

# Examining the Influential Experiences of Organizational Politics in the Higher Education Sector Punjab, Pakistan

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The inevitable phenomenon of organizational politics is influenced by various factors and instigates devastating consequences on a workplace. Power and politics are considered as key elements in decision making, which shapes the behaviours of employees. Organizational politics have been considered as a significant reality that is widely observed among employees and is influenced by various factors. The perception of organizational politics has been addressed by various scholars and further enriched by identifying influential factors according to cultural, demographic and individual changes. This study primarily focused on determining the perception of organizational politics by extending previous research. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge related to organizational politics by explaining and empirically examining the relationship between ‘scarcity of resources’, ‘workplace belongingness’ and ‘Machiavellianism’ among employees of higher education sector in Punjab, Pakistan. The study is innovative in its approach as it defines and empirically examines the relationship between workplace belongingness and the perception of organizational politics. The results were analysed by using SMART-PLS and found that influential variables belong to different categories and instigate the level of organizational politics. The results found that scarcity of resources positively influenced the perception of organizational politics. Workplace belongingness was found to negatively influence the perception of organizational politics. Machiavellianism was also found to influence the political activity at workplace. This study suggested taking appropriate measures to reduce the political phenomenon in the higher education sector to reduce negative impacts and consequences.

**Key words:** *Perception of Organizational Politics (POP), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Machiavellianism (Mach), Scarcity of Resources (SOR).*

## Introduction

The inextricable phenomenon of power, influence, and politics at an organizational level has attracted the attention of scholars for decades. Politics and power are considered as an influential and interesting aspect of organizational behaviour as these skills can be used as resources for influencing others (Ellen III, Ferris, & Buckley, 2013; Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Nasurdin, Ahmad, & Razalli, 2014). Research scholars have contributed to the stream of research for organizational politics by developing theory and explaining its social influences (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewe, & Johnson, 2003; Rosen & Levy, 2013; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Ferris et al. (2007) determined that by implementing influential techniques and delivery styles, individuals could be effectively influenced. This was achieved by utilizing a political skill set and various categories of influential factors including organizational, individual, and environmental influences. Later, the concept of POP emerged during research on the perception of employees related to working environment and became a focus area for researchers (Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ammeter, 2002). Research scholars have embarked on conceptual links by developing organizational political theory under which power, politics, and influencing working environments has become an area of interest through the effective utilization of power in society.

Political behaviour is widely perceived by the public as self-serving, dishonest, and an anti-social behaviour. Research scholars, however, have viewed it as a less ferocious phenomenon (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Politics is considered as necessary element for organizational processes and as a positive act, rather than an evil. Research scholars have recognized political phenomenon as negative as well as positive due to its consequences and potential outcomes (Ferris & Treadway, 2012). Organizational politics has always been found to be operational in workplaces and is distinguished from the perception of self-serving from the perspective of its participants (Gandz & Murray, 1980). The word "Politics" originated from ancient word 'Polis' as described in studies by Aristotle when discussing political communities in organizations (Hansen, 2006). Further, research scholars have defined the term 'Politikon' which was later termed as 'Political Animal' to describe the societal values shared among humans and is considered as the purpose of existence. Moreover, politics is defined as an attempt to develop and secure personal benefits and the protections of personal objectives in organizational workplaces (Gull & Zaidi, 2012; Kaya, Aydin, & Ayhan, 2016). Political phenomenon is believed to instigate the usage of illegitimate power and scarce resources for protecting personal objectives at the workplace and organizations (Heywood,

2014). Organizational politics has previously been perceived as a source of conflict, power utilization, domination, and authority to protect self-interest.

The POP model proposed and developed by Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989), suggests to explore working conditions that instigate political behaviour among employees to protect self-interest. The POP model includes three categories of influences which causes the emergence of political behaviour at workplace. These categories include organizational influences, job/environmental influences, and personal influential factors. The first category of influential factors under the umbrella of organizational concerns includes centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, and span of control. These factors influence the workplace political behaviour of employees and drive them towards detrimental outcomes (Marasi, Bennett, & Budden, 2018). The second category classified as job/work environment influences included job ambiguity, autonomy, relation among co-workers, supervisors and feedback. These factors describe uncertain working environments as an influence for political behaviour among employees (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). The third category is personal influential factors including self-monitoring, age, gender, experience and Machiavellianism. The model further included outcomes of the perception of politics among employees. These outcomes entail negative and detrimental attitudinal, psychological and behavioural consequences (Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris & Treadway, 2012).

