

Internal Politics in Public Administration Systems

An Empirical Examination of Its Relationship With Job Congruence, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and In-Role Performance

Eran Vigoda

Politics is one of the most common yet least studied phenomena in organizations. This study examines employees' perceptions of organizational politics in the public sector and suggests that it mediates the relationship between job congruence (e.g., person-organization fit and level of met-expectations) and employee performance (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior [OCB] and in-role performance). A survey was conducted among 303 individuals in public personnel from two local municipalities in the north of Israel (first survey). Supervisors completed an assessment of employees' OCB and in-role performance six months later (second survey). Path analysis using LISREL VIII was implemented to evaluate two alternative models, direct and indirect. Findings of the study show that the indirect model fits the data better than the direct model, and therefore supports a mediating effect of perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS) on the relationship between job congruence and employee performance. Structural coefficients among the research variables promote the theory on the affect of job congruence and POPS on OCB and in-role behavior. The findings contribute both to the understanding of antecedents of POPS as well as to the exploration of some of its consequences. The paper concludes with several implications and suggestions for further inquiry into politics in public administration systems.

During the last two decades the concept of Organizational Politics (OP) has received increased attention in management literature. This attention relied partly on the expectation of finding new answers to some old questions, such as what (dis)motivates individuals at work and how can we better explain variations in employees' behavior and productivity? As a result, studies became particularly interested in the potential relationship between workplace politics and individuals' performances. The primary goal of these attempts was to examine whether internal politics plays a significant role in setting organizational outcomes, and if so, what are the nature and characteristics of this relationship.

Politics and political behavior in organizations seemed a promising field for theoretical inquiry, not only because of their practical implications, but for some other reasons as

well. First, modern societies searched for better efficiency and effectiveness in organizations in order to successfully respond to the increasing demands of their citizens. Scholars were urged to provide new explanations of and remedies for the decline in organizational outcomes in both the business and the public sector. Internal politics and power relations between organizational members appeared to account at least for some of these problems.

Second, politics represented a creative approach to the understanding of organizational dynamics, which for many years had been particularly overlooked. Many scholars agreed that politics was a common phenomenon in every organization,¹⁻⁸ yet few comprehensive attempts were made to fully understand it. Studies were preoccupied with other, mainly formal, aspects of workplace activities and preferred categorizing the political arena as a less significant dimension of the organizational nature. Consequently, the field was much understudied until the 1970s and 1980s.

Third, this approach was interdisciplinary, and employed classic terminology rooted in conventional political science and sociological theory. The common perception was that politics in the workplace was a necessary evil that no individual or society could avoid, but it was no different from many other difficulties that had to be borne. Therefore, management literature consistently considered politics, power, and influence relations among stakeholders as illegitimate, informal, and dysfunctional, as against authority and formal organizational design, which were described as apolitical and functional.⁹ Scholars like Block stated bluntly that “politics (in organizations) is basically a negative process. 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.”¹⁰ OP was presumed to describe a dark and exceptional aspect of workplace activity.¹¹

With growing interest in workplace politics, some studies have suggested promoting a more empirical approach to the examination of its outcomes. However, only recently have a few scholars responded positively to this challenge, and most of them have focused on employees attitudes as the prime outcomes of OP.¹²⁻¹⁴ As a result, scant empirical evidence exists today that can support the (possibly negative) effect of internal workplace politics on employees’ outcomes, and especially on objective performance evaluations. The main goal of this study is to contribute to the development of theoretical thinking on OP, and more specifically to demonstrate the relationship between job congruence, perception of organizational politics, and two constructs of employees’ reactions: In-role performances and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

The thesis developed here is that employees respond to the political climate of their work environment both formally and informally. Job congruence is expected to affect individuals’ perception of politics, and both politics and congruence with the work sphere are presumed to have an influence on employee performance. Note that while the focus of this study is on *public* personnel management, much of the theory developed, as well as the findings and the conclusions, are also relevant to the private sector.

