

## Organizational Politics, Job Attitudes, and Work Outcomes: Exploration and Implications for the Public Sector

Eran Vigoda

*Department of Political Science, The University of Georgia, and Department of Political Science,  
The University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel*

The study aimed to promote understanding of employees' reactions to organizational politics. The relationship between perception of organizational politics, job attitudes, and several other work outcomes was examined among 303 public sector employees in Israel. Perception of organizational politics was found to have had a negative relationship with job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment), a positive relationship with intention to leave the organization (exit), and a stronger positive relationship with negligent behavior (neglect). It is suggested that public personnel will tend to react to workplace politics with negligent behavior rather than by leaving. A weak negative relationship was found between perception of organizational politics and employees' performance as reported by supervisors. Perception of organizational politics also made a unique contribution to explaining variance among the work outcomes, beyond the variance explained by job attitudes and personal variables. Several implications and recommendations for further inquiry into perception of politics in organizations, particularly in the public sector, are noted. © 2000 Academic Press

*Key Words:* organizational politics; job satisfaction; organizational commitment; intentions of exit and neglect; job performance; public sector employees.

Studies have long argued that politics is an epidemic phenomenon in organizations and that it deserves more attention and empirical examination (e.g., Gandz & Murray, 1980; Mayes & Allen, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). The importance of organizational politics (OP) lies in its potential consequences and effect on work outcomes. Theoretical arguments suggest that politics often interferes with normal organizational processes (e.g., decision making, promotion, and rewards) and damages productivity and performance on individual and organizational levels. Empirical attempts to support this notion have proved equivocal. Some studies found a negative relationship of OP to job attitudes or stress-related responses (e.g., Drory, 1993; Ferris et al., 1996a, 1996b). More recent works suggested that politics enhances withdrawal behav-

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to Eran Vigoda, Department of Political Science, University of Haifa, Haifa 31905, Israel. Fax: 972-4-8257785. E-mail: [eranv@poli.haifa.ac.il](mailto:eranv@poli.haifa.ac.il).

iors and turnover intentions (e.g., Bozeman et al., 1996; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997), but others found no such relationship (e.g., Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995). All these studies overlooked the relationship between OP and other possible work outcomes, such as direct negligent behavior and actual job performance.

Few studies have examined issues related to OP in the public sector. At first glance several studies appear to have done so, but in fact they were conducted mainly at universities (e.g., Christiansen, Villanova, & Mikulay, 1997; Ferris et al., 1996a, 1996b; Welsh & Slusher, 1986), or they used mixed samples of private and semipublic agencies like hospitals and government-owned industries (e.g., Drory, 1993; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). Also, most studies of OP refer to the North American private sector (e.g., Bozeman et al., 1996; Cropanzano et al., 1997; Hochwarter, Witt, & Kacmar, 1997; Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997). With the exception of that of Parker et al. (1995) no study has examined the effect of perceived organizational politics on work outcomes among public sector employees who serve citizens (e.g., governmental agencies or local municipalities). Patterns of employment, occupation, and service in public organizations substantially differ from those of private or semipublic systems. In most countries wages of public servants are lower than those of private sector employees, promotion is slower, and rewards are generally not related to work outcomes (Rainey, 1991). On the other hand, public organizations usually offer a stable work environment, higher job security, and some even a challenge of serving a large and heterogeneous population. Hence, the possible unique effect of internal politics on public agencies and public servants is still unclear and deserves more attention.

Employees' reactions to OP in the public sector were examined in two ways. Previous studies (e.g., Bozeman et al., 1996; Cropanzano et al., 1997) predicted that OP will be negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. We expected that both OP and job attitudes will be useful in explaining other work outcomes such as employees' intentions to leave (exit) and tendencies to neglect job duties (neglect). Evidence of such reactions to OP is scarce. We further proposed that employees performance may decline in response to high levels of perceived OP. Our research attempts to explore these reactions to OP and to elaborate on relevant implications for the public arena.

## A DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

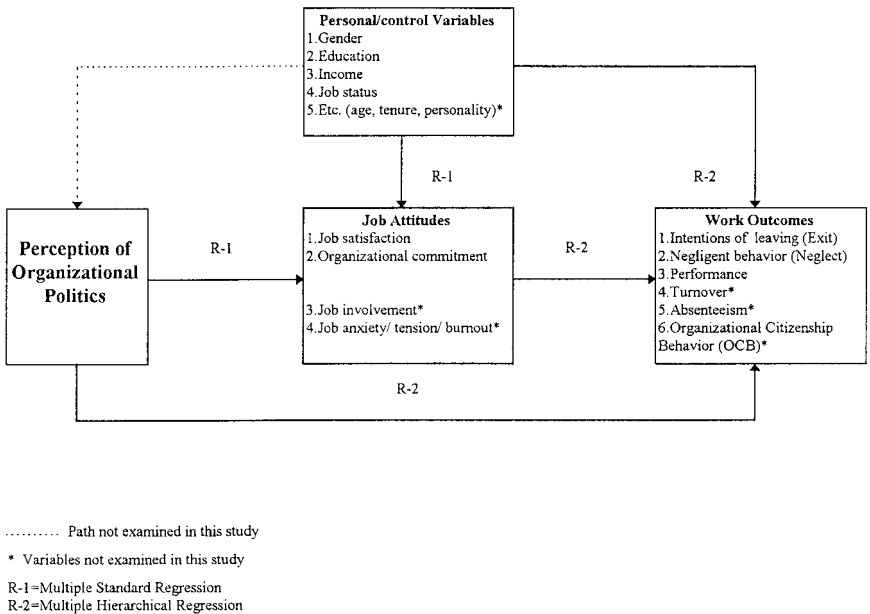
Organizations are social entities that involve a struggle for resources, personal conflicts, and a variety of influence tactics executed by individuals and groups to obtain benefits and goals in different ways (Molm, 1997). Estimating the political climate of a work unit is a complex task but it is crucial for a better understanding of organizations. OP is usually defined as behavior strategically designed to maximize self-interests (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989) and therefore contradicts the collective organizational goals or the interests of other individuals. This perspective reflects a generally negative image of OP in the eyes of most

