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Perceptions of Organizational Politics: A Meta-analysis of Outcomes

Brian K. Miller · Matthew A. Rutherford ·
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Abstract Organizational researchers during the past few decades have increasingly focused on the role of subjective work issues and their impact on important worker-related outcomes. One of the most prominently studied factors, perceptions of organizational politics, has received much recent conceptual and empirical attention. In an effort to better understand the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and key outcomes, we apply meta-analysis on 79 independent samples from 59 published and unpublished studies involving 25,059 individual participants. Results indicate strong negative relationships between POP and job satisfaction and between POP and organizational commitment, moderately positive relationships between POP and the outcomes of job stress and turnover intentions, and a non-significant relationship between POP and in-role job performance. Moderator tests show that age, work setting (i.e., public sector or private sector), and cultural differences (i.e., domestic sample or international sample), have contingent effects on certain POP relationships.

Keywords Meta-analysis · Perceptions of organizational politics · Job satisfaction · Organizational commitment · Job performance

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The occurrence of organizational politics, whether actual or perceived, has long been thought to have substantive and largely adverse effects on workers (e.g., Burns 1961; Gandz and Murray 1980; Porter 1976). Commonly viewed as subjective evaluations regarding others' self-serving work behaviors not sanctioned by authority (e.g., Ferris et al. 1989, 2000; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Mayes and Allen 1977; Mintzberg 1983), researchers have suggested that highly political organizational environments are responsible for a variety of harmful work consequences, including higher stress and turnover intentions, and lower worker satisfaction, commitment, and worker productivity—thus, organizational productivity and profitability suffers (Ferris et al. 1989, 2002; Kacmar and Baron 1999). Organizational politics perceptions are fueled by conditions such as uncertainty about organizational decisions, ambiguity about expectations, procedures, or roles, and competition for scarce resources (Ferris et al. 1989, 2002; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Parker et al. 1995).

It has been almost 20 years since Ferris et al. (1989) published their highly influential conceptual paper detailing a model of organizational politics perceptions. Despite widespread agreement that organizational politics has long been an unfortunate "fact of life" (Ferris et al. 1989, p. 143; Burns 1961; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Schein 1977), nearly all of the empirical work on perceptions of organizational politics (POP) has taken place since the publication of Ferris et al. (1989) model, and has been further stimulated by the development of valid POP instruments in the 1990s (Ferris and Kacmar 1992; Kacmar and Carlson 1997; Kacmar and Ferris 1991).

Despite much recent research attention, including two POP literature reviews (Ferris et al. 2002; Kacmar and Baron 1999) and an edited book (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory 2006); no meta-analytic studies of POP have been published.

More importantly, results for the outcomes of POP thus far have been equivocal, leaving the magnitude and direction of the various relationships examined—and the efficacy of the conceptual models—largely unsettled. For example, the correlation between POP and job satisfaction has ranged from .01 (Larwood et al. 1998) to −.71 (Vigoda 2001). Additionally, the correlation between POP and job stress has ranged from .01 (Ferris et al. 1993) to .56 (Ferris et al. 1996b). With more than seventy independent samples available for analysis, the time has come to try to better understand the "true" nature of the hypothesized relationships. Thus, in order to come to a statistical consensus and better understand POP-outcomes phenomena, we applied meta-analytic procedures to examine the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational politics and the most commonly studied outcomes of job satisfaction, job stress, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and job performance.

Perceptions of Organizational Politics: Framework and Previous Research

Perhaps the earliest description of organizational politics in the research literature is from Burns (1961, p. 257), who suggested that it occurs when "others (individuals) are made use of as resources in competitive situations." A commonly cited definition of organizational politics is that of Mintzberg (1983, p. 172), who described the phenomenon as "individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all in a technical sense, illegitimate—sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise (although it may exploit any one of these)."

In their seminal conceptual work, Ferris et al. (1989) defined organizational politics as "a social influence process in which behavior is strategically designed to maximize short-term or long-term self-interest, which is either consistent with or at the expense of others' interests" (p. 145). Importantly, and consistent with assertions by earlier theorists (e.g., Porter 1976; Gandz and Murray 1980), they argue that it is not *actual* politics (or political behavior) that matters most to organizational consequences—rather, it is the subjective *perception* of workplace politics, whether *actual* or not, that results in typically adverse reactions and behaviors. This is consistent with Lewin's (1936) notion that individuals respond based on perceptions of reality rather than on any objective reality. Hence, we suggest a definition by Ferris et al. (2000, p. 90) to be more applicable to the current study: the perception of organizational politics "involves an individual's attribution to 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."

POP scale development began less than two decades ago. In an unpublished study, Ferris and Kacmar (1989) developed the initial POPS scale, a unidimensional 5-item scale. Since then, several multi-dimensional scales were developed in an attempt to better understand various POP complexities. With a 12-item scale refined from a much larger pool of items, Kacmar and Ferris (1991) made perhaps the earliest attempt to measure POP multi-dimensionality, finding three dimensions which they labeled General Political Behavior (Factor 1), Going Along to Get Ahead (Factor 2), and Pay and Promotion (Factor 3). In a subsequent scale development research project, Kacmar and Carlson (1997) made several revisions to the original 12-item scale and found the same three dimensions. Representative POP scale items for the three factors include "People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down", "Telling others what they want to hear is sometimes better than telling the truth", and "The stated pay and promotion policies have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined", respectively.

