

Organizational Politics and its Correlates: A Study on Higher Education System of India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship of perception of organizational politics (POP) with its antecedents and consequences. The study proposes a model including three levels of antecedents which are never tested in a single study before. Organizational level antecedents include scarcity of resources and workforce diversity. Work environment level includes relationship and role conflict. Individual level includes need for power with gender and age of employees. Organizational commitment, job anxiety and intention to turnover were undertaken as consequences of POP. Primary data is collected through structured questionnaire from 294 faculty members of two central universities in Northern India. The sample constitutes Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors from various departments of the Universities. Data was analyzed using simple linear regression analysis and t-test. The results indicated a strong support for proposed linkage of POP with scarcity of resources, workforce diversity, relationship and role conflict, organizational commitment, job anxiety and intention to turnover. On the other hand, no relationship was found between POP and need for power. This study will be helpful in motivating future research for improving the quality of higher education in India by reducing the reducing the level of POP and its unfavorable consequences by controlling its antecedents.

Keywords: Organizational Politics, Scarcity of Resources, Workforce Diversity, Relationship and Role Conflict, Need for Power, Organizational Commitment, Job Anxiety, Intention to Turnover

INTRODUCTION

Organizational politics (OP) is pervasive in all forms of organizations, across all the levels (Zalenick, 1977). Whether organizations are profit making systems or social welfare systems they are political structures.

Organizational politics is an intriguing field of study. It has been observed in the past that decision making processes are not completely rational towards the betterment of the organization. Individuals and groups influence these formal and organizational oriented processes through informal means for promotion of their self-interest. These informal influences were earlier considered as power and bureaucratic dysfunctions, later on, have been given the label "Organizational Politics". Different authors offer different views to define OP, however, none of them have captured complexity of the term. Drory and Romm (1990) presented a classification of definitions of OP on the basis of frequency with which different authors used various elements to define it. The elements in the review are divided into three basic categories, that is, outcomes, means and situational characteristics. Considering all the above mentioned classifications, Valle and Witt

(2001) defined organizational politics as “actions that (a) are inconsistent with accepted organizational norms, (b) are designed to promote self-interest, and (c) are taken without regard for, and even at the expense of organizational goals”.

Previous research has measured it in terms of perception of people. These studies are based on Lewin’s (1936) argument. According to which rather than responding on reality employees respond to their perception of reality. Likewise, to understand insights of politics in organizations it should be studied in terms of perception of people. For the purpose of this study, organizational politics is studied from cognitive approach, that is, from the perspective of individual’s perception.

Previous research has studied OP from either from macro or micro perspective. Studies based on micro level perspective have focused on individual level antecedents. While organizational and work environment level antecedents were focused in macro level studies. Multi-level perspective, considering both levels of factors (macro and micro) was in focus of very few. Therefore, this study focuses on studying OP from a multi level perspective. Present stadiums at testing OP’s relationship with the three levels of determinants and consequences.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Politics is studied from three perspectives that is, macro, micro and multi-level perspectives. Gandz and Murray (1980) have emphasized on department or group level politics and studied organizational politics from a macro level perspective. Drory (1993) have studied it form micro level perspective, emphasizing on the individual level politics. A very few researchers like Ferris et al. (1989) have studied it from multi-level perspective, emphasizing on both macro and micro level variables to study organizational politics. They introduced the model of the perception of organizational politics (POP).

The model presents three levels of POP antecedents and consequences. Centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, span of control were undertaken as organizational level antecedents; advancement opportunity, skill variety, autonomy and feedback were introduced at work environment level; and Machiavellians, self-monitoring, age and gender were proposed as individual level antecedents. Understanding of political games and control over formal organizational processes are treated as moderators between relationships of OP and its consequents. The model has also proposed POP’s consequences at three levels, (psychological, attitudinal and behavioral). Psychological outcomes include constructs like employee stress and exhaustion. Behavioral outcomes include constructs that represents a negative change in employees’ attitude like trust, dissatisfaction, organizational commitment, and Organizational citizenship behavior. Behavioral outcomes are constituted of constructs which represents change in employee behavior like tardiness, neglecting work absenteeism and job turnover. The model first shows the impact of antecedents on POP. It then reflects the impact of POP on its consequents as mediated by the variables: control and understanding.

PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The proposed framework is based on perception of organizational politics model, developed by Ferris et al. (1989). The framework first represents the relationship of POP with proposed antecedents and consequents. Since the antecedents proposed in Ferris et al.’s model are tested in previous research, few antecedents that may also affect POP are introduced in present study at three levels (refer Figure 1).

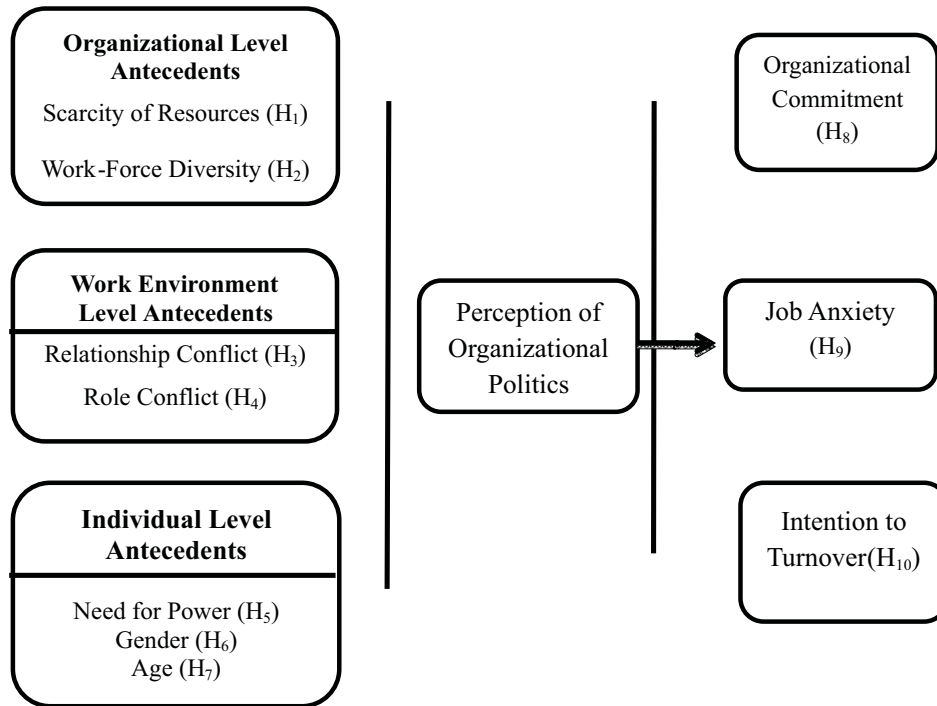


Figure 1. Proposed research model

Considering the proposed research model, following hypothesis are being drawn:

H₁: Scarcity of resources and POP will be positively related.

H₂: Workforce diversity and POP will be positively related.

H₃: Relationship conflict and POP will be positively related

H₄: Role conflict and POP will be positively related.

H₅: Employees need for power and POP will be positively related.

H₆: Female employees will perceive more politics in organizations in comparison of male employees.

H₇: Old aged employees will perceive more politics in organizations in comparison in comparison of young aged employees.

H₈: POP and organizational commitment will be negatively related.

H₉: POP and job anxiety will be positively related.

H¹⁰: POP and intention to turnover will be positively related.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted. The study was based on survey technique. Data were collected using survey method from 294 teaching staff working in two major central universities of India. A total 1580 respondents were approached through personally as well as online, out of which only 294 responses were received, resulted in 18.6% response rate.

Six incomplete responses were discarded, and the final analysis was conducted on 288 responses, comprises of 89.9% male and only 10.1% female respondents.

Measurement Instrument

To design questionnaire for the study following structured were undertaken:

POP was measured with a six-item scale taken from Kacmar and Carlson (1997) POP scale.

Scarcity of resources was measured with four-item scale adopted from an eight-item scale developed by Pareek (1983).

Perception of workforce diversity was assessed using three items adapted from Jehn, North craft and Neale's (1999) scale to measure perception diversity in the workforce.

Role conflict was measured using nine items, adopted from Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) scale.

Relationship conflict was measured with the help of a five-item scale, taken from Jehn (1995) scale.

Need for power was measured with the help of 12-item coercive and persuasive power scale (CPP) developed by Pareek (1994). The scale items related to two sub-dimensions of need for power - coercive power (six items) and persuasive power (six items).