The POP model categorized antecedents including organizational, job/work environment and personal influences. This stream of research demonstrates that later research scholars have introduced and empirically examined various antecedents after the development of the POP model based on diverse justifications and cultural differences. These antecedents included organizational climate (O'connor & Morrison, 2001), trust (Poon, 2003), organizational size (Fedors, Ferris, Harrell-Cook, & Russ, 1998), hierarchal level (Muhammad, 2007), organizational justice (Rosen, Harris, & Kacmar, 2009), relationships among co-workers (Riaz, 2013), Machiavellianism (Ferris & Treadway, 2012; Riaz, 2013), age and gender (Buenger, Forte, Boozer, & Maddox, 2007; Muhammad, 2007), favouritism (Ahmed, 2018; Daskin & Tezer, 2012), strategic control (Elbanna, 2016), accountability and performance (Hochwarter et al., 2007) and scarcity of organizational resources (Ahmed, 2018; Poon, 2003). Following this research stream, scholars have suggested and recommended the utilization of the POP model. The introduction of various new antecedents, depending upon the cultural phenomenon, may be included, examined, and empirically assessed at the POP level in any organization (Ahmed, 2018; Elbanna, 2016).

According to research scholars, organizations have observed dynamic and challenging working environments in terms of job insecurity, distrust, and ineffective communication. This reduces relation among co-workers at the workplace (Rosen et al., 2009). Further, it has been empirically examined that power and politics influence decision- making for self-

interest, protection, and to achieve personal goals (Bouckenooghe, Zafar, & Raja, 2015). Since the development of the POP model, various negative and positive outcomes have been empirically examined. These outcomes include anxiety, satisfaction, turnover, intention, and absenteeism (Ferris et al., 2002; Saleem, 2015), role conflict (Riaz, 2013), and role ambiguity (Poon, 2003). Further factors that have also been identified include de-motivation, work mode (Cho & Yang, 2018), social influence (Ferris, Perrewé, Daniels, Lawong, & Holmes, 2017), burnout (M. N. Baloch, Jhatial, & Halepota, 2017), reduction in creativity (Malik et al., 2018) and declined organizational effectiveness (Elbanna, 2016). These antecedents have all been examined so far in all three categories of experiences in POP model.

The prime aim of the present study is to determine the level of POP in relation to political behavior. Research scholars have identified that the perception of reality is more important than reality itself in the assessment of attitudes and behaviours of individuals (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Ogungbamila, 2013). Organizations and workplaces have faced various issues related to organizational political phenomenon as it causes stress (Munro, Rodwell, & Harding, 1998), declined organizational commitment (Leather, Beale, & Sullivan, 2003), frustration (Harris, Harris, & Wheeler, 2009), cynicism (Buenger et al., 2007), negligent behaviour (Riaz, 2013), psychological strain, turnover intention (Ahmed, 2018; Daskin, 2013; Ferris & Hochwarter, 2011), decreased innovation (Danish, Humayon, Aslam, Usman, & Tariq, 2014), counterproductive work behavior (Akanni, Oladejo, & Oduaran, 2018), reduced performance (Akinbode, 2009), organizational inefficiency (Akanni et al., 2018), dissatisfaction, job anxiety and lower performance (Abbas, Raja, Darr, & Bouckenooghe, 2014; Ferris & Hochwarter, 2011), counterproductive work behavior due to OP (M. N. Baloch et al., 2017; Shrestha, 2017), lack of credibility (Riaz, 2013). Contrary to the negative consequences, organizational politics were found to be influential for positive outcomes and create benefits for participants. The positive outcome of POP and benefits of organizational politics were defined by Vigoda (2002) as career progression, recognition, increased control and increased reputation of an individual (Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2002; Ellen III et al., 2013; Ishak, 2016b).

Danish et al. (2014) identified various studies conducted on perception of organizational politics in Western regions. There is scarcity of literature and a lack of empirical studies of POP on Asian and, specifically, Pakistan. Khokhar and Zia-ur-Rehman (2017) conducted studies to examining relationship between counterproductive work behaviour, organizational citizenship behaviour, and performance influenced by organizational politics. Previously studies revealed that POP negatively influenced the innovation capability (Abbas et al., 2014). Further, the study found the contradiction that POP has no negative effect on the stress levels of employees in Pakistani working environments. Rizwan, Afzal Humayon, Shahid, Aslam, and Shahid (2017) identified that the higher education sector of Pakistan hasn't

gained the attention of research scholars for examining the influence of organizational politics. Studies have instead been focused on the health sector (Gull & Zaidi, 2012), banking sector (Rashid, Karim, Rashid, & Usman, 2013) and telecom sector of Pakistan by (Rathore, Khaliq, & Aslam, 2017).