Consonant with the above definitions, researchers commonly suggest that organizational politics, and politics perceptions, have a negative influence on workers and on the work environment (e.g., Ferris et al. 1989; Ferris et al. 2002; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Mayes and Allen 1977; Porter et al. 1981). In their original model, Ferris et al. (1989) argued that POP adversely influences job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, and two organizational withdrawal outcomes: turnover and absenteeism. Ferris et al.'s (2002) addendum to the Ferris et al. (1989) model expanded the list of possible consequences associated with POP. They suggest that POP has a negative influence on organizational commitment and job performance. However, as mentioned above, research on these relationships has yielded inconsistent results; hence the need for additional study. The three most commonly examined *original* (Ferris et al. 1989) POP outcomes are job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intentions. These are the subject of the next section.

Job Satisfaction and POP

Ferris et al. (1989) suggest that POP has a direct and inverse effect on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke 1976, p. 1300). The measurement of job satisfaction ranges from global measures of job satisfaction such as the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale (Judge et al. 1994) to composite measures of various facets of job satisfaction, such as those

found in Smith et al. (1969) Job Descriptive Index (JDI). Previous examinations of the POP-job satisfaction relationship have usually found an inverse relationship (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1997; Ferris et al. 2000; Harrell-Cook et al. 1999; Kacmar et al. 1999; Valle and Perrewé 2000). However, the aforementioned extremely wide range of correlations suggest that the true score correlation is far from settled and that moderators of this relationship may exist.

Job Stress and POP

Ferris et al. (1989) proposed that there is a positive relationship between political perceptions and job stress. However, there is very little agreement on the definition and conception of stress (Bailey and Bhagat 1987). Matteson and Ivancevich (1987) define stress as "an adaptive response, moderated by individual differences, that is a consequence of any action, situation, or event that places special demands upon a person" (p. 10). Burke (1988) and Nelson and Burke (2000) found that role-based factors such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and lack of power—organizational issues suggestive of organizational politics perceptions—can be sources of stress for employees. Despite strong theoretical arguments, tests of the relationship between POP and job stress have been equivocal. Some have found no effect at all (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1997, Study 2; Hochwarter et al. 1999, Study 1). However, most have found as originally hypothesized, that POP and stress are positively related (e.g., Ferris et al. 1994; Ferris et al. 1996a, b; Kacmar et al. 1999; Valle and Perrewé 2000). However, as previously mentioned, correlations between POP and job stress have ranged widely. Even though all existing research has shown a positive correlation (albeit sometimes non-significant) for the relationship between POP and job stress, the great range of correlations suggests that more research is needed to understand the conditions responsible for such variability, i.e., that moderators may exist.

Turnover Intentions and POP

Ferris et al. (1989) suggest that as one perceives high organizational politics, the disillusionment that accompanies such an experience is likely to result in higher turnover intentions. Tests of the relationship between POP and turnover intentions have shown a positive effect (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1997, Study 1; Hochwarter et al. 1999, Study 2; Kacmar et al. 1999; Valle and Perrewé 2000), no effect at all (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1997, Study 2; Harrell-Cook et al. 1999; Hochwarter et al. 1999, Study 2; Randall

et al. 1999), or even a negative effect (Larwood et al. 1998). Thus, correlations between POP and turnover intentions in the literature have ranged from −.05 (Larwood et al. 1998) to .60 (Vigoda 2001). However, most researchers have uncovered a positive relationship between POP and turnover intentions. Again, the wide range of findings, especially regarding directionality, suggests that more study is needed.

Extensions of the POP Model

After reviewing the empirical research up until 2001, Ferris et al. (2002) found that several additional consequences of POP were empirically examined in addition to those proposed in the original Ferris et al. (1989) model. They revised the original POP model to include seven new consequences that they believed made sound conceptual sense: in-role job performance, organizational commitment, trust, organizational cynicism, justice reactions, and organizational citizenship behaviors.

The two most widely studied of these new consequences, not in the original Ferris et al. (1989) model, are organizational commitment and in-role job performance. In adding these two consequences to the revised model, Ferris et al. (2002) viewed both as having negative relationships with POP.

Organizational Commitment

Ferris and colleagues have consistently argued that POP has a negative effect on organizational commitment (e.g., Ferris et al. 1989, 2002). Organizational commitment has been defined as the "strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organization" (Porter et al. 1974, p. 604). Whereas organizational commitment is widely viewed as being multi-dimensional (e.g., Allen and Meyer 1990; Porter et al. 1974), empirical POP studies to date have largely failed to tease out such dimensional distinctions, focusing instead on organizational commitment as an aggregated whole.