Organizational commitment was measured with the help of 12-item scale adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990) scale, measuring three sub-dimensions - continuance commitment, affective commitment, and normative commitment.

To measure job anxiety, eight item scale was adapted from The State-Trait Inventory for Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety (STICSA)", developed by Gros, Antony, Simms, and McCabe (2007).

Intention to turnover was measured with a two-item scale developed by Cropanzano, James, and Konovsky (1993).

All the constructs used were measured using a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A pilot study of 45 faculty members working in the same two major central universities was conducted to ensure reliability and validity of the instrument. Composite reliability ranged from 0.746 to 0.917, higher than 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). AVE of all constructs was higher than 0.5, ensuring convergent validity among construct items. Correlation among all the items was higher with corresponding constructs in comparison of other constructs, ensuring discriminate validity.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to test the relationship of POP with proposed antecedents and consequences, linear regression analyses were conducted (refer Table I). Relationship of undertaken antecedents was tested using linear regression analysis. Only two constructs of individual level antecedents (gender and age) were tested using independent sample t-test.

Assumptions of linear regression analysis were tested before applying the test. Assumptions of linearity, normality, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were tested. To test linearity, results of ANOVA test were considered. The significance value of f-static for all the constructs was below 0.05. Thus, relationships between independent and dependent constructs were found to be linear. To reconfirm linearity of relationships, scatter plots were visually examined. Relationships on the plots were seen to be linear. To test multicollinearity among independent constructs, VIF values were used. The set of five predictor constructs were tested for collinearity. The collinearity between the exogeneous constructs was insignificant. VIF values were less than the recommended level of 5 (refer Table I). Thus, multicolleniariry among the predictor constructs was not found. The residuals were found to be scattered randomly and not showing any increasing or decreasing pattern. Thus, the data is considered to be approximately homoscedastic. To test normality of distribution, skewness static was divided by its standard error. The values obtained were within the range of ± 1.96 , except for values of job anxiety and intention to turnover. To reconfirm results of normality test, normal distribution curve of measured variables was drawn. Distribution curve of intention to turnover and job anxiety were found to be skewed. To normalize the distribution, outliers were identified using Z-scores. All the responses belonging to the skewed constructs were transformed to a standardized value and tested at a critical value of ± 4 (Hair et al., 2009). Thus, any case with standardized Z-score beyond range of ± 4 was considered to be an outlier. These outliers were replaced with mean value of the scale (3). After making treatment of outliers, descriptive statistics was again calculated. It was found that mean and skewness of the treated variables got reduced. Further on dividing the skewness with standard error of skewness, the values now obtained were within the range of ± 1.96 . Thus, distribution for all the constructs was assumed to be

approximately normal. To reconfirm normality of distribution, Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted. Results of Shapiro-Wilk test reconfirmed normality of distribution for all the constructs ($p > 0.05$). Distribution curves were also drawn again and distribution was found to be approximately normal.

On satisfying the assumptions, linear regression analysis was conducted. Results of linear regression analysis are presented in Table I.

Antecedents

Perception of organizational politics was regressed on five predictor constructs/ antecedents.

Scarcity of resources, workforce diversity, role conflict and relationship conflict were significantly related to POP. Whereas, need for power had no significant impact on the same.

Regression analysis was conducted, taking scarcity of resources as independent variable and perception of organizational politics as depended variable. Scarcity of resources explained 18.4% variance in employee's POP ($R^2 = 0.184$). The relationship was found to be positive with moderate strength ($\beta = 0.429$, $R = 0.429$). Since p value was less than 0.05, we reject null hypothesis that is, resource scarcity and POP are not related ($t = 4.005$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, results of regression analysis supported hypothesis 1.

Workforce diversity explained about 12% variance in employee's POP ($R^2 = 0.120$). The relationship was positive with a moderate strength ($\beta = 0.313$, $R = 0.347$). Considering p value of less than 0.05, we reject the corresponding null hypothesis that is; workforce diversity would not be related to POP ($t = 3.051$, $p = 0.003$). Therefore, results supported Hypothesis 2 that is, workforce diversity is positively related to POP.

Relationship conflict explained 52.6% variance in perception of organizational politics ($R^2 = 0.277$). The relationship was positive with a moderate strength ($\beta = 0.444$, $R = 0.526$). The impact of relationship conflict on POP was significant ($t = 5.10$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, we reject corresponding null hypothesis that is, there would be no relationship between relationship conflict and POP. Results supported Hypothesis 3.