organization members. For example, Block (1988, p. 5) mentioned politics (in organizations) as basically a negative process and argued that "If I told you you were a very political person, you would take it either as an insult or at best as a mixed blessing." Gandz and Murray (1980) and Medison et al. (1980) observed that when individuals were asked to describe workplace politics they typically listed self-serving and manipulative activities that are not perceived positively. Studies which developed this conception (e.g., Drory, 1993; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) found that OP was perceived as self-serving behavior by employees to achieve self-interests, advantages, and benefits at the expense of others and sometimes contrary to the interests of the entire organization or work unit. This behavior was frequently associated with manipulation, defamation, subversiveness, and illegitimate ways of overusing power to attain one's objectives.

Ferris et al. (1989) suggested the concept of *perception* of organizational politics (Perception of Organizational Politics Scale—POPS) as a good measure of OP. Kacmar and Ferris (1991, pp. 193–194) and Ferris and Kacmar (1992, p. 93) argued that the higher the perceptions of politics are in the eyes of an organization member, the lower in that person's eyes is the level of justice, equity, and fairness. More recent studies (Ferris et al., 1996b; Folger, Konovsky, & Cropanzano, 1992) have used the theory of procedural justice to argue that OP is related to the efficiency of human resource systems and to decision-making processes. Lack of minimal justice and fairness in these systems was found as a main cause of higher perceptions of organizational politics and therefore of hampered organizational outcomes. All these studies relied on Kurt Lewin's (1936) argument that people respond to their perceptions of reality, not to reality itself. Likewise, politics in organizations should be understood in terms of what people think of it rather than what it actually represents. Studies thus proposed that perceptions of justice and fairness reflect a political climate in the workplace and may also be related to a variety of work outcomes. These ideas were extensively advocated by Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues in numerous studies (Ferris et al., 1996a, 1996b; Ferris, Fedor, & King, 1994; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Ferris, King, Judge, & Kacmar 1991; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991).

### OUTCOMES OF POLITICS PERCEPTION

Many definitions of OP view it as workplace activities that can result in negative or destructive work outcomes. However, empirical efforts to support this proposition have been inconclusive. Parker et al. (1995) found that OP was not related to job satisfaction, loyalty, senior management effectiveness, and endorsements of positive organization values. Nevertheless, they found that respondents who perceived more politics in the organization also tended to see the organization as less supportive of innovation. Ferris et al. (1989) mentioned three potential responses: increased job anxiety, decreased job satisfaction, and withdrawal from the organization. Later studies confirmed some of these relationships. The most salient was between perceptions of organizational politics and job attitudes. For example, Drory (1993) found that perceptions of politics



**FIG. 1.** Reactions to perceptions of organizational politics.

were negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. He found that OP had a potentially damaging effect on lower status employees but no negative effect on higher status employees. He speculated that lower status employees, who lacked a stable power base and effective means of influence, perceived OP as a source of frustration and reacted to a climate of politics by showing increasingly negative attitudes toward the organization (pp. 68–69). Bozeman et al. (1996) elaborated on the effect of perception of organizational politics on several work outcomes. No direct effects were revealed in this two-study investigation, yet some interactive relationships were found among perception of politics, feelings of self-efficacy, and the outcome variables. Specifically, the relationship between OP, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to turnover, and job stress was moderated by the variable job self-efficacy. The relationship was stronger for individuals with high job self-efficacy than with low.

A comprehensive framework of antecedents and responses to perceptions of organizational politics was advanced by Ferris et al. (1989). Our theoretical conception relies on theirs and tries to extend it in several ways. Figure 1 presents our model for the examination of the relationship among OP, job attitudes, and several work outcomes. First, it fosters the idea that OP reflects perceptions of procedural justice, fairness, and equity in one's work environment, so it may be related to job attitudes. Second, the model anticipates that both politics and job attitudes have an effect on employees' behavioral intentions and job performance. This idea also draws sub-

stance from extensive literature that relates workplace justice to job attitudes and to a variety of work outcomes, such as career development and formal and informal job performance (e.g., Blau et al., 1993; Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990; Fitzgerald & Rounds, 1989; Moorman, 1991; Morrow, Mullen, & McElroy, 1990; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Scandura, 1997).