In fact, most POP researchers have measured Organizational Commitment by use of a unidimensional measure (e.g. Mowday et al. 1979). A few POP researchers (e.g. Cropanzano et al. 1997; Hochwarter et al. 1999) have measured this inherently multi-dimensional construct with only the Affective Commitment sub-scale of Meyer and Allen (1984). Only one (Randall et al. 1999) measured more than one dimension of Organizational Commitment. They reported the correlations between POP and both Affective Commitment and Continuous Commitment. Since many of the early measures of Organizational

Commitment were heavily affective in their tone, we considered measures of Affective Commitment to be construct equivalent with early unidimensional measures of Organizational Commitment. We did not allow measures of other dimensions (e.g. continuance or normative) or the summation of multiple dimensions to be used as proxies for unidimensional measures of Organizational Commitment.

Much like the findings for job stress described above, empirical work on the POP-commitment relationship has been equivocal. Whereas most have found POP to have an inverse relationship (e.g., Maslyn and Fedor 1998; Nye and Witt 1993; Witt 1998), others have found a positive relationship (Cropanzano et al. 1997, Study 1). Further, two studies have found no relationship at all between POP and commitment (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1997, Study 2; Randall et al. 1999). Although most extant research to date on this relationship has revealed negative correlations between POP and organizational commitment—from −.70 (Cropanzano et al. 1997) to −.13 (Vigoda-Gadot et al. 2003)—the wide range of findings on the magnitude of the relationship and disparate findings regarding the directionality of the relationship begs for further research.

In-role Job Performance

Ferris et al. (2002) suggest that a negative relationship exists between POP and in-role job performance. Overall job performance is generally divided into two components: task performance (or in-role performance) and contextual performance (or extra-role performance) (Borman and Motowidlo 1993; Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994). While in-role performance encompasses the technical duties necessary for the successful execution of the job, extra-role performance involves the execution of acts not necessarily described in a job description, such as helping with the completion of a coworker's duties after one has finished their own duties. Since Ferris et al. (2002) made a strict differentiation between in-role job performance and extra-role behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior, we focused our analysis on in-role performance measures. Consistent with the Ferris et al. (2002) update to the original model, POP researchers have examined in-role and extra-role job performance as separate constructs. Because the other outcomes of concern to us were attitudinal in nature, but in-role job performance is behavioral, we were concerned with the source of such behavioral ratings. The majority of POP researchers have used supervisors' ratings of subordinates, but some have used self-reported data. We, therefore, coded for this aspect of the primary studies and discuss this further in our section on moderators below.

Since organizational politics are viewed as counterproductive workplace behaviors that usually serve to distract workers from their in-role task performance, researchers suggest that there is a negative relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job performance (e.g., Ferris et al. 2002). However, a review of extant empirical work on this relationship is inconclusive. With inverse (e.g., Vigoda 2000), nonsignificant (e.g., Randall et al. 1999), and positive findings (Hochwarter et al. 2006) clouding the picture, the direction of this relationship is quite unsettled. Thus, correlations between POP and job performance in the literature have ranged from negative (−.32; Witt 1998) to positive (.12; Hochwarter et al. 2006). Whereas, not all researchers have found a negative correlation, and given the wide range of previous findings, especially with regard to directionality, meta-analysis may provide some insight and provide some evidence of the existence of moderators of this relationship.

Moderators

Ferris et al. (1989) originally conceived of age and membership in an ethnic minority as antecedents of POP under the premise that younger workers are naïve to organizational life and will tend to believe that merit alone will propel them up the corporate ladder whereas older workers, with more organizational experience, will be more aware of the existence of politics. They also suggest that members of ethnic minorities tend to encounter more politics (and other setbacks and barriers) than non-minorities in organizations. Ferris et al. (2002) re-conceptualized age and ethnicity as moderators of both antecedents and outcomes of POP. This re-conceptualization suggests that age and ethnicity exacerbate the relationship between POP and various outcomes. They also added employment setting and cultural differences as potential moderators of POP-outcomes relationships which suggests that those working in public (i.e., non-profit or governmental) firms and those working abroad might conceptualize of POP and its outcomes differently.

Although no systematic analysis of such POP moderators has been conducted to date, the strong conceptual arguments posed by Ferris and colleagues prompted us to examine the moderating influence of these factors in this study. That is, the wide range of findings in primary studies of the relationship between POP and its outcome variables may be partially explained by moderators. Meta-analysis, with its variance-explained and Q-statistic tests, can provide evidence of the existence of moderators of the relationships in this nomological network of constructs. Specifically, Hunter and Schmidt (2004) suggest that if over 75% of the variance is unexplained by the correction of statistical artifacts, then evidence of moderators may exist. Similarly, Hedges and Olkin (1985) suggest that a

significant χ^2 associated with their Q-statistic provides evidence of the existence of possible moderators. We use both tests and explain more about them and about meta-analytic procedures below.

Methods

We used meta-analysis (Hunter and Schmidt 1990, 2004; Hunter et al. 1982; Rosenthal 1984), a method of quantitatively determining if previous studies are consistent in their results, to examine our hypotheses. In this study we used the Hunter and Schmidt (2004) method to assess whether the differences among study outcomes are attributable to statistical artifacts and to arrive at the "true score" correlation. We corrected for sampling error and for measurement unreliability in the independent and dependent variables. Correction for these statistical artifacts allows the researcher to establish population correlations and to determine whether there is enough evidence to explore whether there are potential moderator variables responsible for the variance in the population correlation.