The present study intends to determine the level of POP influenced by three different predictors of each category as proposed by POP model of Ferris (1989). The study focuses on the higher education sector of Punjab and Pakistan to generalize the results of determining the relationship empirically between predictors and the perception of organizational politics. The present research considered three categories defined as organizational influences, job/environment influences, and personal influences to determine level of POP. This study empirically examines the influence of ‘scarcity of resources’, ‘workplace belongingness’, and ‘Machiavellianism’ under the categories of organizational, job/environment, and personal influences respectively. The present research contributes and extends the current knowledge base that empirically examines the influence of ‘workplace belongingness’ on the perception of organizational politics among the employees of higher education sector of Pakistan. Previous studies have examined the influence of ‘scarcity of resources’ on POP, but they are limited in number and have been conducted by using different measurement scales. This research follows the work of Poon (2003). Previous studies have examined the influence of ‘Machiavellianism’ on POP. The personality trait of Machiavellianism is considered as the ‘dark side’ of management (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004). The previous studies were found to be inconclusive and mixed results were gained regarding influencing the perception of organizational politics. The previous research conducted by Ishak (2016b) depicted the insignificant results of Mach and the overall study. This research was conducted on Malaysian school principals, which is contradictory to findings of the study conducted on government employees by Riaz (2013) as significant influential impact of Mach on POP. Furthermore, the present study intends to empirically examine the relationship and influence of ‘scarcity of resources’, ‘workplace belongingness’ and ‘Machiavellianism’ to determine the POP among the employees of the higher education sector of Pakistan.

## **Literature Review**

Literature on organizational behaviour involves detailed discussions on power and politics and considers this as a pejorative action. On the other hand, political players deny this perspective and justify power and politics as a natural organizational phenomenon necessary for decision making. First and foremost, political activity utilizes the power for influencing decision, protecting the self-interest of the individual and for the achievement of unsanctioned deeds. The personal gain and benefits are focused largely at the cost of others or the organization while avoiding the disadvantages described as political activity (Robbins, 2015). Research scholars have focused on the phenomenon of organizational politics and

predictors of OP and consequences of political activities in the workplace among employees. It was found that some employees indulge in office politics while others don't participate in the political game of organizations (Kidron & Vinarski Peretz, 2018). Scholars have identified and empirically examined the triggers behind the occurrence of office politics in determining the level of POP at workplace (Elbanna, 2016). In various studies of determining organizational politics and its instigators, Ferris (1989) has developed the model of POP to determine the level of organizational politics and highlights the three major categories of predictors. These are organizational, job/work environment and personal factors. The POP model provided the basis for modern research and contributed to assessing organizational politics and the engagement of employees in office politics (M. N. Baloch et al., 2017; Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2007; Kidron & Vinarski Peretz, 2018; Poon, 2004).

The perception of political phenomenon among employees depends upon the interpretation of an individual's experience and by assessing behaviours of others. This includes the interpretation is misperception of the actual event (Cho & Yang, 2018). Research scholars have found that highly charged political environments fabricate negative experiences and effects at a workplace. This includes higher turnover, dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, negative emotions, decrease motivation, less productivity, and even counterproductivity. This will be described in detail in first phase of the present study (Chang, Rosen, Siemieniec, & Johnson, 2012; Cho & Yang, 2018).

Due to the significance and importance of the political phenomenon in the workplace, research scholars have extensively embarked on associated antecedents and their consequences. This area does require more investigation for diverse cultures of organizations and demographic regions. Moreover, the intensity of politics may vary from culture to culture. Further, the political phenomenon may be based on different antecedents and instigate diverse kinds of consequences, depending upon the demographic factors and culture (Poon, 2003, 2006). Previous studies have identified causes and effects of POP in various workplaces and have empirically examined various antecedents that instigate perception of organizational politics (Elbanna, 2016; Ferris & Treadway, 2012; Muhammad, 2007; Poon, 2006; Riaz, 2013; Vigoda, 2002). Research scholars are also convinced with the significance of this cultural phenomenon. Hofstede (1980:1993) states that cultural settings can't be generalized in different environments of organizations or demographically, further proving that cultural influence can't be ignored. Cultural dimensions in the Western world are far different than the Asian world according to Hofstede dimensions of culture. Therefore, findings of studies in one region can't be applied to another region. This must be considered as most of the research on political phenomenon took place in developed and Western world, but limited studies have been carried out in developing countries. Thus, the research on the perception of organizational politics needs to be conducted on developing nations to identify the similarities and differences between two different regions.

