0.03 0.007822 Gender 35 15,832 0.00 0.00 0.009662 Tenure 42
15,309 0.05 0.05 0.007485 Education 13 5,979 -0.02 -0.02 0.013890 Minority Status 8 5,058 0.00 0.01 0.004417
Machiavellianism 8 10,706 0.34 0.42 0.009471 Self Monitoring 5 632 -0.04 -0.04 0.008343 Locus of Control-External 8 8,919
0.26 0.31 0.022067 Positive Affect 14 7,225 -0.27 -0.31 0.003835 Negative Affect 13 6,802 0.36 0.41 0.014761 % 95%
Variable Artifact Artifact Credibility Variance Variance Interval Organizational Centralization 0.001347 12% (0.33 0.73)
Formalization 0.002900 11% (-0.48 0.12) Hierarchical Level 0.002073 13% (-0.16 0.30) Span of Control 0.005596 100% 0.07
Procedural justice 0.003217 29% (-0.77 -0.42) Job/Work Environment Autonomy 0.003863 20% (-0.52 -0.03) Feedback 0.002260
4% (-0.80 0.16) Skill Variety 0.003105 100% -0.18 Advancement Opportunity 0.001099 2% (-0.93 -0.07) Trust 0.002295 5%
(-1.00 -0.21) Leader Member Exchange 0.001913 19% (-0.75 -0.40) Cooperation 0.001254 2% (-0.84 0.20) Participation in
0.001725 7% (-0.83 -0.25) Decision-Making Met Expectations 0.003855 86% (-0.66 -0.56) Development Opportunity 0.000803 8%
(-0.8 -0.46) Personal Age 0.003088 40% (-0.16 0.11) Gender 0.002607 27% (-0.16 0.17) Tenure 0.003153 42% (-0.08 0.18)
Education 0.002855 21% (-0.23 0.19) Minority Status 0.001920 44% (-0.09 0.10) Machiavellianism 0.000914 10% (0.24 0.61)
Self Monitoring 0.011782 100% -0.04 Locus of Control-External 0.001078 5% (0.02 0.59) Positive Affect 0.002159 56% (-0.39
-0.23) Negative Affect 0.001895 13% (0.19 0.63) 95% Fail Variable Confidence Safe Interval N Organizational
Centralization (0.45 0.73) 297 Formalization (-0.27 -0.09) 162 Hierarchical Level (-0.01 0.14) NA Span of Control (-0.01
0.15) NA Procedural justice (-0.65 -0.54) 634 Job/Work Environment Autonomy (-0.35 -0.20) 266 Feedback (-0.48 -0.16) 230
Skill Variety (-0.22 -0.13) Advancement Opportunity (-0.65 -0.35) 334 Trust (-0.80 -0.47) 380 Leader Member Exchange
(-0.63 -0.52) 529 Cooperation (-0.53 -0.11) 153 Participation in (-0.63 -0.45) 438 Decision-Making Met Expectations
(-0.65 -0.57) 245 Development Opportunity (-0.74 -0.56) 261 Personal Age (-0.0 0.00) NA Gender (-0.03 0.03) NA Tenure
(0.02 0.08) 155 Education (-0.08 0.04) NA Minority Status (-0.04 0.05) NA Machiavellianism (0.36 0.49) 263 Self
Monitoring (-0.1 0.03) NA Locus of Control-External (0.21 0.41) 202 Positive Affect (-0.34 -0.28) 370 Negative Affect
(0.35 0.48) 456 Note. K = number of studies; N = total sample size; r bar = average observed effect size; p = r bar
corrected for measurement error in both the predictor and the criterion; Corrected Observed Variance = observed variance
in corrected correlations; Artifact Variance = variance in corrected correlations attributable to all artifacts.

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