Literature Search

An extensive search was conducted in order to identify empirical studies examining the outcomes associated with perceptions of organizational politics. A number of steps were taken to ensure that all relevant studies were included. First, cited reference searches were conducted using the Social Science Citation Index database to identify all studies citing Ferris et al. (1989), Ferris et al. (2002), Kacmar and Ferris (1991), Ferris and Kacmar (1992), and Kacmar and Carlson (1997). The first two of these five studies developed the model being tested in our analysis and the last three studies provide commonly used measures of POP. Second, searches were conducted in the Psych Info and ABI Inform databases using the keywords *perceptions of organizational politics*, *organizational politics*, *perceptions of politics*, and *political perception*. Third, emails were sent to the Academy of Management's Research Methods Division and Human Resources Division list-servers requesting unpublished studies.

These efforts identified 273 studies for potential inclusion in our article. Each article was then examined for inclusion in the meta-analysis on the following criteria: (1) it must be empirical, (2) it must examine the relationship between POP and some outcome, and (3) if it did not measure POP per se, then its focal variable must be construct equivalent to POP. This last requirement indicated that numerous studies examining political behavior (e.g.

ingratiation, impression management) or political skill were not included in our analysis.

More than half of the studies uncovered in our search were eliminated because they were non-empirical. Still others studies were eliminated because they measured political behavior or political skill. Numerous others were eliminated because they used construct inequivalent measures of organizational politics. Similarly, some studies used proxy variables for their other focal constructs. For example, some authors used organizational commitment as a proxy for intent to turnover. These constructs are divergent and their relationships with POP should be analyzed separately and therefore were not allowed as proxies in this study. Three studies were eliminated because the sample had been used in another published study (to use them would have resulted in double-counting of respondents). The final tally of studies included in our meta-analysis was 59. Several studies included more than one independent sample; therefore the number of independent samples in our meta-analysis was 79.

Coding and Agreement

Main Effects Coding

Numerous study characteristics were coded for use in the meta-analysis or for use in the search for moderators. Rutherford coded all of the articles selected for inclusion, and Miller coded one quarter of the studies selected at random. We coded for the primary study sample size, the reliability of POP and the outcome measures, and the correlation between POP and the outcomes. The overall percentage agreement between the coders was 96.16%. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICC-1: Shrout and Fleiss 1979) for the reliability of POP was .968, for the reliability of the various outcomes the ICC-1 was .999, for the primary study sample size it was .999, and for the correlations it was .999. The few discrepancies that arose were resolved by mutual agreement.

Moderator Coding

The role of the meta-analyst is rife with judgment calls that can affect the results of a study (Wanous et al. 1989). One of the many inherent judgments that we made was to code a priori for theoretical and methodological moderators that may be responsible for the wide range of results of primary research on POP and its outcomes. A theoretical moderator is a study characteristic that is likely to play a role in the theoretical underpinnings of the focal relationship. For example, one might code whether or not

the sample was primarily comprised of information technology (IT) workers when meta-analytically examining the relationship between job characteristics and turnover, if the underlying theory suggests that IT workers somehow differ in their reactions to job characteristics or have different predispositions toward turnover than do non-IT workers. A methodological moderator is one that pertains to the method of data collection or the setting used for data collection. For example, meta-analysts often code for whether data were collected in a laboratory setting or a field setting because of the strict controls provided in the former and the possibility for confounding variables in the latter.

We coded for four theoretical moderators: percentage of the sample that were of an ethnic minority, mean age of the sample, whether the sample was comprised mainly of public sector employees or employees of private sector firms, and the percentage of the sample that were working abroad. Ferris et al. (2002) suggest that minority group members and older workers will be more likely to experience more adverse outcomes as a result of high levels of perceptions of organizational politics. In essence, to be older or a member of an ethnic minority is to exacerbate the relationship between POP and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Ferris et al. (2002) also suggest that the employment setting and cultural differences may exacerbate the relationship between POP and its outcomes. We operationalize the "employment setting" as public entities versus private companies. We suggest that whether one is an employee in the public sector, with its often highly unionized environment and tendency toward seniority systems of pay and advancement rather than a merit-based system, will affect how one perceives the relationship between politics and its outcomes. Additionally, we operationalize "cultural differences" as employees working domestically versus internationally. We suggest that samples comprised primarily of international employees will perceive of the theoretical relationships in the model differently by virtue of such cultural differences and expectations regarding the workplace. We also coded for the methodological moderator of the source of in-role job performance ratings: supervisor or subordinate. Most primary study POP researchers limited some aspects of common-source, common-method bias by collecting data on their respondents' job performance from a source other than the respondent themselves, i.e., the supervisor. We suspect that such efforts by researchers may affect the correlation between our focal constructs. To examine our degree of rater agreement, Miller and Rutherford both independently coded 13 of 59 studies (i.e., 22%). For each of these studies, there was perfect agreement on the coding of the five moderators. Miller then coded 25% of the samples and Rutherford coded the remaining 53%.