The first part of the model refers to the possible relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job attitudes. Drory (1993) suggested that the events comprising OP naturally occur within the social arena of the organization. Consequently, perceptions of fairness stemming from internal politics will be primarily reflected in one's attitudes to elements one considers responsible for the political climate. These may be supervisors, co-workers, and other factors in the organization, which together generate overall job satisfaction. Previous studies suggested a relationship between constructs of procedural justice (e.g., time since last promotion or time since last appraisal) and perception of politics (Ferris et al., 1996b). A political organizational climate may suppress unfair and unjust activities that are easily observed by employees. When an employee feels deprived and unfairly treated because of political considerations, he/she will be inclined to react initially by reducing voluntary obligation and attachment to the organization. These spontaneous attitudes and reactions are not directly controlled by the organization and are expected to change more easily in response to disappointment with the workplace. One of the most studied aspects in this regard is organizational commitment. According to Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) this variable is fundamental in determining job attitudes. It comprises involvement in and identification with the organization, and it is greatly affected by job satisfaction and overall organizational climate.

Recent studies have followed these arguments and incline to a more empirical examination of the politics–job attitudes relationship. Ferris et al. (1996b, 1998) found that perception of organizational politics was negatively related to job satisfaction. Bozeman et al. (1996) supported this finding and in addition found that perception of politics was negatively related to organizational commitment. In keeping with these studies we expected to find that a perceived political atmosphere in public agencies would first result in negative job attitudes. Hence, public employees with high perceptions of organizational politics will tend to show lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment than other employees. Hypothesis 1 was formulated to test this elementary relationship.

H1: Perception of organizational politics will be negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

A change in job attitudes may be regarded as the immediate reaction to OP (Drory, 1993), potentially signaling more negative responses by employees in the long run. Therefore, the second part of our model examined the relationship between perception of organizational politics, job attitudes, behavioral intentions, and job performance. It is widely accepted in organizational behavior theory that

job attitudes may lead to behavioral intentions and, with the passage of time, to actual behaviors. Hirschman's (1970) theory suggested the option of exit (leaving the organization) as a possible destructive reaction to decline in organizations. This behavior differs substantially from other, more constructive traits, such as voice (intention to stay and fight for one's beliefs and occupational goals) and loyalty (willingness to adjust and comply with the current environment). Ferris and Kacmar (1992) proposed several responses to OP that "appear similar in nature to Hirschman's (1970) exit, loyalty, and voice" (p. 97). Cropanzano et al. (1997) suggested that employees who view the organization as political in nature, unequal, or promoting only the aspirations of the powerful members may be encouraged to leave it physically and also psychologically. OP can cause disengagement or psychological withdrawal of individuals. Employees may be physically present at the workplace but their minds are elsewhere. Still, empirical studies provide only marginal support for this idea (e.g., Bozeman et al., 1996).

Examinations of Hirschman's framework (e.g., Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult & Lowery, 1985) elaborated on another destructive reaction to instability and unfairness at work. This option, named neglect, represents an alternative whereby the individual stays in the organization but expresses dissatisfaction by unproductive activity or even injurious behavior. For example, employees may put less effort in their work, delay certain assignments without justification, or show no creativity and initiative even though they are capable of it. Other forms of neglect may reflect little consideration for citizens'/clients' needs or carelessness in using organizational property. Neglect is considered a more negative/passive response because of its covert image and potential long-term damage to the organization. An employee may remain with the organization but neglect his/her essential duties and assignments when he/she has no other job alternatives or wishes to requite the organization for being unfair (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992). Aspects of such behavior were found among employees in an American federal agency (Rusbult & Lowery, 1985). These findings may suggest that negligent behavior serves as an operative alternative for public personnel who feel abused by internal politics but still would not choose actually to leave the organization for a variety of reasons. Symptoms of psychological withdrawal, like continues daydreaming or chatting to co-workers about non-work-related subjects (e.g., internal politics?), evince much similarity to negligent behavior (Hulin, 1991). Note that negligent behavior may also reflect misbehaviors or activities that damage the organization, not always because of overtly vicious intentions but sometimes through irresponsibility or sloppiness stemming from low attachment to or lack of identification with it (Vardi & Wiener, 1996). Misbehavior can thus be driven by high levels of OP that lead to job dissatisfaction and low organizational commitment.

Ferris, Harrell-Cook, and Dulebohn (1998) applied the ideas of Hirschman (1970) to support a theory of reactions to OP. They found that OP may result in negative repercussions, such as low job satisfaction, high levels of neglect, or intention to exit. That is, when some organizational members misuse politics to

achieve self-interest, and thereby violate basic fairness and justice norms, the effect on co-workers is inevitable. Employees who see themselves injured by such power-seeking activities may react in several ways. One response may be an intention to leave the organization. An alternative is to stay but to reciprocate with negligent behavior. Hence, we expected that OP would be positively related to destructive work outcomes, such as exit and neglect. Our second hypothesis is thus

H2: Perception of organizational politics will be positively related to employees' intentions of exit and neglect.

A negative relationship is further expected between perception of organizational politics and job performance. To our knowledge, with the exception of Hochwarter et al.'s (1997) study, this relationship has not been examined so far. If internal politics is related to job attitudes, and thereby to intentions to exit and neglect, there is a sound rationale for the belief that actual performance by employees will also be affected. Previous studies have found a relationship between intention to turnover and job performance (e.g., Mossholder, Bedeian, Norris, Giles, & Field, 1988). Other studies have used both variables as important work outcomes that are related to the emotional state of an individual (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). This state (e.g., job anxiety, job tension, burnout) was found to correlate with feelings of fairness and justice in the work environment as caused by the political behavior of others (e.g., Bozeman et al., 1996; Ferris et al., 1996a,b). When individuals are cognitively planning to leave the organizations their minds and energies are turned to other available job options. They are also more exposed to job and occupation stressors and therefore tend to be less focused on their job duties. All these may cause a decline in job performance. Hence, the third hypothesis is

H3: Perception of politics will be negatively related to employees' performance.