Role conflict explained 10.4% variance in perception of organizational politics ($R^2 = 0.104$). The relationship was positive with moderate strength ($\beta = 0.349$, $R = 0.322$). The p value was computed to be less than 0.05, therefore we reject the corresponding null hypothesis that is; there would be no relationship between role conflict and perception of organizational politics ($t = 2.81$, $p = 0.007$). Hypothesis 3 that is, role conflict would be positively related to POP is supported.

Need for power explained a negligible variance in perception of organizational politics ($R^2 = 0.001$). Strength of the relationship is very low ($R = 0.024$). Although relationship was found to be negative but insignificant ($\beta = -0.036$, $p = 0.843$). Therefore, we failed to reject corresponding null hypothesis that is, there is no relationship between employees need for power and POP.

The remaining two proposed antecedents were demographic characteristics of respondents namely, gender and age. Therefore, independent sample t-test was applied to find out the significant difference in level of POP of male and female employees; and young and old aged employees.

The mean values of POP for male ($\bar{x} = 2.77$) and female employees ($\bar{x} = 2.92$) represented that female employees have higher perception of POP in comparison of male employees (refer Table II).

In order to test the significance difference between level of perception of organizational politics of male and female employees, independent sample t-Test (one-tailed) was applied. Before applying t-test, assumption of homogeneity of variance must be verified. The assumption states that there must be no significant difference between variance of the groups. In order to test the assumption, Levene's test for equality of variances was applied. The significance value of more than 0.05 represented that there is no significant difference in variance of male and female employees ($p = 0.884$, refer Table II).

On verifying the assumption of homogeneity of variance, t-Test was applied. The value of t-static was found to be lower than 1.645 ($t = -0.410$, $p = 0.683$, refer Table II). Hypothesis 6 that is, female employees, perceives their organization to be more political in comparison of male employees was not supported.

The mean values of POP for young aged ($\bar{x} = 2.78$) and old aged employees ($\bar{x} = 2.79$), represented that level of POP of these two groups was almost equal (refer Table II). Still to test any significant difference in level of POP of the two groups, t-Test (one tailed) was applied. Results of Levene's test for equality of variances represented that there is no significant difference in variance of young aged and old aged employees ($p =$

0.358, refer table II). Results of t-test presented a value of t-static, which was lower than 1.645 ($t = -.040$, $p = 0.968$, refer table II). Hypothesis 7 that is, old aged employees have higher level of political perception in comparison of young aged employees, was not supported.

In addition to the pre-defined hypotheses, to find out differences in level of POP of various groups, respondents were further classified on various demographic grounds. Additional demographic classifications included university in which respondents were presently employed, educational qualifications, designation, tenure with present organization and religion. Results of Levene's test for equality of variances represented that there is no significant difference in variances of groups made on various demographic characteristics (refer Table II). To test significant difference in level of POP of employees working in BHU and AMU, t-Test was applied. No significant difference in level of POP was found in employees of BHU and AMU ($t = -0.357$, $p = 0.722$).

To test significant difference in level of POP of employees belonging to various educational qualifications, hierarchical levels/ designations, tenures and religions, one-way ANOVA was applied. No significance difference was found in level of POP of post graduate, doctorate and employees holding other qualifications ($f = 0.539$, $p = 0.567$). Level of POP of Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors was not found to be significantly different from each other ($f = 1.578$, $p = 0.214$). Employees of various tenures had similar level of POP ($f = 0.497$, $p = 0.686$). There was no significant difference in level of POP of employees belonging to Hindu, Islam, Christian and other religions ($f = 1.737$, $p = 0.168$). Therefore, results indicated that level of employee's POP is not affected by any of the undertaken demographic characteristics.

Further, significant difference in POP of groups made on various demographic characteristics was tested separately for BHU and AMU. Results of t-test and one-way ANOVA for comparison of means indicated that none of the demographic characteristic specifies differences in level of POP, except for work tenure of employees in BHU (refer Table III and V). A significant difference in level of POP was found in employees of BHU belonging to various tenures (refer Table III).