Meta-analysis Procedures

The meta-analysis was conducted following procedures outlined by Hunter and Schmidt (2004) and using Meta-Analysis 5.3 software created by Schwarzer (1989) to test our hypotheses. The meta-analytic process was as follows. First, the statistical artifacts of sampling error and measurement error were corrected. Second, the estimated population standard deviation was calculated using the formulas in Hunter and Schmidt (2004). Third, the percentage of variance attributed to statistical artifacts was calculated as one test of the presence of potential moderators of our tested relationships. Fourth, the χ^2 statistic was calculated as another test of the presence of potential moderators.

Results

A summary of the results of the meta-analyses are presented in Table 1. Following the suggestions of Cohen (1988), we considered corrected correlations in the range of 0 to .20 to be small, between .21 and .40 to be moderate, and above .40 to be large.

Job Satisfaction

Thirty-five independent samples were included in the meta-analysis of the relationship between POP and job satisfaction. The total number of individual participants was 12,733 for an average sample size of 364. The mean uncorrected correlation was −0.40, but after correcting for statistical artifacts, the corrected correlation was −0.45. These results indicate that a large inverse relationship exists between perceptions of organizational politics and job satisfaction. The 95% confidence interval after corrections ranged from −.73 to −.17 and hence did not include zero (an indication that the true score correlation is likely to be negative). Thus, as proposed by Ferris et al. (1989, 2002), we found evidence of a significant negative correlation between POP and job satisfaction. However, the percentage of variance accounted for by statistical artifacts was 12.64%, falling well below the 75% minimum threshold advocated by Hunter and Schmidt (2004) as necessary to conclude that moderators do not exist. Additionally, the χ^2 was 453.84 ($p < .0001$). Both the percentage of variance explained and the χ^2 tests indicate the possibility that moderators of the relationship between POP and job satisfaction might exist. Nonetheless, the results here clearly indicate that worker job satisfaction typically suffers as the perception of organizational politics increases.

Table 1 Meta-analytic results for outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics

	k	n	r	ρ	C.I.	SD_ρ	%	χ^2
%Job satisfaction	35	12733	−.40	−.45	−.73, −.17	.15	12.64	453.84***
Job stress	24	8998	.34	.45	.16, .73	.13	13.74	212.50***
Turnover intentions	24	7083	.35	.44	.17, .71	.12	19.15	148.38***
Organizational commitment	25	7237	−.37	−.41	−.68, −.14	.14	14.89	218.36***
Job performance	20	6949	−.10	−.11	−.20, .01	.08	50.76	39.82**

Note: k = number of independent samples in each analysis; n = total number of individual participants in the k samples; r = mean uncorrected correlation; ρ = mean weighted correlation corrected for sampling error and measurement unreliability; C.I. = 95% confidence intervals, SD_ρ = estimated population standard deviation; % = percentage of variance across samples attributable to artifacts; $\chi2 = \chi^2$ test for unexplained variance

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Job Stress

Twenty-four independent samples were included in this meta-analysis of the relationship between POP and job stress. The total number of individual participants was 8,998 (mean = 375). The mean uncorrected correlation was 0.34, but after correcting for artifacts, the corrected correlation was 0.45. Like the job satisfaction result above, the 95% confidence interval did not include zero (0.16–0.73). Thus, as proposed by Ferris et al. (1989, 2002), we found evidence of a significant and moderately positive relationship between POP and job stress. Similar to the job satisfaction result above, when workers perceive high levels of organizational politics, job stress appears to increase. However, the low percentage of variance due to statistical artifacts (13.74%) and significant χ^2 value (212.50; $p < .0001$) may indicate that moderators may be impacting the POP-job stress relationship.

Intent to Turnover

Twenty-four independent samples were included in this meta-analysis of the relationship between POP and intent to turnover. The total number of participants was 7,083 for an average sample size of 295. Like the job stress result and consistent with Ferris et al. (1989, 2002) suggestions, a moderately positive relationship between POP and turnover intentions was found. The mean uncorrected correlation was 0.35, but after correcting for artifacts, the corrected correlation was 0.44. Further, the 95% confidence interval was fully in the positive range (0.17–0.71). Once again, however, a low percentage of variance due to statistical artifacts (19.15%) and significant χ^2 value (148.38; $p < .0001$) provide some evidence that moderators of this relationship likely exist.

Organizational Commitment

The relationship between POP and organizational commitment was explored empirically in 25 independent samples. The total number of participants in these samples was 7,237 (mean = 289). After correcting for artifacts, the corrected correlation was −0.41 (mean uncorrected $r = 0.37$), and the 95% confidence interval after corrections ranged from −0.68 to −0.14. Similar to the findings for job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intentions, politics perceptions indeed appear to have the proposed (Ferris et al. 1989, 2002) deleterious effect on workers' commitment. However, just as with each of the above outcomes, a low percentage of variance (14.89%) and high χ^2 value (218.36; $p < .0001$) seem to signal the presence of moderators.