Theory, hypotheses, and models

OP is a complex phenomenon that appears to have no clear definition. Scholars have treated this slippery concept in many ways. They described it as ways to get ahead in an organization, as dynamic processes of influence that produce organizationally relevant outcomes beyond the simple performance of job tasks, or as the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non-sanctioned influence means.^{15,16} Ferris, Fedor, Chachere and Pondy suggest that OP is a social influence process in which behavior is strategically designed to maximize short-term or long-term self-interests, which is either consistent with or at the expense of others' interests.¹⁷ Pfeffer defined OP as those activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to obtain their preferred outcomes in a situation where there is uncertainty or disagreement.¹⁸ This perception is much in line with Mintzberg who argued that politics refer to "individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, technically illegitimate—sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise."¹⁹ Most of these definitions correlate OP with personal struggles, conflicts, influential activities, and, most importantly, inequity and unfairness, which result from the strong ambitions or aspirations of those who hold power in the workplace.

Perception of organizational politics

A variety of perspectives and methods were advanced to understand politics in organizations.²⁰⁻²⁹ One of the most common approaches is relatively new and began to flourish at the end of the 1980s. Progress was made with the works of Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues, who focused on employees' subjective *perception* of organizational politics rather than on political behavior or influence tactics per se. Concentration on perception of politics instead of actual political behavior appeared to stem from the fact that the former is more easily defined, explained, and empirically measured. However, perception reflects individuals' opinions of the social-political atmosphere of a work unit, and as such it can be categorized as an indirect measure of OP. Not surprisingly, this variable faced some criticism regarding its ability to represent the entire political environment in organizations.³⁰ Nevertheless, a consensus exists that it embodies an important dimension of the intra-organizational climate created by power struggles and influence tactics of all organizational members.

As was suggested by Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues, perception of organizational politics represents the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political in nature (promoting the self-interests of others), hence, unjust and unfair from the individual point of view.^{31,32} This approach is rooted in Kurt Lewin's argument that people respond to their perception of reality, not to reality itself. Politics in organizations should similarly be understood in terms of what people think rather than what it actually represents.³³ This idea yielded a scale for the measurement of political perception termed the "Perception of Organizational Politics Scale" (POPS). Different studies resulted in several versions of this scale.³⁴⁻³⁶

Several of these studies sought to examine the antecedents of POPS and argued the existence of three groups of influences.^{37,38} The first group consisted of general *personal influences* like age, sex, and self monitoring. The second group was termed *organization influences* and included variables like centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, and span of control. The third group of antecedents, named *job/work environment influences*, was based on variables such as job autonomy, job variety, feedback, advancement opportunity, and interaction with others. Most studies accepted this theoretical framework and showed its usefulness for the understanding of workplace politics. However, few tried to elaborate on other factors that may be important in that regard. This should be noted, since the ratio of explained variance in most of these studies was moderate and ranged around 0.30-0.41.^{39,40} Therefore, some further efforts in pointing out other predictors of political perceptions may contribute to our knowledge of this intriguing manifestation.

Relying on the above, the present study suggests taking a step forward and examining the effect of job congruence on perception of organizational politics and employee performance. Studies have mentioned job congruence as an important determinant of employees' productivity and performance. For example job congruence was found to be related to job stability/persistence and to performance evaluations in 774 employees in Israel.⁴¹ Other studies also mentioned the importance of job congruence, organizational climate, and general culture as crucial factors that may facilitate employees coping abilities in a new work environment and during the initial integration stages in organizations.⁴² Additional studies suggested that newcomers are aware of the ongoing politics within the organization but must go through a learning process of gaining the acceptance of others. Job congruence can help them to successfully cope during this period and adapt to the political environment.^{43,44} Therefore, it is only natural to try to relate job congruence to organizational politics, which represents a meaningful domain of workplace atmosphere.

Job congruence and organizational politics

Job congruence generally refers to the basic compatibility of an employee with his/her workplace and specific job. It also reflects a level of fulfilled aspirations and expectations of the work environment in its broad sense. This study treats job congruence as being comprised of two constructs: employees' level of met expectations (ME) and person-organization fit (POF). These are two well established factors reflecting the adaptability of an individual to his/her work surroundings. Studies defined ME as the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he/she expected to encounter.⁴⁵ Bretz and Judge (1994) defined POF as the degree to which individuals (skills, needs, values, and personality) match job requirements.⁴⁶ The higher ME and POF are, the higher the congruence of the individual's characteristics and expectations with the organizational environments and demands.

The congruence between an individual and the workplace is expected to have a negative effect on an employee's perception of organizational politics. The rationale for this relationship is based on several studies, which argued that individuals are more likely to have a positive evaluation of an organization when their goals are met than when their aspirations are threatened.^{47,48} The basic model of Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues also

mentioned the job/work environment influences as potential predictors of politics perceptions. Variables like job autonomy, job variety, feedback, advancement opportunity, and interaction with others represent one's level of fit and compatibility with the workplace. This fit may reduce employees' perception of organizational politics. Those who better fit the organization and have more realistic expectations are presumed to view the environment as less aggressive, less power seeking, more fair and equal, and thus apolitical.