Finally, it is expected that perception of organizational politics will make a unique contribution to the explanation of all the three work outcomes mentioned above. This contribution should hold beyond that caused by job attitudes and by other personal variables. Drawing on early works of Ferris et al. (1989, 1992) we presumed that perception of organizational politics is distinct from other job-related attitudes and should be analyzed as an independent construct. Support for the existence of this singular contribution may attract more attention to the potential outcomes of workplace politics.

The personal variables were integrated in our model for control purposes, but also for a more substantial reason. Previous studies have mentioned personal and personality factors as important determinants of OP. The basic argument in the studies of Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues was that personal as well as personality characteristics of employees better explain the emergence of perceptions of organizational politics. Several studies supported the notion that indi-

viduals with different education, income, tenure, and hierarchical level, as well as male and female employees, will perceive politics in different ways. For example, Ferris et al. (1996a) found differences between white women and white men when they examined the moderating effect of understanding on the relationship between co-workers' political behavior and employees' reactions. Drory (1993) found that the association between political climate and negative job attitudes was stronger for employees of lower status than for those of higher status. An additional explanation for the relationship between personal/personality variables and OP derives from the theory of person-organization fit (Blau, 1987; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Meir & Hasson, 1982; Smart, Elton, & McLaughlin, 1986; Spokane, 1985). These studies provided evidence that when employees fit their work environment better they also show improved job attitudes, career success, and more intention to stay in the organization. Coping more effectively with a given political atmosphere reflects a better person-organization fit. This idea was recently supported by Vigoda (2000). Hence, better fitted employees may have more positive attitudes to their job and to the workplace. Such employees will not develop feelings of alienation, disappointment, mistrust, or other negative job attitudes, while other employees perhaps will. As a result they are expected to show improved work outcomes. Therefore, we decided to include personal constructs in our model. All this led to Hypothesis 4.

H4: Perception of organizational politics will contribute to the explanation of work outcomes over and above the contribution of other job attitudes and personal variables.

## METHOD

### *Sample and Procedure*

The research was conducted between May 1996 and January 1997 and was based on a survey of employees and supervisors at two municipalities in the north of Israel. Participants were asked to take part in a two-stage study aimed at investigating job attitudes and behaviors. They were also informed that employees would take part in the first stage, while supervisors would participate in the second. Participation throughout the research was voluntary and employees were assured of full confidentiality during the entire process. In the first stage employees were asked to provide information on their perception of organizational politics, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions of exit and neglect, as well as several personal variables. Six months later we returned to the employees' direct supervisors and asked them to provide detailed performance evaluations for each of the participants. We decided to collect data from supervisors 6 months after stage one for two main reasons: first, to allow the development of any possible behavior which may occur as a response to OP. This is especially important for newcomers and recently tenured employees, who need time to understand and get socialized to a new OP climate. According to Schein (1968, 1978), during the first stages of entering the organization employees experience political events only as bystanders. With time they are bound to actively enter into situations where their personal power and influence encounter

other employees' ambitions. The consequences of such confrontations can be translated into positive or negative work outcomes. Second, the 6-month interval took into account the organizations' needs and schedules and was a compromise on our requirements. Hence, we decided on a longer period between the two stages for both practical and procedural reasons. Altogether, 22 supervisors participated in the second stage, each providing between 12 and 17 performance evaluations.

Of 411 questionnaires that were distributed among employees at stage one, a total of 303 usable questionnaires were returned. Performance evaluations of supervisors were obtained for all the employees who agreed to participate in the study (a total return rate of 73.7%). A breakdown by occupation showed that 17% of the sample were blue-collar workers, 43% clerical and administrative workers, 11% high-technical workers, and 29% engineers, architects, and other professionals; 56% of the sample were female, 77% married, 89% had a full-time job (11% part-time), and 33% were low-level or middle-level managers. Average age was 44.2 years ( $SD$  10.3); average tenure in the organizations was 11.8 years ( $SD$  8.6). An academic college degree was held by 32% of the respondents. The above demographic characteristics of the sample were quite similar to those of the total population in the two organizations that participated in the study.

### *Measures*

*Perception of organizational politics.* This variable was measured by a shorter version of Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) that was first developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and later reexamined by Kacmar and Carlson (1994). POPS was defined as the degree to which the respondents view their work environment as political and therefore unjust and unfair. While Kacmar and Ferris's original scale included 40 items, Kacmar and Carlson's study used the most parsimonious set of only 12 items, which we adopted here. Sample items are (1) "Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here," (2) "Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization" (reverse-scored), and (3) "There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them." Respondents reported how much they agreed with the items. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), so that a higher score meant higher perception of organizational politics. The overall reliability was 0.77, which is quite similar to that reported in other studies (e.g., 0.74 in Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; 0.76 in Parker et al., 1995).

### *Job Attitudes*

*Job satisfaction.* This measure was developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980). Respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with six aspects of their job: current job, co-workers, supervisors, current salary, opportunities for promotion, work in general. The scale ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Reliability of the scale was 0.77.