Since there were four groups made on the basis of tenure, to find out POP of which group varies from other group, Tuckey's Post-Hoc Test was conducted. Results indicated that level of POP of employees with work tenure of more than 5 years and less than or equal to 15 years differs significantly from level of POP of employees with work tenure of more than 30 years and less than or equal to 45 years (refer Table IV). The mean values represented that people with work tenure of 30-45 years ($\bar{x} = 3.67$) have higher level of political perception than employees with 5-15 years ($\bar{x} = 2.32$) of work tenure.

Consequences of POP

As proposed in the model of perception of organizational politics (Ferris et al., 1989), POP has implication on various work related outcomes. For the purpose of this study, relationship of POP with three of the consequences was tested. The consequences selected for the purpose of this study were job anxiety, organizational commitment and intention to turnover. To test relationship of POP with proposed consequences, linear regression analysis was done. The results are presented in Table I.

POP explained 16.9% variance in organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.169$). The strength of relationship was moderate ($R = 0.411$). Since the relationship is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.392$, $p = 0.000$), employees with higher POP will be less committed to their organization.

The results supported Hypothesis 8 that is POP and organizational commitment will be negatively related.

Since organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct, relationship of POP is tested with its three dimensions individually. The three dimensions are affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC). On one hand, a significant negative relationship of POP is found with AC and CC ($R^2 = 0.302$, $\beta = -0.446$, $p = 0.00$ and $R^2 = 0.083$, $\beta = -0.237$, $p = 0.016$ respectively). While on the other hand, relationship between POP and NC was found to be insignificant ($R^2 = 0.041$, $\beta = -0.155$, $p = 0.094$). The strength of its relationship was highest with AC ($R = 0.550$), followed by CC ($R = 0.287$). Strength of relationship between POP and NC was low ($R = 0.202$).

Perception of organizational politics explained 6.3% variance in job anxiety ($R^2 = 0.063$). The strength of relationship is moderate ($R = 0.251$). Their relationship was found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.309$, $p = 0.036$).

Results supported Hypothesis 9 that is, POP and job anxiety will be positively related.

POP explained 20.3% variance in employee's intention to turnover ($R^2 = 0.203$). The strength of relationship is moderate ($R = 0.451$). Their relationship was found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.523$, $p = 0.000$).

Results supported Hypothesis 10 that is, POP and intention to turnover will be positively related.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided many insights into the phenomenon of organizational politics: The research has not only provided an evidence to support the findings of previous studies on OP (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) but it has also provided some contradicting findings. Among the three levels of antecedents, organizational level and work environment level antecedent were found to be significantly related to POP whereas individual level antecedents had no significant impact on the same. We have come to better understand how politics is perceived and acted upon in universities. With increased understanding perhaps organizational and individual improvements may be made.

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Table 1 Results of linear regression analysis

		VIF	R	R ²	.	T	Sig	
—	Organizational Level		1.47	0.429	0.184	0.429	4.005	.000*
		WD→POP	1.43	0.347	0.120	0.313	3.051	.003*
	Work Environment Level	RSC→POP	2.35	0.526	0.277	0.444	5.100	.000*
		RC→POP	1.91	0.322	0.104	0.349	2.807	.007*
Individual Level	NFP→POP	1.13	0.024	0.001	-0.036	-0.199	.843	
Consequences	POP→OC		0.411	0.169	-0.392	-3.712	.000*	
	POP→AC		0.550	0.302	-0.446	-5.424	.000*	
	POP→CC		0.287	0.083	-0.237	-2.473	.016*	
	POP→NC		0.202	0.041	-0.155	-1.699	.094	
	POP→A		0.251	0.063	0.309	2.137	0.036*	
	POP→ITO		0.451	0.203	0.523	4.165	0.000*	

Note: Regression is significant at the 0.05 level; SC, Scarcity of Resources; WD, Workforce diversity; RSC, Relationship conflict; RC, Role conflict; NFP, Need for power; POP, Perception of organizational politics; ITO, Intention to turnover; A, Job anxiety; OC, Organizational commitment.