The importance of fit and expectations in social life and their implications for the study of politics was further advanced in other works, which argued that actors in every social political system are motivated by the cost and benefits of their activities and the mutual political exchange relationships with the environment.⁴⁹ Those who better fit the organization and succeed in fulfilling self aspirations will tend to develop positive perceptions towards their social and work environment. When such congruence exists employees will perceive the organization as less political and responding well to their needs and aspirations. They will probably attribute their success to factors other than politics, such as their own qualifications and level of performance at work. However, individuals who do not fit a specific job or work unit are expected to perceive the organization more negatively. When job congruence is low it is more likely that employees will feel disappointed and frustrated and will develop alienation from the organization and their surroundings. Such feelings may broaden the emotional as well as the functional gap between a person and her/his job. Consequently, employees will tend to attribute their failure to achieve their goals to the political system of the organization rather than to themselves.

The relationship between job congruence and performance at work is even more established in management theory. The expectancy theory argued that expectations significantly affect an employee's motivation, perception, and performance in the workplace.⁵⁰ The expectancy theory suggests that a better fit between individuals and their work environment enhances an employee's met expectations. When one's personal characteristics and attitudes are close to those of the workplace, a better fit can be expected between one and one's job/work. Organizations that employ better fitted individuals have significant advantages over other organizations. They show high levels of production and improved quality of performances, and they encounter only minor problems of absenteeism and turnover.

Empirical evidence exists today to support these claims. An extensive meta-analysis of 31 studies and 17,241 people found correlation of $-.29$ between met expectations (ME) and intentions to leave the organization. A correlation of $.19$ was reported between ME and job survival, and of $.11$ between ME and job performance.⁵¹ Other studies examined person-organization fit (POF) as a construct of work adjustment and affirmed a positive effect of POF on tenure, satisfaction, and other constructs of career success.⁵² These arguments led to the first hypothesis in this study:

Hypothesis 1: Job congruence is negatively related with perception of organizational politics and positively related with employee performance

Consequences of organizational politics

Most studies on organizational politics naturally expected to find politics related with poor employee performance or as a potential source of work stress.^{53,54} However, this relationship seems far more complex. Bozeman and his colleagues elaborated on the effect of perception of politics on four outcome variables: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intention to turnover, and job stress. No direct relationships were found in this two-study investigation, yet some interactive relationships were found between perception of organizational politics, feelings of self-efficacy, and the outcome variables. Specifically, individuals with high job self-efficacy perceived organizational politics as a threat, and thus exhibited lower levels of organizational outcomes (organizational commitment and job satisfaction) than persons with low job self-efficacy.⁵⁵

A more balanced approach to OP was adopted in other studies. In a survey conducted by Gandz and Murray over half of the respondents thought that politics in an organization means unfair, bad, irrational, and unhealthy behavior. Nonetheless, many believed that political behavior is necessary if one wants to be a good employee or a successful manager and get ahead in the organization.⁵⁶ An early work of Hirschman suggested that political behavior is a legitimate fight response to different conflicts or to a decline in organizations.⁵⁷ It was also argued that OP is a legitimate way for people to take effective action in the organizational context by having control over information, flexibility and statecraft.^{58,59} These studies imply that OP is not necessarily related to negative work outcomes. Other studies stated that OP is a natural social influence process.^{60,61} Workplace politics may have functional as well as dysfunctional consequences and can be helpful or harmful for members of the organization. OP may have several positive outcomes (e.g., career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, control, and success). It may also result in harmful outcomes (e.g., loss of strategic power, position credibility, negative feelings toward others, internal feelings of guilt). More important for this study, a majority of these works argued that organizations with extremely high levels of internal politics will eventually have to face hampered job performance of their members.