*Organizational commitment.* This variable was measured by the most commonly used instrument, namely, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) introduced by Porter and Smith (1970). We used a shortened nine-item version that reflects the definition of commitment suggested by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). This definition reflects the three dimensions of commitment: (1) desire to retain membership in the organization; (2) belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization; and (3) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization. Sample items for this measure include (1) "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization," (2) "I really care about the fate of this organization," and (3) "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for the organization." The scale for this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the reliability achieved here was 0.88.

### *Work Outcomes*

*Intentions of exit and neglect.* Measures of exit and neglect were based on the theoretical conception of Hirschman (1970) and subsequent studies that developed it. According to Farrell and Rusbult (1992:202), the *exit-quitting* category includes job movement both within and across organizational boundaries, as well as a variety of cognitive activities that precede leaving. This behavior includes intentions of searching for a different job and thinking about quitting. The *neglect* category includes reactions wherein the employee passively allows conditions to worsen. Such a behavior is best described as reduced interest or effort at work or increased error rate.

To test for intentions of exit and neglect we used an 11-item scale. Respondents were asked to report how much they agreed with the items. The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Intentions of exit were measured by a 5-item scale. Sample items are (1) "I often think about quitting," (2) "Next year I will probably look for a new job outside this organization," and (3) "Lately, I have taken interest in job offers in the newspaper." The scale of neglect was reframed and extended by application of the study by Leck and Saunders (1992). The 6-item scale included such items as (1) "I sometimes put in less effort in my work than I know I can," (2) "Sometimes I postpone important duties for an unlimited period of time," and (3) "I work hard on my job" (reverse-scored). Reliability of all the scales was close to the findings of Farrell and Rusbult (1985) (in parentheses) and was 0.84 (0.70) for exit and 0.67 (0.58) for neglect.

*Performance.* This variable represented employees' adherence to and completion of formal job duties (Katz, 1964). The scale was based on the studies of Williams and Anderson (1991) and Morrison (1994), who separated intrarole (formal) from extrarole (informal) performance. A seven-item scale was completed for each participant by his/her direct supervisor. Evaluations were made on a scale from 1 (never or almost never) to 5 (always or almost always). Supervisors reported how much each of the subordinates (sample items) (1) "ade-

quately completes assigned duties,” (2) “fulfills responsibilities specified in job description,” and (3) “meets formal performance requirements of the job.”

### *Personal/Control Variables*

Four personal variables were used. Two dichotomous variables were gender (0, male; 1, female) and job status (0, full-time job; 1, part-time job). Two ordinal variables were education, which was measured on a scale from 1 (partial high school education) to 5 (master's or higher degree), and income (net values/month), which was also measured on a 5-point scale from 1 [up to NIS 2000 (about \$500), very low salary] to 5 [over NIS 8000 (about \$2000), very high salary].

### *Data Analysis*

The research hypotheses were tested by multiple standard and hierarchical regressions. To test hypothesis H1 we regressed job satisfaction and organizational commitment on perception of politics and the personal variables. Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were tested by three multiple hierarchical regressions. Here, intentions of exit, neglect, and job performance were regressed on perception of organizational politics, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the personal variables. The variables were entered into the equations in three steps. This was done to examine the individual contribution of each construct in the model to the explanation of the work outcomes.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and reliabilities of the research variables. All measures displayed good reliabilities and good psychometric properties. Perception of organizational politics was positively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment ( $r = -0.30, p < 0.001$ , and  $r = -0.26, p < 0.001$ , respectively). It also showed a positive correlation with intentions of exit and neglect ( $r = 0.29, p < 0.001$ , and  $r = 0.27, p < 0.001$ , respectively). Furthermore, perception of politics was negatively correlated with performance evaluations as reported by supervisors ( $r = -0.14, p < 0.05$ ).

Table 2 displays the results of two multiple regressions. Both regression models show that perception of organizational politics was negatively related to job attitudes after controlling for several personal variables. The relationship between perception of organizational politics and job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.27, p < 0.001$ ) was slightly stronger than the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational commitment ( $\beta = -0.24, p < 0.001$ ). While part-time employees and those with higher incomes were more satisfied at work, male employees and those with a lower education level showed more organizational commitment. Perception of organizational politics and the personal-control variables explained 13.6% of the variance in job satisfaction and 11.6% of the variance in organizational commitment. These findings support

TABLE 1  
Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations among Research Variables (Reliabilities in Parentheses)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Organizational politics (OP)											
1. Perception of organizational politics (POPS) <sup>a</sup>	3.06	0.60	(.77)								
Job attitudes											
2. Job satisfaction <sup>b</sup>	3.54	0.67	-0.30***	(.77)							
3. Organizational commitment <sup>a</sup>	3.64	0.77	-0.26***	0.56***	(.88)						
Work outcomes											
4. Intentions of exit <sup>a</sup>	2.07	0.85	0.29***	-0.40***	-0.41***	(.84)					
5. Neglect <sup>a</sup>	1.88	0.64	0.27***	-0.25***	-0.19***	0.52***	(.67)				
6. Performance <sup>c</sup>	4.19	0.65	-0.14*	0.10	0.09	-0.21***	-0.26***	(.92)			
Control variables											
7. Gender (female)	0.56	0.50	0.19***	-0.15**	-0.18***	0.08	-0.07	-0.04	-		
8. Education	2.71	1.43	-0.12*	0.05	-0.13*	0.07	-0.05	-0.08	0.04	-	
9. Income	2.58	1.04	-0.04	0.14*	-0.07	-0.09	-0.06	0.07	-0.29***	0.39***	-
10. Job status (part-time job)	0.11	0.31	-0.07	0.11*	0.06	-0.03	-0.06	0.10	0.25***	-0.02	-0.30***