Job Performance

Twenty independent samples were included in this meta-analysis of the relationship between POP and job performance. The total number of participants was 6,949 for an average sample size of 347. Unlike the results for the other direct outcomes (above), the relationship between POP and job performance remains unclear. Though the mean correlation was negative (uncorrected $r = −0.10$; corrected $\rho = −0.11$), the 95% confidence interval (−0.20 to 0.01) included zero. Based on the current findings, we have no clear evidence that the proposed (Ferris et al. 2002) negative relationship between POP and job performance exists. Moreover, moderators are likely to impact this relationship (50.76% of the variance due to statistical artifacts; $\chi^2 = 39.82$, $p < .01$). Given evidence of the multi-dimensional nature of job performance (e.g., Borman and Motowidlo 1993), future examinations of the POP-job

performance relationship should take into account both task and contextual performance elements.

Moderator Test Results

Given that our meta-analytic results described above indicate that a substantial amount of the variance in the correlations is unexplained by statistical artifacts alone, we conducted analyses in order to identify potential POP moderators. Three of the five moderators for which we coded were continuous variables that required a median split to create two categories. However, not every study examining each relationship provided information on each moderator. Therefore, for each of our five outcomes a different median split was conducted for each individual moderator test. For the remaining naturally categorical moderators, a simple yes/no scoring procedure was used. These categories (whether artificial or natural) allowed us to use a simple t-test to examine the differences in group means under the assumption of unequal variances (Winer et al. 1991). See Table 2 for these results.

Our moderator test results reveal that the percentage of the sample who were of an ethnic minority did not moderate any of the relationships between POP and its outcomes The percentage of the sample who were public sector employees moderated the relationship between POP and turnover intentions ($t = 16.64$, $p < .01$) with those samples comprised of predominantly private sector employees (mean $r = .28$) having a weaker relationship between POP and turnover intentions than those samples comprised of predominantly public sector organizations (mean $r = .43$). The mean age of the sample moderated the relationship between POP and organizational commitment ($t = -3.15$, $p < .01$) with those samples with a mean age below 38.10 years (mean $r = -.26$) having a weaker relationship between POP and organizational commitment than those samples with a mean age above 38.10 years (mean $r = -.44$). The domestic/international nature of the samples moderated the relationship between POP and organizational commitment ($t = 3.25$, $p < .01$) with international samples having a weaker relationship between POP and organizational commitment (mean $r = -.26$) than did domestic samples (mean $r = -.44$). Lastly, the source of in-role job performance ratings moderated the relationship between POP and in-role job performance ($t = -2.62$, $p < .05$) with samples using supervisor ratings of performance showing a negative relationship (mean $r = -.16$) and samples using self-reported ratings of performance showing no relationship at all (mean $r = .00$). These results offer partial validation of the moderators suggested in Ferris et al. (2002) updated model of organizational politics perceptions which suggests that ethnicity, work setting, age, and cultural differences

moderate a variety of outcomes. While not suggested by Ferris et al. (2002), the source of in-role performance ratings offers some insight into a factor affecting the relationship between POP and job performance. We discuss the results of our main effects and moderator tests below.

Discussion

Main Effects

As conceptualized in the original model, we found POP to have a strong negative effect on job satisfaction and a moderately positive effect on job stress and on turnover intentions. Two other outcomes, both in the revised POP model (Ferris et al. 2002), were also analyzed. Our findings indicate that POP appears to adversely affect organizational commitment in workers with high politics perceptions. Lastly, while POP and in-role job performance were hypothesized to be inversely related, no such relationship was found.

There are several important implications of these direct effect findings. From a research perspective, models of job satisfaction, job stress, turnover, and organizational commitment should all consider politics perceptions' adverse effects. Researchers performing empirical tests of each of these critically important worker-related factors should consider the impact of organizational politics perceptions as a predictor or, at least, as a control variable. Given that each of these individual-level factors has been shown to affect worker productivity and, ultimately, organizational profitability (e.g., Judge et al. 2001; Somers and Birnbaum 1998; Sullivan and Bhagat 1992), organizational researchers would be wise to consider the harmful impact of politics perceptions in such studies.

From a practitioner perspective, the current study provides validating evidence for the detrimental effects of politics perceptions and should stimulate managers to do something about it. Given that such undesirable outcomes are probably more a result of subjectively constructed *perceptions* of political behavior rather than on any *actual* politics (Ferris et al. 1989; Gandz and Murray 1980), organizational practitioners should do whatever is reasonable to diminish such subjective evaluations. For example, to reduce worker uncertainty about how and why decisions are made, managers could regularly include workers in organizational decision-making processes, particularly in judgments related to resources allocation (e.g., Ferris et al. 2002). In addition, increasing worker understanding of organizational policies and procedures related to performance evaluations, rewards, and discipline can aid in reducing the psychological feelings of ambiguity that workers in uncertain environments often

Table 2 Moderator test results for the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and various outcomes