Theories of organizational conflict may also be useful in analyzing the possible consequences of OP. These ideas view organizations as rife with power struggles and political processes.⁶² Conflict in organizations may have negative effects on the aggregate ability of organizations to function efficiently. Conflict in the workplace is almost inevitable, and operative measures have to be taken to prevent its negative effect on employee performance. Nevertheless, conflict can also balance power relationships, promote flexibility and adaptability, and prevent stagnation of work units. It also has the potential to enhance growth and stability, guard against “groupthink,” and facilitate effective decision-making. This can be achieved only if conflict and internal politics are wisely used by the organizational leadership to create a feeling of productive competition under fair terms among

all players. Note, however, that only few studies have provided sound empirical support for this theoretical rationale and therefore the relationship between OP and employee performance remains vague.

Employee performance

So far this article has discussed employee performance as one construct. However, we examined both formal (in-role) and informal (extra-role) individual performance. In-role performance usually refers to duties and responsibilities one executes as an integral part of one's job assignments. Extra-role behavior describes activities beyond formal job requirements that one chooses to do without expecting any direct reward. These formal and informal activities contribute to the general health and prosperity of the work unit. Among them, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is the one that has received considerable attention in management literature during the past decade. OCB had its roots in the work of Katz and Kahn, who argued that an important behavior required of employees for the effective functioning of an organization is the undertaking of innovative and spontaneous activities beyond the prescribed role requirement.⁶³ OCB consists of informal contributions that participants can choose to make or withhold, without regard to sanctions or formal incentives. For example, this behavior may show exceptional willingness to assist others with their work duties, helping new employees, or using the organizational resources only when necessary. Many of these contributions, aggregated over time and people, were thought to enhance organizational effectiveness.⁶⁴ OCB was described as the "good soldier syndrome," which every organization must foster.⁶⁵

Further, the idea was suggested that better measurement of OCB should also include items representing in-role behaviors because such an analysis would clarify whether the respondents differentiated intra-role and extra-role behaviors.⁶⁶ This recommendation was strongly supported in other studies, which found that the boundary between intra-role and extra-role behavior was ill-defined and varied from one employee to the next and between employees and supervisors.⁶⁷ While OCB refers to informal behaviors aimed at enhancing organizational outcomes, in-role performances refer to a set of required behaviors one is expected to display in one's job and for which one is directly rewarded. These activities comprise duties, routine tasks, and ad-hoc requests of the immediate supervisor. Sometimes they are part of the organizational formal procedures and regulations, but they are always perceived as an essential part of the contiguous production process. For this reason, the present study has undertaken an integrative approach to the measurement of OCB, using both in-role and extra-role behaviors in one scale.

Perception of organizational politics is predicted to be negatively related to OCB and in-role performance. High levels of OP usually reflect an unfair organizational environment in which those who hold more political power determine criteria of resource allocation and distribution. This is generally done with only minor concern for objective standards, fair priorities, and actual needs of the rest of the organization members. Studies suggested a relationship between constructs of procedural justice (e.g., time since last promotion or time since last appraisal) and perception of politics.⁶⁸ Arguments which support the relationship between justice and performance in the workplace can also be found

in numerous other studies.⁶⁹⁻⁷² For example, it was argued that a leader's fair or supportive behavior may create a need in subordinates to reciprocate. One way to "pay back" a leader for his/her supportive and fair behavior is by performing better or engaging in citizenship behavior. Employees consider their leader the key representative of the organizational justice process because of his/her frequent contact with them. A person's sense of fairness would depend very much on the leader's behavior and fairness values.⁷³

Other studies found that supervisors have a direct influence on subordinates' behavior by increasing the fairness of interactions with them.⁷⁴ This idea can be extended to include other organizational members as well. Managers and co-workers are continuously responsible for the formation of the political climate in the workplace. Organizations rife with political maneuvering and power struggles usually have less concern with fairness and equity values. They enable the powerful ones to gain more advantages and benefits than others. Therefore, in-role performance, and especially OCB, may be negatively related with the general political atmosphere in a given work unit. One study Farh et al. (1990) partially supported this notion and found that higher levels of justice and fairness (lower levels of organizational politics) encourage employees to respond with higher levels of OCB⁷⁵. Building on the exchange approach, employees with high job congruence will perceive their environment as more fair, and therefore will reciprocate with better performance. That is, organizations that create a culture and atmosphere of equity and a fair distribution of social and political resources may increase an employee's formal performance as well as willingness to engage in OCB. Thus, a second hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Perception of the existence of organizational politics is negatively related to in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior

Since perception of organizational politics largely reflects attitudes towards fairness and equity in the organizational arena, it is also expected to mediate the relationship between an individual's congruence with the job/work environment and personal performance. Schein argued that employees may be expected to develop attitudes toward the political climate of the work unit only after they spent a reasonable period of time in the organization. During the first stages of entering the organization they experience political events only as bystanders. However, with time, they are bound to actively enter into situations where their personal power and influence abilities are confronted with other employees' ambitions. The results of such confrontations can be translated to positive or negative work outcomes.⁷⁶

The proposition that perception of organizational politics is a mediator between job congruence and employee performance is based on previous studies.⁷⁷⁻⁷⁹ These studies argued that perception of politics mediates the relationship between some job/work influences and individuals' outcomes such as job anxiety, job stress and burnout, organizational withdrawal, turnover, absenteeism, job satisfaction, effectiveness, loyalty, and commitment. Perception of politics was found to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction and with organizational commitment. It was also positively related to job stress

and burnout. However, to our knowledge, almost no evidence exists today as to how politics affects formal and informal performance evaluations of employees by their supervisors. Relying on these findings it is expected that:

Hypothesis 3: Perception of organizational politics mediates the relationship between job congruence and employee performance

Models

Two models are suggested to test the contribution of organizational politics to the understanding of variations in employee performance. These models have the advantage of examining the entire theoretical conception of the study as one integrative view. They extend the implications of the hypotheses, which elaborate on some meaningful, yet specific and relatively limited relationships between OP, job congruence, and performances.

The indirect/research model: This model relies on the literature of perception of organizational politics. It assumes that OP does make a difference and can affect employee performance. The general conception is that internal politics mediates the relationship between job congruence and employee performance. High job congruence results in low perception of organizational politics and a perception of fair resource distribution. In this environment employees feel equally treated and as having reasonable chances of achieving interests and ambitions. Also expected is an increase in job performance, which is the reaction to such positive attitudes towards the organization, managers, and co-workers. Thus, it is anticipated that low perception of organizational politics lead to an increase in formal outcomes (in-role performance) as well as informal outcomes (OCB).

The direct/alternative model: This model excludes organizational politics from the analysis of individual performance in the workplace and expects to find that job congruence is directly related to employee performance. Thus, organizational politics, fairness, and justice in the workplace have only a minor effect, or no effect at all, on employee performance. The alternative model must be examined in comparison with the research model in order to more strongly support the latter.⁸⁰ The model also represents the null hypothesis in our study and, if supported, it implies that analyzing perception of organizational politics makes no meaningful contribution to the understanding of employee performance.

Method

Sample and procedure

A two-phase survey of 411 employees in two local municipalities located in northern Israel was conducted between May 1996 and January 1997. The employees had not taken part in any other study during the previous two years. Participation in the research was voluntary and employees were assured of full confidentiality in the data analysis. To ensure this process, the research staff distributed the questionnaires in the departments and collected

them directly from the respondents after they had been completed. Alternatively, employees had the option of returning the questionnaires by mail in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher.

In the first survey, employees were asked to provide information about their feelings regarding fit with the organization and their level of met expectations. They also provided information on their perception of organizational politics. In the second survey, which took place six months later, supervisors completed a detailed questionnaire on the formal and informal performance of their employees. This information was obtained only for those who completed the questionnaires during the first survey. A total of 303 questionnaires (return rate of 73.7%) were used in the final analysis. A breakdown by occupation showed that 17% of the sample were blue-collar employees, 43% clerical and administrative workers, 20% high-technical workers, and 20% engineers, architects, and other professionals. Fifty-six percent of the sample were female, 77% married, 89% had a full-time job, and 33% were low-level or middle-level managers. Average age was 44.2 years (s.d.= 10.3); average tenure in the organizations was 11.8 (s.d.= 8.6); 32% of the respondents held a B.A. degree or higher. The demographic characteristics of the sample were quite similar to those of the total population in the two organizations that participated in the study: 57% females, 74% married, average age 45, average tenure in the organization 9 years, and 31% with B.A. degree or higher.

Measures

Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS): This variable was measured during the first survey by a short version of perception of political scale (POPS).⁸¹ Other studies, like this one, defined POPS as the degree to which the respondents view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair. The original scale of POPS was suggested by Kacmar and Ferris and included 40 items. We decided to follow Kacmar and Carlson's study, which used the most parsimonious set of only 12 items. 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" (reversed item); (3) "There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them." The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), so that a higher score means higher perception of organizational politics. Reliability of the scale was 0.77, which is quite similar to that reported in other studies (e.g., 0.74 in Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; 0.76 in Parker et al., 1995).