Note. Scale anchors: <sup>a</sup> 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). <sup>b</sup> 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). <sup>c</sup> 1 (Never or almost never) to 5 (always or almost always). *N* = 296–303 due to missing values.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

TABLE 2  
Findings of Multiple Regression Analysis (Standardized Coefficients) for the Relationship  
between Organizational Politics and Job Attitudes

Variable	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment
Control variables		
1. Gender (female)	-0.09 (-1.48)	-0.16 (-2.60**)
2. Education	-0.05 (-.83)	-0.13 (-2.14*)
3. Income	0.17 (2.70**)	-0.05 (-.83)
4. Job status (part-time job)	0.16 (2.74**)	-0.06 (1.09)
Organizational politics (OP)		
5. Perception of organizational politics (POPS)	-0.27 (-4.79***)	-0.24 (-4.20***)
$R^2$	.136	.116
Adjusted $R^2$	.121	.100
$F$	9.07***	7.60***

Note.  $N = 296-303$  due to missing values.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

hypothesis H1, which argued that OP is negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Table 3 shows the results of three multiple hierarchical regressions. In each regression model the personal variables were entered first in order to control for the other variables. Job attitudes were entered in the second step of each equation, while the third step added the primary variable in our study, perception of organizational politics. That was done to estimate the additional explained variance contributed by this construct above and beyond other variables. In the first regression model intentions of exit were negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $\beta = -0.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). These variables made the highest contribution to the explained variance in the equation (19.8%). Perception of organizational politics was positively related to intentions of exit ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Note that this variable raised the explained variance by an additional 3.2% and brought the total value of variance in the final equation to 26.1%.

In the second regression, job satisfaction showed a negative relationship with negligent behavior ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, perception of organizational politics was positively related to neglect ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and contributed 12.6% to the explained variance in the final equation. This value was higher than the explained variance caused by both job satisfaction and the personal/control variables together (9.2%). It set the total explained variance of neglect after the third step at 14.7%. The findings reported so far supported hypothesis H2 for intentions of exit and were even more concrete for the neglect variable. Thus, employees who viewed the workplace as political in nature were

TABLE 3  
Findings of Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Standardized Coefficients) for the Effect of Organizational Politics and Job Attitudes on Work Outcomes (*t* Test in Parentheses)

Variable	Exit			Neglect			Performance		
	Step: 1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Control variables									
1. Gender (female)	0.05 (0.82)	-0.05 (-0.85)	-0.08 (-1.49)	-0.09 (-1.52)	-0.15 (-2.39*)	-0.20 (-3.20***)	-0.03 (-0.47)	-0.01 (-0.18)	0.01 (0.20)
2. Education	0.13 (2.05*)	0.10 (1.78)	0.13 (2.34*)	0.11 (1.76)	0.10 (1.62)	-0.14 (2.34*)	-0.14 (-2.21*)	-0.14 (-2.12*)	-0.16 (-2.44*)
3. Income	-0.16 (-2.29*)	-0.14 (-2.24*)	-0.16 (-2.54**)	-0.15 (-2.20*)	-0.13 (-1.89)	-0.15 (-2.26*)	0.16 (2.36*)	0.16 (2.27*)	0.17 (2.43*)
4. Job status (part-time job)	-0.09 (-1.45)	-0.02 (-0.33)	-0.01 (-0.11)	-0.08 (-1.26)	-0.03 (-0.51)	-0.01 (-0.24)	0.15 (2.43*)	0.14 (2.19*)	0.13 (2.06*)
Job attitudes									
5. Job satisfaction		-0.23 (-3.507***)	-0.19 (-2.93**)		-0.19 (-2.70**)	-0.14 (-2.02*)		0.04 (0.53)	0.01 (0.17)
6. Organizational commitment		-0.29 (-4.46***)	-0.27 (-4.15***)		-0.11 (-1.51)	-0.07 (-1.09)		0.05 (0.73)	0.04 (0.51)
7. Perception of organizational politics			0.19 (3.47***)			0.25 (4.26***)			-0.13 (-2.07*)
$R^2$	0.031	0.229	0.261	0.026	0.092	0.147	0.039	0.045	0.059
Adjusted $R^2$	0.018	0.213	0.242	0.012	0.073	0.126	0.025	0.025	0.036
$F$	2.33	14.24***	14.39***	1.89	4.84***	6.99***	2.91*	2.25	2.56*
$\Delta R^2$	—	0.198	0.032	—	0.066	0.055	—	0.006	0.014
$F$ for $\Delta R^2$	—	38.01***	12.77***	—	10.47***	19.02***	—	0.89	4.19***

Note.  $N = 296-303$  due to missing values.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

more likely than other employees to develop intentions of exit and negligent behaviors.

