## Moderating Role of Political Skill on Perceived Organizational Politics and Job Outcomes: A Study of Higher Education in India

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the effects of perceived organizational politics on the work performance and stress of academia in Indian higher education institutions. It also analyzes the moderating effect of political skill on the link between perceived organizational politics, work performance, and stress among faculties. The study used quantitative methods to collect cross-sectional data and adopted constructs from previous research tailored to the present study's needs. The results indicate that perceived organizational politics affects the work stress and performance of the faculties. Faculty members who perceive high politics at the workplace also have high political skills. A negative link was found between political skill and work performance. Political skill significantly moderates the link between perceived politics and work stress. However, it does not significantly moderate the link between perceived politics and work performance.

Keywords-Organizational Politics, Stress, Performance, Higher Education, Political Skills

#### INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs), such as colleges and universities, have an undeniable role in developing a nation with the transformation of society through intellectual input. In addition to teaching, faculty members are responsible for various tasks, including scientific research, administrative duties, and social work (Meng & Wang, 2018). However, HEIs have experienced many challenges across the world in the form of rapid growth in student enrolment, enhanced focus on performance scrutiny of teaching and research projects, a stronger focus on industry-based teaching and learning activities, and scientific impact of research (Kinman & Johnson, 2019 and references therein). Unfortunately, to meet these challenges effectively, faculties face severe difficulties in obtaining research grants, lack of infrastructure facilities, poor working conditions, politics at the workplace, and lack of empowerment. Moreover, the internal working structure

of universities and other HEIs reveals a complex system operated through decentralized governance and delegated authority with a fluid participation process allowing faculty to contribute based on their interest.

Thus, under such circumstances, political tactics assume importance in decisiveness, especially when concerted choices do not bear exclusively within the jurisdiction of administrative authorities or faculties and deep-seated pressure groups attempt to institute their impact (Lawrence and Ott, 2013 and references therein). In this relations, Ferris et al. (1989) identified organizational politics (OP) as an environmental stressor that affects employees in three different ways:(1) intention to leave, (2) may remain part of the organization without involving politics, and (3) may stay in the organization with active engagement in political activities. Whereas political behavior has two antecedents: personal (political skills (PS), own sense of control, dedication to the organization, and success desires) and organizational (resource scarcity, uncertainty about roles, assessments of performance, job advancement, and participatory decision making) (Lencioni, 2006).

According to Vigoda (2000), "Political perceptions are the silent enemy within organizations." The first-hand experience of being the only female faculty member of a government-aided degree college and personally facing and dealing with various problems frequently serves as prime motivation to conduct this study. Although numerous studies have been conducted on perceived organizational politics (POP), PS, work performance, and job attitudes, there needs to be more research on their link to HEIs from India. Notably, the OP at the HEIs in India differs from organizations in South Asian and Western countries. For example, in India, specifically in Uttar Pradesh (the most populated state of India), the colleges under HEIs are classified as Government Colleges, Government-aided Colleges, Colleges with self-finance courses, Governmentaided colleges with self-finance courses, and Government Colleges with selffinance courses. All these colleges are affiliated with state universities, which creates additional hindrances in the forms of issues related to research supervision, infrastructure facilities, academic courses and programs, viva, copychecking, and discrimination between college and university faculties (though their pay scale and positions are identical), and several other administrative problems.

The present study measures the POP, PS, work stress, and working efficiency of the faculties and explores the influence of the POP on the work performance and stress of faculty members at Indian HEIs.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

#### Perceptions of OP, Work Performance, Stress

Ferris et al. (1989) stressed that "OP is a personal insight, not an independent actuality," and therefore, it is better to call it "POP" instead of "OP." Furthermore, Vigoda and Cohen (1998) argued that OP is generally motivated by power acquisition, whereas Ferris et al. (2002) believed that OP is a constant-sum game in which individual benefits are achieved at the cost of everybody else. Earlier studies have found POP negatively associated with employees' attitudes, health, actions, institutional obligation, occupational contentment, individual performance, and work engagement (e.g., Park & Lee, 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Shrestha, 2021). Additionally, Khan & Hussain (2016) identified the existence of a strong sense of politics in HEIs of Pakistan. Ahmed et al. (2020) found that in universities, faculties are more involved in creating conflicts than gaining power. Additionally, female faculty members 'POP and stress levels are higher, and job satisfaction, job involvement, and commitment are lower than males. However, OP does not affect the work performance of university faculties. Some studies identified that OP significantly affects employees' turnover intention (Adekoya, 2018; Gupta, Singhal & Chauhan, 2021).