Independent variables

Met Expectations (ME): Employee's met expectations represent the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he/she expected to encounter.⁸² This variable was measured at T1 by the 9-item scale.⁸³ Respondents were asked to describe how well their expectations about their immediate supervisor, kind of work, co-workers, subordinates, physical working conditions, financial rewards, career future and organizational identification, and their overall jobs had been met in recent months. The scale for this measure ranged from 1 (never or

very seldom) to 5 (very frequently or completely). Reliability was .83, close to the 0.85 reliability found in other studies.⁸⁴

Person-Organization Fit (POF): A comprehensive 15-item scale for the measurement of POF was suggested in a recent study.⁸⁵ This scale was proposed to include four different perspectives of fit. The first assessed the degree to which individual knowledge, skills, and abilities match job requirements. The second determined the degree of congruence between individual needs and organizational reinforcement system and structure. The third matched patterns of organizational values and patterns of individual values. The fourth perspective concerned individual personality and perceived organizational image as key constructs of POF. We applied all these dimensions with one exception: the scale here included only 13 items because we decided to omit two items unsuited to a public sector setting. The scale included two sets of questions, the first asking respondents to indicate how descriptive each statement was of their current organizational environment. The second set asked them to indicate how well each statement described them personally. Naturally, the two sets were quite similar in content. In line with the above study, the amount of fit was operationalized as the sum of the differences between responses to corresponding items on the two sets of questions. The scale for each item was of 5 points, ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (definitely true). Sample pairs of items included: (1a) “This organization encourages and rewards loyalty” versus (1b) “I believe organizational loyalty should be encouraged and rewarded;” (2a) “This organization offers long-term employment security” versus (2b) “I believe organizations should offer long-term employment security to their employees.” This scale was applied during the first survey, and its reliability was .78.

Dependent variables

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and In-role Behaviors: On the basis of previous studies, a mixed scale of OCB and intra-role behaviors was used.^{86,87} This was done to better define the boundaries between the two performance measures, which are sometimes difficult to distinguish. Two fairly clear-cut factors of OCB were found in other studies.⁸⁸ One factor suggested the quality of altruism, whose component items all concerned helping a specific person, be it the supervisor, a co-worker, or a client. The other factor, at the time labeled general compliance, appeared to represent a more impersonal sort of OCB—conscientiousness in attendance, use of work time, and adherence to various rules, but a conscientiousness that far surpassed any enforceable minimum standards. It implied more of a “good soldier” syndrome of doing things that were “right and proper,” but doing them for the sake of the system rather than for specific persons. Consequently, a 20-item list taken from the employee studies was presented to the supervisors during the second survey. Twenty-one supervisors completed the list and evaluated each of their employees’ behavior over the past year. Each item was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed three clear factors. The largest factor included 8 items and was labeled OCB altruistic since all of its items referred to helping a specific person, either the supervisor or a co-worker. The resultant Cronbach’s alpha for this factor was .93. The second factor included 5 items representing the more impersonal sort of OCB. In accordance with the literature, this factor was labeled OCB

compliance. All the items included in this factor displayed conscientiousness and responsibility towards the normal operation of the organization, over and above formal requirements of job duties. A Cronbach's alpha of .80 was achieved. A third factor generated by the analysis included 7 items, all of them dealing with formal duties at work, and therefore this factor was labeled in-role performance. Cronbach alpha for this factor was .92. Factor analysis showed that the supervisors were able to distinguish intra-role and extra-role performance (the two OCB factors) in their particular setting. Studies argued that because the two OCB dimensions represent distinct classes of citizenship behavior, they should be analyzed separately. It was also suggested that the two OCB dimensions can have different antecedents, as demonstrated in their results. The present study, based on these suggestions and on the findings of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which will be presented in the findings section, analyzed the three dimensions as distinct but related constructs.

Path analysis and evaluation of the models

The two models were assessed using path analysis with LISREL VIII. A covariance matrix among the research variables, using listwise deletion of missing values, formed the input for the path analysis. The common approach is to estimate structural relationships among variables that are free of measurement errors. However, we implemented another technique in which the multi-item scales were treated as single indicators of each construct.⁸⁹ Therefore, we also corrected for measurement errors in our models. To correct for random measurement errors, the random error variance associated with each construct was equated to the value of its variance multiplied by the quantity one minus its estimated reliability.⁹⁰ Other studies have also used this approach.^{91,92} Moreover, the utility of the approach was supported in another study which showed that latent variable analysis yielded virtually identical parameter estimates of direction, magnitude, and significance.⁹³ Results of this procedure, however, diverged substantially from the uncorrected single-indicator analysis.