The third equation examined the relationship among job attitudes, perception of organizational politics, and employees' performance. None of the job attitudes showed a relationship with performance. Nevertheless, perception of organizational politics was negatively related to employees' performance ( $\beta = -0.13$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ). Hence, employees with lower perceptions of organizational politics tended to perform better than those with high perceptions. Three of the personal/control variables also demonstrated a significant relationship with performance. Individuals with low education level, higher income, and who held a part-time job were described by supervisors as employees with better performance. These findings quite strongly supported hypothesis H3 for the intentions of exit and neglect variables. They more modestly supported this hypothesis for the performance variable. Hence, the findings further show that perception of organizational politics may play a significant role in predicting employees' performance, beyond the effect of other job attitudes. The regression models discussed so far also supported hypothesis H4. In each of the hierarchical regression models, perception of organizational politics made a significant contribution to the explanation of the dependent variable. This contribution varied from 3.2% for intentions of exit to 3.6% for performance and up to 12.6% for neglect. Perception of organizational politics was strongly related to negligent behavior and to a lesser extent to intentions of exit. Employees' performance was negatively related to perception of organizational politics, yet this relationship was not very strong. It is important to mention that intentions of exit were better explained by job attitudes and perception of organizational politics than were the other two work outcomes ( $R^2 = 26.1\%$ ). Performance had the lowest level of explained variance among the three work outcomes examined here ( $R^2 = 5.9\%$ ).

Among the personal variables gender was found to have a significant relationship with neglect, as women employees showed fewer intentions of negligent behavior ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). More highly educated employees reported more intentions of exit ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) but had lower intentions of neglect and lower levels of performance ( $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively). Income was negatively related to intentions of exit and neglect ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively) and positively related to performance ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Supervisors also reported better performance of part-time than of full-time employees ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Our model reflects a potential mediating effect of job attitudes on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Although we did not posit specific hypotheses for such a mediating effect it is an important finding worthy of consideration. Table 4 presents our test of mediation. To support a mediating relationship we followed the studies of Baron and Kenny (1986) and James and Brett (1984). As may be observed, job attitudes mediate the relationship between OP and intentions of exit and neglect. First, the zero-order correlations between perceptions of politics and job attitudes are significant ( $r =$

TABLE 4  
 Summary of Findings for the Mediating Effect of Job Attitudes on the Relationship  
 between OP and Work Outcomes

Variable	Zero-order correlations		Standardized regression coefficients controlling for OP		Differences	
	Exit	Neglect	Exit	Neglect	Exit	Neglect
Job attitudes						
Job satisfaction	-0.40***	-0.25**	-0.19**	-0.14*	0.21*	0.11*
Organizational commitment	-0.41***	-0.19***	-0.27***	-0.07	0.14*	0.12*
Organizational politics (OP)						
Perception of organizational politics (POPS)	—	—	0.19***	0.25***	—	—

Note.  $N = 296-303$  due to missing values.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

$-0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , for job satisfaction and  $r = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , for organizational commitment: see Table 1). Second, as Table 4 proves, with the exception of performance, job attitudes and work outcomes were also significantly correlated. Job satisfaction was negatively related to exit and neglect ( $r = -0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $r = -0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , respectively). Organizational commitment was negatively related to exit and neglect ( $r = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $r = -0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). Finally, when perceptions of organizational politics were controlled these correlations diminished considerably, as the major criterion for mediation requires (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1177). Job satisfaction was related to exit and neglect ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively). Organizational commitment was related to exit ( $\beta = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and was not related to neglect. No support was found for a mediating effect of job attitudes on the relationship between OP and performance. All in all, this study found that OP was a relatively good predictor of work outcomes, especially negligent behavior, in the public sector.

## DISCUSSION

What is the effect of perceived politics on organizations and employees? Is politics a factor that improves our understanding of employees' job attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behavior at work? What is the nature of this relationship and what implications should be drawn from it for the public sector? Our goal was to further theory and knowledge on employees' reactions to politics in

public organizations by providing some answers to these questions, and several unique features were indeed produced. We found main effects of OP on two variables which have received little, if any, attention in previous studies. These variables were negligent behavior and job performance. We further found that job attitudes mediated the relationship between OP and work outcomes.

Special attention should be paid to the relatively strong relationship between perception of organizational politics and negligent behavior. Politics perception alone accounted for 5.5% of 14.7% of the explained variance in the neglect variable. These findings suggest that reactions to politics in traditional public systems may be more destructive-passive than destructive-active (i.e., exit). One way of interpreting this finding is that employees in the Israeli public sector are less willing to give up work security and tenure even if they feel that politics is all around them. Normally, they choose to respond with more passive behavior (i.e., neglect), which is less risky and does not endanger their career development and occupational status. Since most of the public sector does not compensate employees according to their performance at work, neglecting one's duties or job assignments is less dangerous than in the private sector, but at the same time it represents dissatisfaction with the intraorganizational atmosphere. As a result of internal politics, the public sector may comprise more "unsatisfied-neglecting types" than "unsatisfied-leaving types" of employee. If internal politics breeds negligent behavior and obstructive organizational performance in public agencies, one should also consider the wider effect on all service recipients. When a public sector employee neglects his/her job, organizational outcomes are damaged and the citizens are the most likely to suffer. Negligent behavior and negative job attitudes may thus yield low-quality work outcomes and poor and ineffective public services. Low efficiency of public systems threatens large populations and thus carries high potential damage for the society. It also reflects a substantial obstacle to reforms in public organizations and to new trends in public administration (i.e., New Public Management), which endeavors to become more responsive and businesslike and to improve vocational skills of public servants (Pollitt, 1988, 1990).