The present study intends to empirically examine the key antecedents of POP in the developing Asian country of Pakistan. This study intends to investigate the influence of 'scarcity of resources' (SOR), 'workplace belongingness' (WPB), and Machiavellianism on the perception of organizational politics among Pakistani public sector universities. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by explaining the relationship between 'workplace belongingness' (WPB) as antecedent of POP. This research is a pioneering and novel in its empirical investigation of the relationship between WPB and POP.

### **Scarcity of Resources and Perception of Organizational Politics**

Lack of resources or the scarcity of resources can be referred to as an inappropriate supply of resources, limited opportunities to work and progress, inappropriate benefits and incentives and limited opportunities for career growth. The lack of resources at organizational workplaces instigates political phenomenon and negative consequences (Bhatnagar, 2007; Karadal & Arasli, 2009). Limited organizational resources increase the competition among employees at a workplace and influence the political behaviour. Individuals are attracted towards the protection of self-interest to acquire the limited resources at workplace. Scarcity of resources influence the competitive environment, which further leads to involvement in political games for the protection of self-interest to acquire resources at workplace (Poon, 2003). Previous studies have reported negative relations between scarcity of resources and performance. This also decreased the satisfaction level and generated negative consequences such as political activity at the workplace (Bodla & Danish, 2009; Daud, Isa, Nor, & Zainol, 2013; Gull & Zaidi, 2012; Rawwas, Javed, & Iqbal, 2018).

Contrary, the study of Karadal and Arasli (2009) reported insignificant association between scarcity of resources and performance. Similarly, other studies reported no relationship between scarcity of resources and job commitment (Danish et al., 2014; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008) that result in political activity. Research scholars have reported positive and influential relationships between favouritism among employees at the workplace, creating a negative political environment (Ahmed, 2018; Vigoda, 2002). Lack of resources at the workplace create intense levels of stress that causes political activity in the hope of gaining control over scarce resources and self-interest protection (Khan & Hussain, 2016). A positive correlation has been depicted between the scarcity of resources and perception of politics that influence negative outcomes such as the increase of turnover intention (Daskin & Tezer, 2012).

The study conducted on Pakistani public sector colleges demonstrated that scarcity of resources caused the occurrence of political activity and negative outcomes (Ahmed, 2018). Based on the above discussion and empirical studies, it appears that there is a dearth of

studies on the scarcity of resources at workplaces. It was found that the scarcity of resources instigated political activities and they are mixed and therefore inconclusive. The present study intends to determine the influence of the scarcity of resources at higher educational institutes of Punjab, Pakistan on POP. Therefore, this research provides the basis for following hypothesis.

**H1:** *‘Scarcity of Resources’ significantly affects the perception of organizational politics at workplace*

### **Workplace Belongingness and Perception of Organizational Politics**

The system referred to as workplace belongingness is defined as healthy interpersonal relationships for welfare among each participant in the workforce (Jena & Pradhan, 2018). Previously, studies have been conducted to determine well-being and belongingness as desire a for social affiliations at workplace among employees (Verhagen, Lodder, & Baumeister, 2018). The study investigated the relationship between belongingness and satisfaction and found that the ‘need to belong’ is not damaging to the workplace environment, but decreased satisfaction may be caused due to unmet belongingness. Previous research studies on belongingness shows that the concept of personal belongingness was established by the previous research of Verhagen et al. (2018) and conceptualized by Jena and Pradhan (2018). This research defined the difference between ‘general belongingness’ and ‘workplace belongingness’. The construct was introduced and defined in operational context as ‘workplace belongingness’ and developed appropriate measures to define a sense of belongingness (Jena & Pradhan, 2018).

Studies have empirically examined the relationship between belongingness and narcissism and found that a narcissist attitude in the workplace negatively influenced the behaviour of employees and created harmful consequences (Carnevale, Huang, & Harms, 2018). The construct of ‘workplace belongingness’ originated from the concept of ‘need to belong’, defined by Baumeister & Leary (1995) and Leary & Cox (2008). This research stated that this concept plays a vital role in the job environment. Thus, the present study intends to determine ‘workplace belongingness’ as a job and environmental factor which can be influential in the phenomenon of politicals in the workplace.