To correct for random measurement errors the random error variance associated with each construct was equated to the value of its variance multiplied by the quantity one minus its estimated reliability.⁹⁰ Other studies have also used this approach.^{91,92} Moreover, the utility of the approach was supported in another study, which showed that latent variable analysis yielded virtually identical parameter estimates of direction, magnitude, and significance.⁹³ Results of this procedure, however, diverged substantially from the uncorrected single-indicator analysis.

Fit indices

10 indices were used to assess the fit of the models. The first one was the chi-square test, which is the most basic and essential for the nested model comparison. A low and non-significant value of chi-square represents good fit to the data. The chi-square test is sensitive to sample size, so the ratio of the model chi-square to degrees of freedom was used as another fit index. A ratio up to 2 was considered in this study as a satisfactory value. Moreover, the use of chi-square is based on the assumption that the model holds exactly in the population. As noted elsewhere, this may be an unreasonable assumption in most empirical research since it means that models which hold approximately in the given pop-

ulation will be rejected in large samples.⁹⁴ Therefore, we used the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).^{95,96} A value of .05 indicates a close fit and values up to .08 represent reasonable errors of approximation in the population. Some other fit indices are also reported as less sensitive to sample size differences and to the number of indicators per latent variable increase.⁹⁷ Six of these indices were used in this study: the Relative Fit Index (RFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI).

The RFI and the CFI were developed to facilitate the choice of the best fit among competing models that may differ in degree of parameterization and specification of relations among latent variables.^{98,99} They are recommended as being the best approximation of the population value for a single model. The closer their value to 1 the better the fit. NFI was proposed in earlier studies and is additive for the nested-model comparison.¹⁰⁰ Its value should be close to 1 to indicate a good fit. However, it has the disadvantage of being affected by sample size, and on some occasions it may not reach 1.0, even when the model is correct (especially in small samples). This difficulty was resolved with the modified index called NNFI, which has the major advantage of reflecting model fit very well at all sample sizes. As with NFI, a value closer to 1 reflects better fit. The last two indices do not depend on sample size explicitly and measure how much *better* the model fits than no model at all. Both these measures should be between zero and 1, and a value higher than .90 is considered very good. Another recommended index for the selection of one of several a priori specified models is the Expected (single sample) Cross-Validation Index (ECVI).¹⁰¹ This index is a measure of the discrepancy between the fitted covariance matrix in the analyzed sample and the expected covariance matrix that would be obtained in another sample of the same size.¹⁰²

Path coefficients

Testing the quality of two or more a priori alternative models should rely mainly on a variety of fit indices, as described previously. However, it does not necessarily imply that one model is superior or the correct causal model. Another important criterion for the quality of the model is the plausibility criterion.¹⁰³ This criterion means that the path coefficients in the plausible better-fit model well adhere to the general theoretical conception and to the hypotheses. This adherence should hold in terms of magnitude as well as in the expected directions. Accordingly, a model that fits the data well, but many of whose theoretical paths do not support the theoretical arguments, cannot be defined as correct. There has to be some balance between the fit indices and the theoretical predictions or hypotheses regarding the relationships among research variables. The accuracy of the theoretical predictions can be tested by the path coefficients in each of the models, as was done in this study.

Findings

Descriptive statistics

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study variables (reliabilities in parentheses)

Variable	Means	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Person-Organization Fit (POF)	3.36	.67	(.78)					
Met Expectations (ME)	3.05	.67	.45***	(.83)				
Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS)	3.06	.60	-.46***	-.53***	(.77)			
OCB Altruistic	3.40	.80	.01	.12*	-.16**	(.93)		
OCB Compliance	3.77	.68	.11	.09	-.14**	.36***	(.80)	
In-Role Performance	4.19	.66	.12*	.03	-.14*	.55***	.58***	(.92)