On the contrary, politics are not always bad, and it is a tactic that an individual uses for their own or organizational purposes, such as career advancement, recognition, status, power, position, fulfilling ego, control, and success (Vigoda & Cohen, 1998 and references therein). Therefore, OP positively affects employee engagement (Chukwuma & Agbaeze, 2019) and work performance (Abun et al., 2022).

In the organizational context, Motowidlo (2003) defined performance as the overall anticipated organizational assessment of what people do during a predefined time duration. Moreover, Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit (1997) argued that human performance is an evaluative component of positive or negative behavior. Campbell et al. (1996) classified job performance into two parts, i.e., 'job-specific' (that demands the application of knowledge, skills, and abilities and hence, it is part of job descriptions) and 'non-job specific' (also known as contextual or citizenship performance related with maintaining the interpersonal and psychological environment that facilitates job-specific

performance). Furthermore, contextual performance has two facets: job dedication (i.e., self-disciplined behavior) and interpersonal facilitation, and employees with poor contextual performance may not be proficient enough self-managers to have mastered effective PS (Witt et al., 2002 and references therein; Poropat, 2002 and references therein).

Stress is another job outcome in this study. In an organizational setting like HEIs, poor interpersonal relations (Haneef, 2019), academic burden, student-associated concerns, academic work and professional advancement, and clerical matters (Akinmayowa & Kadiri, 2016), role ambiguity (Garg et al., 2022), POP (Goodman, Evans& Carson, 2011) and several socio-demographic factors such as age, academic position, work experience, gender, marital status, nature of institution (Meng & Wang, 2018; Atunde et al., 2020; Adebiyi, 2013) may be stressors and caused with stress among academic staffs. It negatively impacted academics' mental health, job satisfaction, job performance, lack of positive work motivation, and reduced work quality (Ahsan et al., 2009; Tijani, 2015; Urbina-Garcia, 2020).

In developing countries, especially HEIs, lecturers' job stress has become critical (Ubogu & Oghounu, 2022, and references therein). High-stress levels among lecturers have been associated with decreased overall job productivity. Moreover, workplace stress has an influence not only on individuals but also on the organization's future development. Therefore, it should not be overlooked or neglected, and organizations must pay greater attention to effective job stress management.

# Political Skills (PS) - An individual personal resource and role as a moderator

According to Ferris & Kacmar (1992), "Politics at the workplace creates uncertainty and ambiguity where favoritism and self-serving behavior prevails." Thus, it is ubiquitous for people to become more vigilant about others' behavior to protect their personal and organizational interests. In this regard, PS is a resource that helps people manage or reduce uncertainty and threats relating to OP and enhances their positive outcomes (Ferris et al., 2000; Kacmar et al., 2013). It is inherent in a person to some extent, but it can be developed or shaped. People can practice this skill to transform themselves by gaining confidence, trust, and sincerity, creating cooperation among discrete behavior; thus helps in realizing personal as well as professional success (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007; Blickle et al., 2011).

Furthermore, according to Ferris et al. (2007), PS has moderating and direct impacts on outcome and predictor-outcome relationships. In these relations, PS works as a moderator and reduces task conflict (Huo, Wang, & Li, 2018), positively influences work performance, and negatively impacts the intent to resign (García-Chas et al., 2019), mitigates the influence of anxiety, stress, and negative symptoms (González et al., 2020), a good predictor of occupational accomplishment (Kapoutsis et al., 2011), especially contextual accomplishment (Bing et al., 2011); enhance job satisfaction (Rizvi et al., 2022), and work engagement (Bostanci, 2020).

### **Formulation of Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses are suggested in light of the study's scope and the literature review.

**H1:** POP significantly influences the (a) work performance and (b) work stress of the faculties at HEIs.

**H2:** PS significantly affects the (a) work performance and (b) work stress of the academia.

H3: PS significantly affects the POP of academia at the workplace of HEIs

**H4:** PS significantly controls the relation between (a) POP and work performance; (b) POP and work stress

#### **METHODOLOGY**

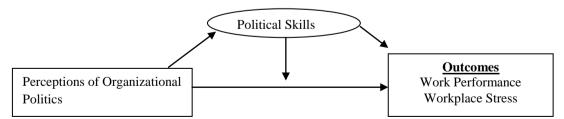
#### Sample and Procedure

Figure 1 shows the theoretical structure of this study. The researcher assumes POP as an independent variable and work performance and stress as dependent variables. The POP can vary considerably across organizations. Data were collected from various colleges and universities to capture maximum political variance. Data were collected from permanent faculties using non-probability sampling techniques. A survey was conducted, assuring participants that they would respond voluntarily and that their information would be kept confidential. In addition, no definition of organizational politics and political skills was given to the respondents.