On the basis of the above discussion, this study is will explain the relationship and influence of ‘workplace belongingness’ on POP. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed for explaining the relationship:

**H2:** *‘Workplace belongingness’ significantly influences the perception of organizational politics at workplace*

## **Machiavellianism and Perception of Organizational Politics**

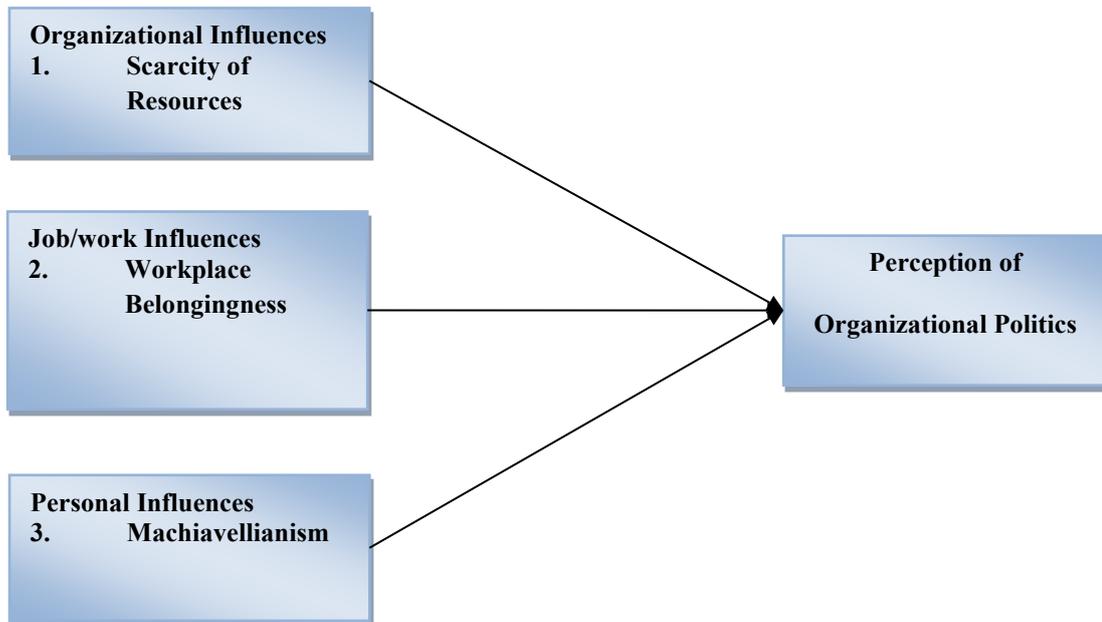
Machiavellianism (MACH) is referred to as a personality trait of an individual and generally is defined as a manipulative and deceptive characteristic for protecting self-interest at the cost of others (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009). It is widely explained in the established literature that organizational politics are influenced by organizational, job/environment and personal factors. Mach is referred to as a personality trait. Ishak (2016b) conducted a study determining the influence of organizational politics on the career growth of an employee and found a significant relationship. Research scholars (M. A. Baloch, Meng, Xu, Cepeda-Carrion, & Bari, 2017; Cohen, 2016; Ishak, 2016a; Riaz, 2013; Silvester, Wyatt, & Randall, 2014) examined the personality trait Mach alongside other constructs to determine the POP. The individual who possessed high Mach personality traits was assumed to be politically charged and influenced the working environment. This individual was also reported to be risky as they remained in power and strived to gain personal benefits and objectives (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997). Further, it has been reported that high Mach personalities were found to be using tactical influential acts for manipulation and utilize resources to gain personal interest at workplace.

A study conducted by Riaz (2013) empirically examined the influence of Mach to determine the POP among a Pakistani sample from the public sector and observed a significant relationship. Similarly, previous studies including those conducted by O'Connor and Morrison (2001) and Valle & Perrew, (2000) stated a strong relationship between Mach and POP. Mixed results have been reported by Ishak (2016b) in examining the influence of Mach on political activity in the workplace. The study by Wakefield (2008) reported no relation between personality trait Mach and political behaviour among banking sector employees. On the contrary, Ferris et al. (2017) discovered that Mach has direct and strong effect on the perception of organizational politics. Similar findings have been shared by Atinc, Darrat, Fuller, and Parker (2010). Another study conducted by Chen (2010) reported a positive relationship between Mach and emotional blackmailing. Other studies (M. A. Baloch et al., 2017; Cohen, 2016; Dahling et al., 2009; Ishak, 2016a; Riaz, 2013) empirically investigated the personality trait 'Mach' and found mixed results due to the diverse culture of workplace settings. The present study intends to examine the influence of Mach on POP in a Pakistani context. Therefore, it has been observed that the political environment depends upon personality factors. Thus, based on previous studies, the third hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H3:** *Machiavellianism significantly influence the perception of organizational politics at workplace*