Table 2 Level of POP on the basis of various demographic characteristics and results of t-test to identify difference in their means

Demographic Characteristics		Mean (x)	SD	t-Test			
				F		t-Test for Equity of Means	
					Sig.	T	Sig.
University	BIU	2.76	0.99	0.538	0.466	-0.357	0.722
	AMU	2.84	0.88				
Gender	Male	2.77	0.95	0.210	0.884	-0.410	0.683
	Female	2.92	0.90				
Age	Young	2.78	0.89	0.856	0.358	-0.040	0.968
	Old	2.79	1.02				
				One Way ANOVA			
				Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		ANOVA	
				Levene's Statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Educational Qualification	Post Graduate	2.52	0.68	1.430	0.246	0.539	0.586
	Doctorate	2.84	0.99				
	Others	2.78	1.17				
Designation	Assistant Professor	2.66	0.93	0.854	0.430	1.578	0.214
	Associate Professor	3.33	1.09				
	Professor	2.75	0.92				
Tenure		2.83	0.64	0.841	0.477	0.497	0.686
		2.67	0.96				
		2.94	1.00				
		3.06	0.98				
Religion	Hindu	2.73	0.96	0.334	0.717	1.737	0.168
	Islam	2.88	0.92				
	Christian	3.08	0.82				
	Others	4.83	0.81				

Table III Comparison of level of POP on the basis of various demographic characteristics in BHU

Note: t-test and f-test are significant at the 0.05 level.

Demographic Characteristics		Mean (\bar{x})	SD	t-Test			
				Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equity of Means	
				F	Sig.	T	Sig.
Gender	Male	2.8	0.99	0.310	0.860	0.248	0.806
	Female	2.6	1.29				
Age	Young	2.70	0.92	1.011	0.320	-0.369	0.714
	Old	2.81	1.09				
				One Way ANOVA			
				Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		ANOVA	
				Levene's Static	Sig.	F	Sig.
Educational Qualification	Post Graduate	1.67	0.96	1.430	0.246	0.606	0.550
	Doctorate	2.78	1.00				
	Others	2.67	0.98				
Designation	Assistant Professor	2.59	1.03	2.820	0.710	2.950	0.064
	Associate Professor	4.33	0.00				
	Professor	2.72	0.93				
Tenure		3.08	0.52	1.368	0.271	3.280	0.034
		2.32	0.92				
		3.06	1.12				
		3.67	0.45				
Religion	Hindu	2.71	0.96	0.334	0.717	2.390	0.104
	Islam	-	-				
	Christian	2.50	1.01				
	Others	4.83	0.00				

Note: t-test and f-test are significant at the 0.05 level.

Table IV Results of Tukey HSD post-hoc test

Tenure	Tenure comparisons	Mean Difference	Sig.
>0 and <=5	>5 and <= 15	.760	.294
	> 15 and <= 30	.021	1.000
	>30 and <= 45	-.583	.737
>5 and <= 15	>0 and <=5	-.760	.294
	> 15 and <= 30	-.739	.236
	>30 and <= 45	-1.344*	.050
> 15 and <= 30	>0 and <=5	-.021	1.000
	>5 and <= 15	.739	.236
	>30 and <= 45	-.604	.682
>30 and <= 45	>0 and <=5	.583	.737
	>5 and <= 15	1.344*	.050
	> 15 and <= 30	.604	.682

Note: * Mean difference at significance level of 0.05.

Table V Comparison of level of pop on the basis of various demographic characteristics in AMU

Demographic Characteristics		Mean (x)	SD	t-Test			
				Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equity of Means	
				F	Sig.	T	Sig.
Gender	Male	2.78	0.90	0.055	0.817	-0.629	0.535
	Female	3.07	0.84				
Age	Young	2.91	0.86	0.061	0.806	0.464	0.647
	Old	2.75	0.93				
				One Way ANOVA			
				Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		ANOVA	
				Levene's Static	Sig.	F	Sig.
Educational Qualification	Post Graduate	2.60	0.64	2.183	0.135	0.596	0.559
	Doctorate	3.00	0.96				
	Others	2.83	1.65				
Designation	Assistant Professor	2.78	0.74	0.563	0.577	0.119	0.888
	Associate Professor	3.00	1.06				
	Professor	2.79	0.93				
Tenure		2.08	0.12	1.258	0.313	1.374	0.277
		3.22	0.78				
		2.83	0.95				
		2.46	1.03				
Religion	Hindu	3.33	0.96	3.145	0.656	0.452	0.643
	Islam	2.88	0.92				
	Christian	3.67	1.02				
	Others	-					

Note: t-test and f-test are significant at the 0.05 level