Outcome variable	Percentage of sample of an ethnic minority							
	Samples below the median			Median	Samples above the median			
	k	r	SD	(%)	k	r	SD	t^{a}
Job satisfaction	8	−.46	.08	15	8	−.49	.11	−.69
Job stress	5	.41	.15	17	6	.36	.14	−.62
Turnover intentions	5	.36	.11	15	4	.49	.06	2.35
Organizational commitment	3	−.55	.17	15	4	−.39	.16	1.20
Job performance	3	−.15	.07	35	4	−.19	.08	−.73
	Percentage of sample employed in public sector							
	Samples below the median			Median (%)	Samples above the median			
Job satisfaction	13	−.37	.14	99	12	−.48	.15	−1.81
Job stress	10	.34	.14	1	9	.39	.16	.76
Turnover intentions	11	.28	.16	1	8	.43	.10	16.64*
Organizational commitment	11	−.40	.14	1	12	−.35	.17	.78
Job performance	9	−.16	.09	1	7	−.05	.11	2.12
	Mean age of sample							
	Samples below the median			Median	Samples above the median			
Job satisfaction	14	−.36	.16	39.13	15	−.44	.11	−1.67
Job stress	10	.33	.19	39.25	11	.34	.12	.10
Turnover intentions	11	.31	.19	40.30	11	.40	.11	1.50
Organizational commitment	10	−.26	.10	38.10	10	−.44	.14	−3.15**
Job performance	9	−.11	.14	40.75	9	−.11	.06	−.07
	International samples				Domestic samples			
Job satisfaction	9	−.42	.13	n/a	25	−.40	.14	−.49
Job stress	7	.34	.12	n/a	15	.35	.17	−.19
Turnover intentions	4	.46	.14	n/a	18	.33	.16	1.59
Organizational commitment	9	−.26	.13	n/a	15	−.44	.13	3.25**
Job performance	2	−.15	.01	n/a	16	−.09	.12	−1.75
	Supervisor-reported ratings				Self-reported ratings			
Job performance	9	−.16	.08	n/a	6	.00	.13	−2.62*

Note: k = number of independent samples in each analysis; r = mean corrected correlation; SD = standard deviation of the distribution of the correlations in each category; t = t-test of the difference in group means

[a] Unequal variances assumed

* p < .05

** p < .01

experience (e.g., Ferris et al. 1996b; Hochwarter et al. 2006; Vigoda 2003).

Moderating Effects

In the current study, we also found several moderating effects. We did not find that the relationship between POP and job satisfaction is moderated by ethnicity, work setting, age, nor cultural differences. With this in mind, the strong link between job satisfaction and various important worker-related outcomes, such as commitment, turnover intentions, withdrawal behaviors, and job performance (e.g., Judge et al. 2001; Shaw 1999; Williams and Anderson 1991), seems to be stable regardless of the moderators examined here. However, a large percentage of the variance in this

relationship is unaccounted for by statistical artifacts, so the possibility of other moderators still exists.

Similarly, we did not find that any of our hypothesized moderators affected the relationship between POP and job stress. Thus, it appears that regardless of age, employment sector, ethnicity composition, domestic or international sample, there appeared to be no significant moderating effect on the corrected correlation between POP and job stress. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that other variables moderate this relationship as a large portion of the variance remains unaccounted for in the corrected correlation.

We found that the relationship between POP and turnover intentions is moderated by one of our moderators: whether or not the sample was comprised predominantly of private or public sector employees. Specifically, we found weaker intentions to turnover in the face of organizational politics for private sector employees than for public sector employees. This finding suggests that the turnover intentions of private sector employees are less adversely affected by politics perceptions than are the turnover intentions of public sector employees.

We also found that the relationship between POP and organizational commitment is moderated by mean age of the sample and by whether or not the sample was comprised of predominantly domestic employees or international employees. We found a significantly stronger relationship between POP and organizational commitment for older samples than for younger samples. We also found a significantly stronger relationship between POP and organizational commitment for samples comprised primarily of domestic workers than for samples comprised primarily of international workers. These findings suggest a stronger negative relationship between organizational commitment and POP for older workers and domestic workers than for younger workers and international workers.

Lastly, even though the relationship between POP and job performance was not significantly different from zero, we nonetheless conducted moderator tests. However, we only found significant results for one moderator of the POP-job performance relationship. Specifically, when supervisors provided in-role job performance ratings, the correlation was negative, but when subordinates themselves provided these ratings, the correlation was zero. This indicates that common-source bias did not artificially inflate this relationship, and that when supervisors provided performance ratings and subordinates provided scores for their perception of organizational politics the relationship between these constructs was indeed negative as proposed by Ferris et al. (2002).

These results have important implications for both research and practice. For instance, more research needs to be performed to better understand why those employed in public sector organizations seem more likely to want to depart organizational environments they view as politically charged. Could it be that organizational managers do a poorer job of communicating expectations and reward processes with public sector employees? From a practitioner perspective, organizational managers may need to do a much better job of paying attention to the various factors that can lead to politics perceptions and high turnover intentions with *all* workers, especially those employed in government or non-profit firms. For instance, practitioners may need to do a better job of communicating expectations, policies, procedures, and standards of behavior with workers, and in communication forms and languages appropriate for such organizations.

Future research needs to also examine why organizational commitment suffers in the face of organizational politics, especially for workforces with a large portion of older workers and firms operating domestically. Could it be that older workers and domestic workers are psychologically or emotionally more apt to be affected adversely by high politics perceptions, resulting in lower indications of commitment? Or could it be that these older workers simply have more realistic expectations of the workplace based upon more work experience and experience lower organizational commitment based upon more employment opportunities because of their greater work experience than do younger workers? Moreover, why do politics perceptions seem to be more prevalent in domestic samples? Might higher individualism and lower power distance play a role with domestic workers? Whatever the answers are, practitioners would be wise to tune into the likely causes of high politics perceptions (i.e., ambiguity; uncertainty; failure to include lower-level workers in decision-making) and make corrective changes.