We have contacted more than 1000 faculties via their social media, WhatsApp groups, and physically and received responses from about 200. Of these, 46 responses were discarded from the analysis due to incompleteness. Hence, 154 responses were considered useable questionnaires. The sample consists of 67% male and 33% female faculty. Among them, assistant professors constituted 70%, followed by 20% professors and 10% associate professors. As per academic

qualification, 60% have NET and Ph.D., 18% have NET and Ph.D., and M. Phil., 19% have masters degrees with Ph.D. without NET, and only 3% have masters degrees with M. Phil. without NET. 38% of total respondents have less than five years of academic experience, 20% have less than ten years of experience, 16% have experience between 10 and 15 years, and 26% possess experience of more than 15 years. Further, 56% were appointed through commission-based direct recruitment, 10% were recruited through honorarium and regularized, 10% were hired through approved self-finance mode, and 24% were recruited through direct recruitment through advertisement. 48% of participating faculties were from commerce and management, 30% were from humanities and social sciences, 15% were from science and IT, and 7% were from other areas. The majority of faculties were married (80%). According to age, most faculty members were between 30 and 40 years (38%) or between 40 and 50 years (32%), followed by 18% of faculty members with ages more than 50 years and 12% with ages less than 30 years. Most respondents were Hindu, 90%, followed by 5% Muslims, 1% Sikh, and 4% belonging to other religions. Additionally, 50% of teaching faculties at HEIs belong to the General category, 30% were OBC, 16% were SC, and 4% were ST. Furthermore, 36% of them taught in Government Colleges, 35% in Government Aided Colleges, 9% each in State and Central Universities, 8% in Government Aided College with Self-Finance, and 3% in Government Colleges with Self-Finance. Most teaching faculty members at HEIs do not have useful contact with higher education authorities (71%) or political parties (90%). Only 29% of faculties have useful contact with higher education authorities, and only 10% have useful contact with political parties.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study



#### **Measures**

Perception of Organizational Politics (POP) is measured by the scale Ferris and Kacmar (1992) developed of 12 items containing three dimensions: general political behavior, going along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies. The reliability estimate for this study's scale ( $\alpha = 0.835$ ) is adequate. For political skills, the researcher adopted a shortened eight items of four subscales (such as

networking ability, apparent sincerity, social astuteness, and interpersonal influence) version of the self-reported "political skill inventory" suggested by Vigoda & Meisler (2010) capturing the dimensions of political skill identified by Ferris et al. (2005). The scale's alpha reliability is ( $\alpha = 0.751$ ) and is adequate. Work performance is measured using seven items from the Bhat and Beri scale (2016). The scale has three dimensions: (i) Task Performance, (ii) Contextual Performance, and (iii) Adaptive Performance. Three items from task performance, two from contextual performance, and two from adaptive performance have been used. Each statement is rated on a five-point Likert scale (1) for always to (5) never. The Cronbach's alpha score on this scale is .61, which is acceptable (Hair et al., 2006). In this study, work performance is referred to as work behaviors devoted to organizational goals and within the control of an individual and measurable, observable, scorable, etc. (Poropat, 2002 and references therein). Work stress is measured using seven workplace stress items from the Daily Stressor Scale (DSS) suggested by Naseem & Khalid (2012). The scale's alpha reliability is ( $\alpha = 0.792$ ) and is adequate. The negatively keyed questions were reverse-coded. The researcher assumes socio-demographic and human capital variables such as age, gender, education, nature of institutes, political affiliation, approach to higher education, mode of recruitment, social category, religion, experience, marital status, position, and subject are controlling variables in this study.

#### **Statistical Tools**

The data is analyzed using SPSS software using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, linear regression analysis, and process macro model 1 of Andrew F. Hayes (2013). The researcher also analyzed the constructs' reliability and average variance and identified that these are greater than the recommended threshold values of 0.6 and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al., 1999). Additionally, convergent validity is supported as all lambda parameters are significant and greater than 0.5.

#### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson coefficient correlation. The mean scores and standard deviation of overall POP (M=2.92, SD=0.69) and its dimensions, such as general political behavior (M=2.94, SD=0.82), going alone get ahead (M=3.03, SD=0.83), and pay and promotion (M=2.67, SD=0.79). Whereas the mean scores and standard deviation of overall PS (M=3.54, SD=0.61) and its dimensions, such as networking ability (M=3.22, SD=0.88),

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apparent sincerity (M=3.82, SD =0.91), social astuteness (M= 3.52, SD 0.74), and interpersonal influence (M= 3.60, SD =0.84). Higher politics are found in going alone to get ahead, followed by general political behavior and pay and promotions among faculties at HEIs. On the other hand, faculties with higher political skills are found to have apparent sincerity, followed by interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and networking ability. The mean and standard deviation of stress (M=3.318, SD =0.723) and job performance (M=2.056, SD =0.616).

Besides, there is a positive link between POP and work stress (r= 0.600; p<0.01), work performance (r= 0.202; p<0.05), and political skill (r= 0.097; p>0.05). It indicates that an increase in perceived organizational politics (POP) leads to an increase in work stress and PS but hampers the performance of academia. Moreover, POP significantly affects the work stress and performance of faculty members. However, there is no statistically significant link between POP and PS. Furthermore, a very weak positive correlation exists between stress and performance (r= 0.066; p>0.05). A negative correlation was found between PS and work performance (r=-.327; p<0.01). However, PS significantly affects work performance. Furthermore, there is a weak correlation between PS and work stress (r= 0.205; p<0.05), though PS substantially affects the work stress of academia at HEIs. Thus, H2 (a) (b) is accepted, while H3 is rejected.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3
General political	2.9459	0.825			
behaviour					
Going alone get ahead	3.0308	0.832			
Pay and promotions	2.675	0.799			
Networking ability	3.224	0.886			
Apparent sincerity	3.828	0.915			
Social astuteness	3.522	0.746			
Interpersonal influence	3.603	0.845			
1. POP	2.929	0.691			
2. PS	3.544	0.618	.097		
			.231		
1. Stress	3.318	0.723	.600**	.205*	
			.000	.011	
2. Work performance	2.056	0.616	.202*	327**	.066
hub 0.04.1 1.0 11.1)		1.(211	.012	.000	.419

<sup>\*\*</sup>p<0.01 level (2-tailed); \*p<0.05 level (2-tailed).

The output of Table 2 depicts a 36% variation (F=85.664, p<0.05) in work stress predicted by the POP. The coefficient ( $\beta$ =0.629, p<0.05) indicates that with one unit change in POP, 0.629 unit change in the work stress. The result (t=9.225, p<0.05) supports the hypothesis that POP significantly impacts the work stress of the faculty members at HEIs. At the same time, the POP predicted a 4% variation (F=6.447, p<0.05) in work performance. The coefficient ( $\beta$ =.180, p<0.05) indicates that with one unit change in POP, there is a change in 0.180 units in the work performance. The result (t=2.539, p<0.05) supports the hypothesis that POP significantly impacts the work performance of the faculty members at HES. Thus, we accept our H1 (a) & (b).

Table 2. The causal association between POP, work stress, and work performance

	R	$\mathbb{R}^2$	F statistic	β	t-value	Sig.
Work stress	0.600	0.360	85.664	0.629	9.255	0.000
Work performance	0.202	0.041	6.447	0.180	2.539	0.012

The outcomes of Table 3 depict the moderation analysis, which revealed a significant overall model. Specifically, the work stress and POP are significantly moderated by PS [F= 33.18; P<0.05]. The model explained 39.9% of the variance. Furthermore, POP [ $\beta$ =1.13, 95% CI (0.61, 1.65), t =4.31, p<0.05] significantly affects the work stress of the faculty members. In addition, PS [ $\beta$ = 0.56, 95% CI (0.16, 0.96), t=2.75, p<0.05] significantly moderated the effect on the link between POP and work stress. The most important thing, i.e., 'Interaction Effect,' when POP and PS interact [ $\beta$ = -0.16, 95% CI (-0.31, -0.01), t= -2.04, p<0.05] yielded a significant prediction of the work stress. Specifically, PS and POP explained an additional 2% of the variance in the work stress  $\Delta$  R<sup>2</sup> = .017, F= 4.17, p<0.05.

The value of  $\beta$ =0.66, p<0.05, 95% of CI [0.52, 0.80] in the maximum effects link shows that the change of one unit in POP will lead to a change of .6643 units in work stress. The value of t = 9.35 confirms the significance of this link. The value of  $\beta$ =0.57, p<0.05, 95% CI [0.43, 0.71] in average effects shows a change of 0.57 units in work stress in the presence of PS as a moderator. The value of t=8.04 confirms the significance of this link. The least effect value of  $\beta$ = 0.50, p<0.05,95% CI [0.33, 0.67] shows that a change of one unit in POP will lead to a change of 0.50 units in work stress in the presence of PS as a moderator. The value of t=5.89 confirms the significance of this link. Thus, we accept our H4 (b).