Another contribution of our study is its elaboration of the relationship between perception of organizational politics and employees' performance. Here a supervisory measure of performance was applied, and its results were collected 6 months after the original survey. As far as we could find, the study of Hochwarter et al. (1997) was the only one that used such a measure to examine a relationship between performance and OP. Our findings advocate such an approach and demonstrate the potential advantages of using a separate measure of employees' performance together with job attitudes and behavioral intentions in one model. An examination of employees' performance as a possible work outcome that relates to OP also adheres to the basic model of workplace politics suggested by Ferris et al. (1989). We found a weak negative relationship between these variables, which indicates that such a relationship may exist and is worth further examination. The findings also adduce a negative relationship between percep-

tions of OP and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as mentioned in previous studies (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Drory, 1993; Ferris et al., 1996a,b).

The relationship between perception of OP and other work outcomes is in line with the theory on OP as suggested by Ferris et al. (1989) and reinforced in subsequent studies. Nonetheless, our study deserves special consideration mainly in light of other works which examined the side effects of OP on work outcomes (Bozeman et al., 1997; Ferris et al., 1989, 1996b; Parker et al., 1995). These studies could not point to any direct relationship between OP, intentions of turnover, job satisfaction, and loyalty. Instead, they suggested that control or self-efficacy mediates the OP-work outcomes relationship. Our findings, however, portray a more complex connection, suggesting that different types of politics-outcomes relationships (direct and indirect) may emerge in different sectors and cultures. The empirical support provided by Ferris et al. (1996) for an indirect relationship may hold for nonpublic or semipublic organizations (e.g., universities) but to a lesser degree for more traditional public structures, such as government agencies and municipalities, as tested here. This may be due to the specific characteristics of the political game in the public sector, which involves extraorganizational pressures from parties, interest groups, and governmental institutions; these are less involved in the internal politics of nonpublic agencies. Employees' degree of control over the political game in public organizations may be low and less significant because of external political influences, which are usually powerful. Mediators such as control or self-efficacy which were proposed earlier may not have any effect in such organizations, while job attitudes may. In our study, organizational commitment and job satisfaction showed a mediating effect of the relationship between OP and work outcomes. This effect was additional to the independent main effect of OP on work outcomes. Hence, we recommend future examinations of direct and indirect relations as dependent in the specific organization and sector.

The personal variables which were used in this study showed some interesting relationships with the outcome variables. First, women, highly educated employees, and those with higher incomes showed fewer intentions of neglect than other employees. A possible explanation is that such employees are more vulnerable and sensitive to their achievements in the organization; they are more careful and less willing to perform negligent behaviors that may risk their position and job security. Another explanation may be the level of acceptance of OP among these employees. When OP is accepted as an integral part of daily life in the workplace employees feel less worried and less capable of doing something about it. They thus treat OP as something you have to put up with if you wish to stay with the organization. This idea is supported by the theory of control and self-efficacy as mentioned early in this study. Highly educated employees were more willing to leave the organization, perhaps because they felt that other job options were available to them. Naturally, low-income employees also expressed higher intentions of exit; however, they were also those who received better performance

evaluations from supervisors. Working better but getting fewer rewards, perhaps due to high OP, may lead to negligent behavior and even leaving the organization in the long run. Nonetheless, the contribution of OP to the explanation of all the work outcomes was significant and was beyond the contribution of the personal variables. This finding implies that OP is an important variable that makes an independent contribution to the explanation of job performance, intentions of exit, and especially negligent behavior of public personnel over and above other variables.

Several limitations of this study should also be mentioned. First, with the exception of performance evaluations, the design of this research was based mainly on self-report data, which are subject to measurement biases such as common method error. Future research on the relationship between workplace politics and work outcomes would benefit from the use of more objective measures. It would be especially interesting to look for the effect of workplace politics on other work outcomes, such as absenteeism, lateness, and turnover (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992), as well as performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Second, most of our data were collected at one point in time. With the exception of job performance all other variables were reported by subordinates. Unfortunately, almost no study, including this one, has used a longitudinal design in regard to OP, although this would be valuable.

Note also that our data were not collected in a North American setting, in contrast to most research on OP. We consider this an advantage of our study but we are also aware that the results might be affected by cultural and structural factors unique to Israel. For example, the Israeli public sector is markedly different from the American in size and responsibilities. It is also more conservative and centralized. Since it was established, Israel has adopted a more West European model of the welfare state in which social services are broad and extensive. Services are controlled by the central government and affected by powerful social elites (Nachmias, 1991). In contrast with the North American public sector, Israeli public agencies face continuous dilemmas of political involvement in administrative processes. This makes the public sector more sensitive to political pressures, political appointments, and involvement of interest groups in the professional decisions of public officials. Scholars agree that due to its singular cultural and structural characteristics, Israeli public administration suffers chronically from overbureaucracy and relatively high politicization in many of its units (Deri, 1993; Nachmias, 1991). In this environment perceived politics is presumably higher than that in smaller organizations that are more businesslike and detached from external pressures of the political system. Moreover, since political behavior inside organizations, as well as outside, is subject to cultural influences (Pfeffer, 1992) this research should be replicated in other settings to allow better understanding of cultural implications.

Beyond its limitations, this study has accomplished several goals which can be marked as making a significant contribution to the field: (1) exploring the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics, job attitudes, exit,

neglect, and job performance; (2) illuminating the special role of OP in traditional public systems and its implications for employees as well as for citizens/customers; (3) utilizing a non-American setting to allow a cross-cultural examination of OP. The contribution of this study lies in its pointing to some new directions for better explaining the relationship among workplace politics, job attitudes, and work outcomes in the public arena.

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