Limitations

It is possible that the results of our meta-analysis are consistent with the propositions of Ferris et al. (1989, 2002) because of reasons other than the revelation of "true score" population correlations. Several alternative explanations exist. One is that most of the studies relied on self-report measures for most of their variables. Common method bias is a problem when both independent and dependent variable measures come from the same source (Campbell and Fiske 1959). Any defect in the source contaminates both measures, usually in the same direction and fashion. Moreover, correlations obtained from the same sources can erroneously lead us to infer a significant relationship where none exists (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). Some respondents may have had an urge to maintain what they regard as a consistent line of answers and thus fell prey to the "consistency motif." Aggravating the

consistency motif problem is the fact that self-report scales often contain conceptually overlapping items even though they attempt to measure different constructs. Thus, the self-report nature of most primary studies on political perceptions may have affected the nature of the relationships between the variables.

Though hypothesized by Ferris et al. (2002), we did not find a significant meta-analytic correlation between POP and job performance. However, even in view of prior equivocal findings for this relationship, our moderator test shows that the source of the performance ratings significantly affects this relationship. It is, therefore, unlikely that the true score relationship between POP and job performance is, in fact, zero but that this relationship was *attenuated* rather than inflated by common-method, common-source bias as our subset of primary studies in which the supervisor provided performance ratings yielded significantly greater correlations between POP and in-role job performance than when subordinates provided performance ratings for themselves.

Another potential problem with prior POP studies, and hence the statistical conclusions reached here, pertains to socially desirable responses. Podsakoff and Organ (1986) explain the problem by stating that if socially desirable responses compress the scores around the end of the scale, the damage is mainly in the attenuation of correlations due to measurement error. However, correcting for the artifact of unreliability was part of the process in this meta-analysis. Still, we suggest that socially desirable responses are a function of various cues in the stimulus setting. It is possible that the contextual influences of the primary studies suggested to the participants a certain slant that was intended by the survey administrators. If the field surveys were presented by supervisors and not by researchers, subtle suggestions could have influenced the responses of participants.

Another possible limitation of the current study is the file drawer problem (Rosenthal 1979), which can be viewed as a publication bias problem (Becker 1994). Such bias exists when study authors only submit for publication those studies that have statistically significant findings. The meta-analyses conducted here included non-published works, so the publication bias should have been somewhat tempered. Nevertheless, use of Rosenthal's (1984) "fail-safe N" on each of the meta-analytic relationships in this study reveals that after correction for attenuation and sampling error, the number of studies needed to reduce the relationship between POP and job satisfaction, job stress, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and job performance to a near-zero correlation of only .05 was 345, 190, 186, 232, and 24, respectively. Except for the relationship between POP and job performance (a near-zero relationship already), the high "fail-safe N" indicates that these relationships are fairly stable.

Generalizability

The large amount of unexplained variance in the examined relationships is indicative of the presence of moderators. Sub-group moderators have the effect of showing that the results are not from a homogeneous population. Heterogeneity typically is not conducive to generalizability. Since our primary studies seem to come from different sub-populations, the results should not be generalized to the population at large. Nevertheless, our moderator tests did reveal that sub-group analysis of the relationships between three of our five model relationships can prove fruitful.

Conclusion and Future Research

The results of this meta-analytic study provide support for four of the five POP consequences that we examined, helping to validate conceptual arguments posited by Ferris et al. (1989, 2002). Findings supported the relationships between POP and job satisfaction (+), job stress (−), intent to turnover (−), and organizational commitment (−), but not for job performance (not significant). Future primary research that examines other aspects of the relationship between POP and various facets of job performance, such as contextual performance or organizational citizenship behavior (Borman and Motowidlo 1993; Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994; Van Scotter and Motowidlo 1996), may be interesting. Further, exploring the distinct relationships between the various dimensions of organizational commitment (e.g., Allen and Meyer 1990) and POP would also be helpful. As for other outcomes conceptualized in Ferris and colleagues' POP models (e.g., Ferris et al. 1989, 2002), additional primary studies are required to better determine the true nature of the relationship between POP and absenteeism, job involvement, justice reactions, trust, organizational cynicism, actual political behavior, and organizational citizenship behaviors as these relationships have been studied too infrequently to be meta-analyzed as of yet.

Additional research is also necessary to better understand what moderates the relationship between POP and its outcomes. Whereas Ferris et al. (1989, 2002) two models suggest various moderators at the individual respondent level (understanding, perceived control, personality influences, and demographic influences), we found that age, cultural differences (international versus domestic samples), and work setting (public versus private sector samples) at the *study level* all had differential effects on some outcomes. Although this meta-analytic study provides organizational researchers a more accurate picture of the relationship between POP and extensively studied POP outcomes and moderators, more research is needed on

these and especially other predictors before a more complete picture of the outcomes of POP is realized.

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