Table 3. Results of Moderation Analysis of POP, PS, and work stress

Model summary			$R^2$	SE	F		P value
		0.063	0.399	0.321	33.1	84	0.000
$R^2$	F	Coeffici	SE	t-value	95% CI		
		ent			LLCI	ULCI	
		1.133	0.263	4.307	0.613	1.653	0.000
		0.056	0.203	2.753	0.158	0.961	0.006
0.017	4.17	0.023	0.043	0.527	-0.062	0.107	0.043
Politica l skill	Effect	SE	t-value	LLCI	ULCI		p-value
3.0000	.6643	.0711	9.347	.524	.805		0.000
3.6250	.5666	.0705	8.035	.427	.706		0.000
4.0250	.5041	.0856	5.889	.335	.673		0.000
	0.017 Politica I skill 3.0000	0.017 4.17 Politica Effect I skill 3.0000 .6643	R <sup>2</sup> F Coefficient  1.133 0.056 0.017 4.17 0.023 Politica Effect SE 1 skill 3.0000 .6643 .0711 3.6250 .5666 .0705	R <sup>2</sup> F Coeffici SE ent 1.133 0.263 0.056 0.203 0.017 4.17 0.023 0.043 Politica Effect SE t-value 1 skill 3.0000 .6643 .0711 9.347 3.6250 .5666 .0705 8.035	R <sup>2</sup> F Coeffici SE t-value  1.133 0.263 4.307  0.056 0.203 2.753  0.017 4.17 0.023 0.043 0.527  Politica Effect SE t-value LLCI  1 skill  3.0000 .6643 .0711 9.347 .524  3.6250 .5666 .0705 8.035 .427	R <sup>2</sup> F         Coefficient         SE ent         t-value         95%           LLCI         1.133         0.263         4.307         0.613           0.056         0.203         2.753         0.158           0.017         4.17         0.023         0.043         0.527         -0.062           Politica Effect         SE         t-value         LLCI         ULCI           I skill         3.0000         .6643         .0711         9.347         .524         .805           3.6250         .5666         .0705         8.035         .427         .706	R²         F         Coefficient         SE ent         t-value         95% CI           LLCI         ULCI           1.133         0.263         4.307         0.613         1.653           0.056         0.203         2.753         0.158         0.961           0.017         4.17         0.023         0.043         0.527         -0.062         0.107           Politica Effect         SE         t-value         LLCI         ULCI           1 skill         3.0000         .6643         .0711         9.347         .524         .805           3.6250         .5666         .0705         8.035         .427         .706

Table 4 depicts POP, and work performance is significantly moderated by PS [F= 12.89; P<0.05]. The model explained 20.50% of the variance. POP [ $\beta$ =0.92, 95% CI (.41, 1.43), t =3.57, p<0.05] significantly affects the work performance of the faculty members. However, PS [ $\beta$ = 0.18, 95% CI (-0.22, 0.57), t=0.89, p>0.05] did not significantly moderate the effect on the link between POP and work performance. However, when POP and PS interact [ $\beta$ = -0.21, 95% CI (-0.36, -0.07), t= -2.85, p<0.05] yielded a significant prediction of the work performance. Specifically, PS and POP explained an additional 4% of the variance in the work performance  $\Delta$  R<sup>2</sup> = .0429, F change = 8.0956, p<0.05.

The value of  $\beta$ =0.28, p<0.05, 95% of CI [0.14, 0.42] in the maximum effects link shows that the change of one unit in POP will lead to a change of 0.279 units in work performance. The value of t = 4.012 confirms the significance of this link. The value of  $\beta$ =0.15, p<0.05, 95% CI [0.01, 0.28] in average effects shows a change of 0.15 units in work performance in the presence of PS as a moderator. The value of t=2.112 confirms the significance of this link. The least effect value of  $\beta$ = 0.06, p>0.05, 95% CI [-0.11, 0.23] shows that a change of one unit in POP will lead to the change of 0.06 units in work performance in the presence of PS as

a moderator. The value of t=0.7209 confirms the non-significance of this link. It reveals that H4 (a) is rejected.