## Research Framework:

**Fig 1.** Proposed Framework



## Research Methodology

The primary aim of this research is to identify the causes of political perception in public sector universities in Punjab. Universities are autonomous and must adhere to guidelines from the higher education commission established at provincial level and federal level. This study is quantitative and cross sectional in nature, therefore, the present study is limited geographically to universities operating in Punjab including Lahore, Multan and Bahawalpur for data collection. The perception of organizational politics is a common phenomenon and employees feel the pressure of the political game at various levels within universities. Questionnaires were used for data collection and distributed to teachers of universities other than principle seats which exclude Chainmen, Deans, Registrar, Principle seats and Vice Chancellor. This was because the perception of organizational politics is perceived by employees at lower operational and hierarchal levels. The behaviour of individuals can be assessed by the perception of reality not reality itself (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Ogungbamila, 2013). The participants of the study were from different academic departments of public sector universities situated in Lahore, Multan and Bahawalpur. in total, 300 questionnaires



were distributed among the respondents and 208 were received as usable for data analysis as response rate was observed as 69%.

### **Measurement of Variables**

The study adopted a measurement scale from previous studies. The measurement was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 as strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree to determine perception of organizational politics among employees of public sector universities of Punjab region.

**Perception of Organizational Politics:** The 12-item measurement scale that was used to measure the perception of organizational politics was adopted from the a study by Kacmar & Carlson (1997) and has been utilized by previous research scholars.

**Scarcity of Resources:** The measurement scale was to determine the scarcity of resources and was developed by Poon (2003). Later a 03 items scale was developed and used in a Pakistani context to measure the scarcity of resources by Ahmed (2018).

**Workplace Belongingness:** The 12 items scale was first time developed by Jena & Pradhan (2018). The present study is novel in its empirical examination of workplace belongingness in organizational political context.

**Machiavellianism:** The construct relates to a personality category. A 16 items scale was used to determine the Machiavellianism was developed by Christie and Geis (1970), later Dahling et al. (2009) updated.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The present section of the study entails analysis of collected data by using SMART-PLS through Measurement Model and Structural Equation Modelling techniques.

### **Measurement Model**

Measurement model technique of SMART-PLS by using PLS Algorithm presents Cronbach Alpha  $\alpha$ , composite reliability and average variance extract (AVE). The Table 1 below demonstrates values of required fields.

**Table 1:**

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
MACH	0.934	0.942	0.520
POP	0.917	0.934	0.579
SOR	0.818	0.917	0.846
WPB	0.911	0.923	0.500

The above table demonstrates the Cronbach alpha  $\alpha$  as it must remain higher than 0.7 in order to be accepted (Mallery & George, 2003). The Cronbach alpha for each construct of the study was found to be higher as Mach, POP, SOR and WPB observed as 0.934, 0.917, 0.818 and 0.911 respectively. Therefore, the constructs are reliable. The composite reliability values must be higher than 0.6. The present results of analysis depicted higher CR, which shows acceptable composite reliability and AVE must remain higher than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this study, all AVE was found to be higher than 0.5. Therefore, in order to meet the requirement of the measurement model, the value for Cronbach Alpha, CR and AVE was found to be acceptable.

### Discriminant validity

Fornell and Larcker (1981) stated that in comparisons made between square roots of average variance extract and correlation, the square root of AVE must remain higher than correlation of latent variables for acceptable discriminant validity. The table 2 below demonstrates the discriminant validity as diagonal values present correlation of constructs and must remain higher than remaining values of same column.

**Table 2:**

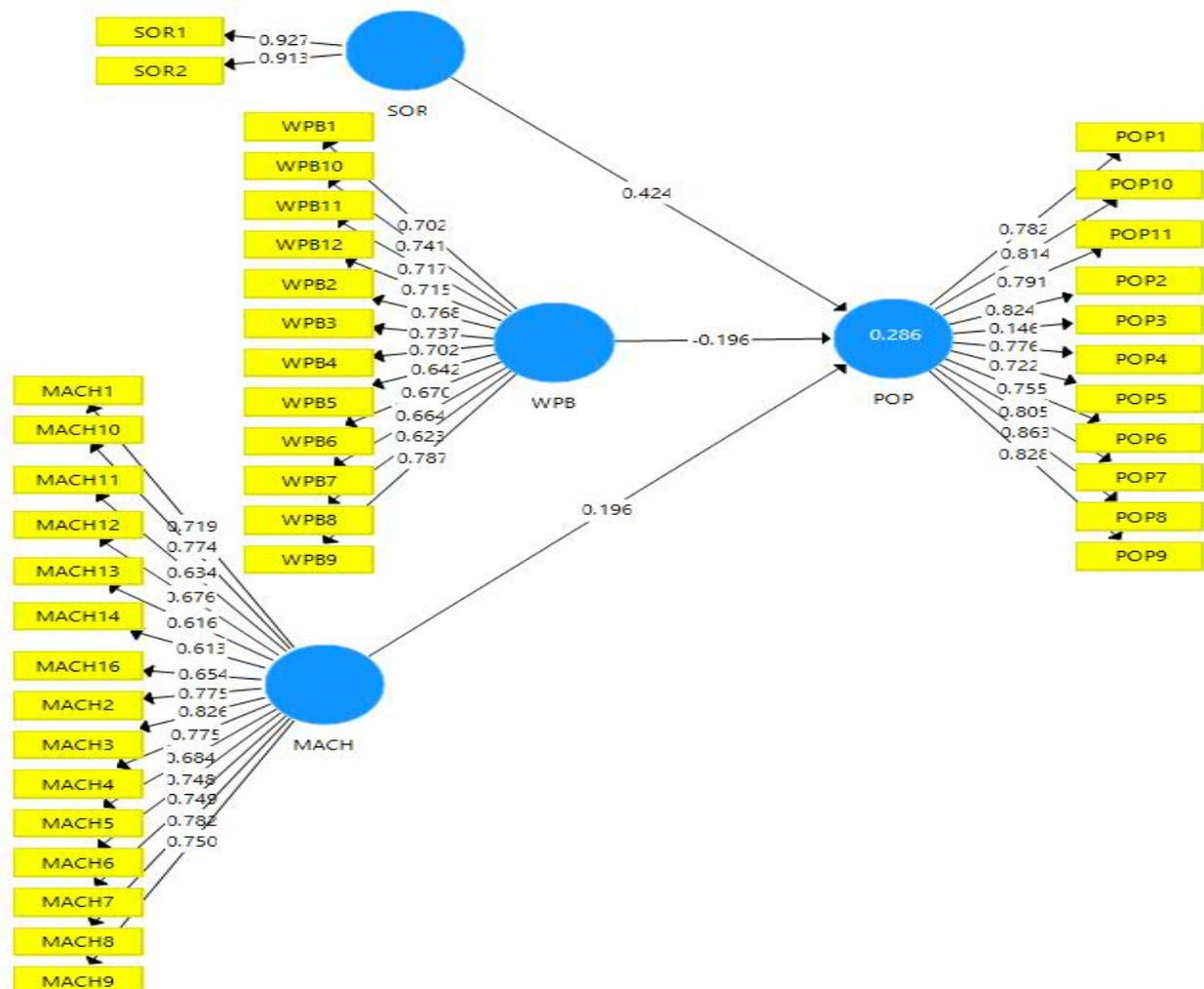
	MACH	POP	SOR	WPB
MACH	0.721			
POP	0.252	0.761		
SOR	0.282	0.488	0.920	
WPB	0.320	-0.154	-0.049	0.707

### Structural Equation Model

The structural model assessment was analysed by using SMART-PLS through a bootstrapping method for the purpose of examining direct relations. The present study has three direct hypotheses as shown in model diagram below fig 2. The influence of independent

variables was investigated according to the requirement and suggestion of PLS (SEM) by F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser (2014). The relationship was examined on the base of  $\beta$  value, t-statistics and sig value (p-value) after running the bootstrapping method of SMART-PLS. Figure 2 shows that SEM model developed in PLS to investigate the relationship between constructs of proposed framework.