Table 4. Results of Moderation Analysis of POP, PS, and work performance

Model summary		R	$\mathbb{R}^2$	SE	F		P	
								value
			0.453	0.205	0.308	12.89		0.000
Moderation	$\mathbb{R}^2$	F	Coeffici	SE	t-value	95% CI		
model and			ent			LLCI	ULCI	-
interaction								
effect								
POP			0.9195	0.2577	3.5683	0.4103	1.4286	0.000
PS			0.1779	0.1990	0.8940	-0.2153	0.5712	0.373
POP× PS	0.043	8.095	-0.2134	0.0750	-2.8453	-0.3616	-0.0652	0.005
	Political	Effect	SE	t-value	LLCI	ULCI	p value	
	skill							
Maximum	3.000	.2792	.0696	4.0116	.1417	.4167	0.000	
effect								
Average effect	3.625	.1458	.0690	2.1116	.0094	.2822	0.036	
Least effect	4.025	.0604	.0838	.7209	1052	.2260	0.472	

#### DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the POP at the workplace strongly affects work performance and the stress of academia at HEIs. Our research findings strongly support the claim that when employees experience politics in the working environment, their performance suffers, and their job stress rises. In other words, POP is unfavorable to desired outcomes like performance at the workplace. Our study's result contradicts the study by Ahmed et al. (2020), who postulated that OP does not affect university teachers' performance. Whereas the present study partially supports the findings of Vigoda & Talmud (2010), who disclosed that POP significantly affects job stress.

Our findings support the notion that PS decreases workplace stress, whereas a negative relationship was discovered between PS and work performance. Simultaneously, our research found a substantial connection between POP and PS. Such a scenario can be explained using the following explanation. A person with good political skills uses most of their time managing and improving their

social status by developing new links with people in influential positions. Furthermore, they cannot focus on their work performance due to their time investment in developing such relations since their career progress depends not on their work performance but their political skill. Therefore, faculty members who have used their personal and social resources are at lower stress levels and have lower work performance. Thus, the results of our study stand in partial contradiction to the findings of Syed and Khan, 2015, and García-Chas et al., 2019, who revealed that PS is positively related to job performance.

It is further observed from the analyzed data that academics with higher PS are better at stress management, although they have higher perceived politics at the workplace. In other words, PS significantly moderates the relationship between POP and work stress. However, PS has no discernible effect on the relationship between POP and work performance. PS reduces the negative impact of POP on job output.

This study found that organizational politics have a detrimental impact on job stress and performance; hence, the responsible authority (i.e., UGC) and Government (both central and state) must take measures to eliminate organizational and political conduct. Furthermore, like orientation and refreshment programs, there should be a few training programs for enhancing good communication, emotional intelligence, and other social skills like political skills and stress management. Such training should be mandatory. Further, these programs should be given credit points to help in the career advancement scheme of academia. Additionally, an 'OCTAPACE' culture (i.e., open, collaborative, trust, autonomy, pro-action, authenticity, confrontation, and experimentation) should be brought into HEIs of India to limit the detrimental impacts of organizational politics.

#### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH WORK

Perceived politics at the workplace strongly affect work performance and cause stress in academia at HEIs. The performance of faculties suffers when they experience politics, and their job stress rises. Thus, perceived politics in the workplace strongly affect work performance and the stress of academia. A negative relationship exists between PS and work performance, and a substantial connection exists between POP and PS.

Furthermore, additional research is required to address the limitations of this study. The data employed in this study are survey data from a limited sample size; therefore, generalizing the research conclusions to the whole HES in India

may be difficult. Thus, the analysis in further research must be performed using a large sample of data. Besides, we also used non-probability sampling methods such as convenience and snowball for populations dominated by faculties at HES of north Indian states like UP, Bihar, and MP. As a result, there is a limitation to generalizing the results of this study. We need to validate the findings of this investigation with more representative samples in future research.

Furthermore, the participant data was presumed to be neutral and truthful. However, there is no certainty that respondents completed all survey questions accurately. The study employed a self-report questionnaire administered using Google Forms, which has previously been utilized in research by specialists in their studies. Even though the cross-sectional questionnaire was anonymous, participants may have been reluctant to reply to survey topics that were sensitive to their positions at their institutions. As a result, we note that the research design of this study contains methodological limitations. Through a longitudinal study design, it is necessary to deduce the causality of organizational politics on outcome variables more clearly. Finally, we propose that a direct comparison of South Asian and Western populations be conducted to investigate the moderating impact of specific cultural contextual variables (e.g., cultural values) on POP and work-related outcomes.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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