**Fig 2.** Structural Equation Model



**Significance of Structural Equation modeling (Direct Relationship)**

For the investigation of the relationship between antecedents of the perception of organizational politics, the bootstrapping method was applied according to Chin (2010). Similar instructions have been shared by previous studies including those by Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser (2014) and Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena(2012). The current section of hypothesis testing was examined and accessed on the base of t-value as the cut-off point is stated as 1.96 in order to reject or accept hypothesis, as lower values will be rejected,

and higher values will be accepted. The  $\beta$ -value demonstrates the direction of hypothesis as given by suggestions in previous studies. Figure 2 presents the direct relationship between SOR (Scarcity of Resources) as an organizational category, WPB (Workplace Belongingness) as a work/environment category and (Mach) Machiavellianism as a personality category suggested by base model of POP. The current study examined the direct relationships H1 of scarcity of resources as there are just few studies found to determine the influence of SOR on perception of organizational politics, present study entails empirical investigation of constructs in higher education sector of Punjab, Pakistan. As suggested by the base model of current research named as the POP model, the second variable examined under the category of work/job environment known as ‘workplace belongingness’ was seen to be influential towards the perception of organizational politics as hypothesis H2 proposed. The present study examines the empirical investigation of constructs in the present context of organizational politics. The construct was suggested to be measured by Jena & Pradhan (2018). The hypothesis H3 addresses the third category of the base model as a personality of an individual. Machiavellianism was considered as a personality trait and was found to be the most striking construct to determine the level of perception of organizational politics. Previous studies depicted mixed results. The present study considered personality traits as an important variable to be examined in higher education sector to determine the perception of politics. Table 3 demonstrates the effect of direct relationship of all hypotheses based on  $\beta$ -value, t-value and sig value (p-value).

**Table 3:** Direct Relationship

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
MACH -> POP	0.196	4.003	0.000
SOR -> POP	0.424	8.466	0.000
WPB -> POP	-0.196	3.323	0.001

The above table presents the H1, H2 and H3 in direct relationships between exogenous and endogenous constructs of the study as proposed in the framework. The results of the hypotheses are shown in table above. The first hypothesis (H1) examined the empirical investigation of ‘scarcity of resources’ and the perception of organizational politics. The results showed that  $\beta$ -value found to be positive as 0.424 and t-statistics found to be higher than the cut-off point and observed as 8.466 with p-value as 0.000. Therefore, H3 was found to be positively significant. The results of the hypothesis H1 were found to be in line with previous studies including Ahmed (2018) and Poon (2003). The results support the proposed hypothesis that scarcity of resources instigates the political phenomenon in the higher education sector to acquire resources. This is evident due to insufficient availability of resources. The hypothesis H2 empirically examined the relationship between ‘workplace belongingness’ and the perception of organizational politics. The results show that  $\beta$ -value as

negative 0.196. The t-value observed as 3.323 with p-value as 0.001. Therefore, H2 is accepted statistically that there is a negative significant relationship between these constructs. The concept of 'workplace belongingness' was empirically investigated for the first time, specifically in an organizational political phenomenon, according to the best of knowledge of the researcher. The hypothesis H3 empirically investigated the influence of Machiavellianism as a personality trait on the perception of organizational politics. The results show that  $\beta$  value observed as 0.196 shows a positive direction. The t-statistics observed as 4.003 which is higher than cut-off point with p-value at 0.000. Therefore, Mach was found to be highly significant in explaining perception of organizational politics among employees of the higher education sector. The results of the study were found to be in line with previous studies including Poon (2003), Riaz (2013), and Valle & Perrewe, (2000). The results were also found to be contradictory to the study of Ishak(2016a) where there was a low impact as insignificant among Malaysian school principals. It can therefore be said that all direct hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 considered as antecedents of perception of organizational politics on the base of POP model developed by Ferris et al. (1989) under each category suggested.

## Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the antecedents of the perception of organizational politics at HES of Pakistan. This paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge by explaining and empirically examining the antecedents of POP in developing country (Pakistan) among public sector universities. The present research effort considered the model of POP developed by Ferris (1989), as later scholars have been extending antecedents under each category relevant to sector and culture. This study empirically examined scarcity of resources, workplace belongingness and Machiavellianism to determine the perception of organizational politics. The present research paper explained and empirically examined the relationship between workplace belongingness and POP. The results found that scarcity of resources significantly influence POP. Therefore, it is suggested that universities must be able to equally allocate resources among their employees in order to control political phenomenon. Further, results demonstrated that workplace belongingness negatively influences the perception of organizational politics. This research develops the explanation and empirical examination of this relationship and found a negative association with POP. The negative significant influence shows that the higher the belongingness of an employee in a workplace will reduce the perception of political phenomenon. Personality trait Machiavellianism was also empirically examined and found significant positive influence on the perception of organizational politics. The higher education sector must pay attention to political phenomenon among their employees in order to achieve progress, performance, and mitigate negative consequences.



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