N=298-303 due to missing values

*P<.05 **P<.01 ***P<.001

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the research variables are presented in Table 1. Reasonable psychometric properties were found for all the measures. The correlations between the OCB constructs and in-role performance were relatively high ($r=.36$ to $r=.58$; $P<.001$) yet still typical for such variables. More importantly, they did not exceed the critical point of .60. These findings reduce the possibility of multicollinearity among the independent variables. Other correlations among the variables indicate that POPS was negatively related to ME and POF ($r=-.46$; $P<.001$ and $r=-.53$; $P<.001$ respectively). POPS was also found to be negatively related to OCB altruistic and to OCB compliance ($r=-.16$; $P<.01$ and $r=-.14$; $P<.01$ respectively). These conditions are mentioned elsewhere as necessary for the support of a mediating effect, and therefore imply that POPS may indeed play a mediating role in the research model.^{104,105}

Confirmatory factor analysis

See Table 2.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis for employees performances (20 items of OCB and In-role behavior)

Model/Description	Model Comparison											
	df	x ²	df	x ² /df	RFI	NFI	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	ECVI	RMSEA
All variables												
Three-factors												
OCBA vs. OCBC vs. INR**	149	411.25*	—	2.76	.88	.90	.92	.93	.87	.84	1.63	.076
Two-factors												
OCBA & OCBC vs. INR	151	846.77*	1 vs. 2	5.61	.76	.79	.79	.82	.71	.63	3.06	.120
OCBA & INR vs. OCBC	151	1267.51*	1 vs. 3	8.39	.64	.68	.67	.71	.56	.45	4.46	.160
OCBC & INR vs. OCBA	151	612.94*	1 vs. 4	4.06	.83	.85	.86	.88	.79	.73	2.29	.100
One-factor												
OCBA & OCBC & INR	152	1470.94*	1 vs. 5	9.68	.59	.63	.61	.65	.53	.42	5.12	.170
OCB constructs												
Two-factors												
OCBA vs. OCBC	64	219.27*	—	3.42	.88	.91	.92	.93	.90	.85	.90	.090
One-factor												
OCBA & OCBC	65	567.55*	6 vs. 7	8.73	.71	.76	.73	.78	.71	.60	2.05	.160

* P<.001

**OCBA=OCB altruistic, OCBC=OCB compliance, INR=in-role performance

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL VII was performed to estimate the internal dimensionality of the dependent variables. This was done to more strongly support the use of formal and informal measures of performance in one model. It also confirmed the assumption that the two OCB constructs (altruistic and compliance) substantially differ from each other and deserve a separate representation in the models. The three-factor model placed the 20 indicators of OCB altruistic, OCB compliance, and in-role performance on separate latent factors. This model was compared with three two-factor models, which forced the indicators of two subscales into a single factor, and forced the remaining indicators of the remaining subscale into a single factor. The three-factor model was also compared with a single-factor model where all 20 indicators were forced into a single latent factor. The findings, presented in Table 2, reveal that the three-factor model fitted the data better than any of the two-factor models or the single-factor model. A chi-square difference test shows that the restrictions added to all the alternative models significantly reduced the fit of these models in comparison with the three-factor one.¹⁰⁶ Another analysis was performed to test the dimensionality of the two OCB subscales. In this analysis only the indicators of the two OCB subscales were tested. The two-factor model placed the 13 indicators of OCB altruistic and OCB compliance on separate latent factors. It was compared with a single-factor model, which placed all 13 indicators on a single latent factor. The findings presented in the lower portion of Table 2 reveal a better fit with the data of the two-factor model than the single-factor model. The chi-square difference test also shows that the single-factor model reduced the fit with the data. The above analyses reconfirm the examination of both formal and informal performances, as well as the separate use of OCB altruistic and OCB compliance in one model.

Models assessment

See Table 3.

Figure 1 describes the two models evaluated here. Table 3 estimates the goodness of fit statistics for these models. As Table 3 shows, the indirect model (Model 1a) clearly provides the best fit. The fit indices for this model show a small, non-significant chi-square (6.89); the ratio of chi-square to the degrees of freedom is lower than 2 (1.15); RFI is .96, NNFI is .99, CFI is 1.00, AGFI is .97, ECVI is .12, and RMSEA is .02. The alternative direct model provides a relatively inferior fit with the data. The chi-square is significant (42.07; $P < .001$), indicating lower fit of this model than the mediating model. Other fit indices of the direct model also show a meager fit with the data: RFI is .63, NNFI is .65, CFI is .91, AGFI is .77, ECVI is .25, and RMSEA is .18. These findings provide some support for hypothesis 3, which expected to find that perception of organizational politics mediates the relationship between job congruence and performances.

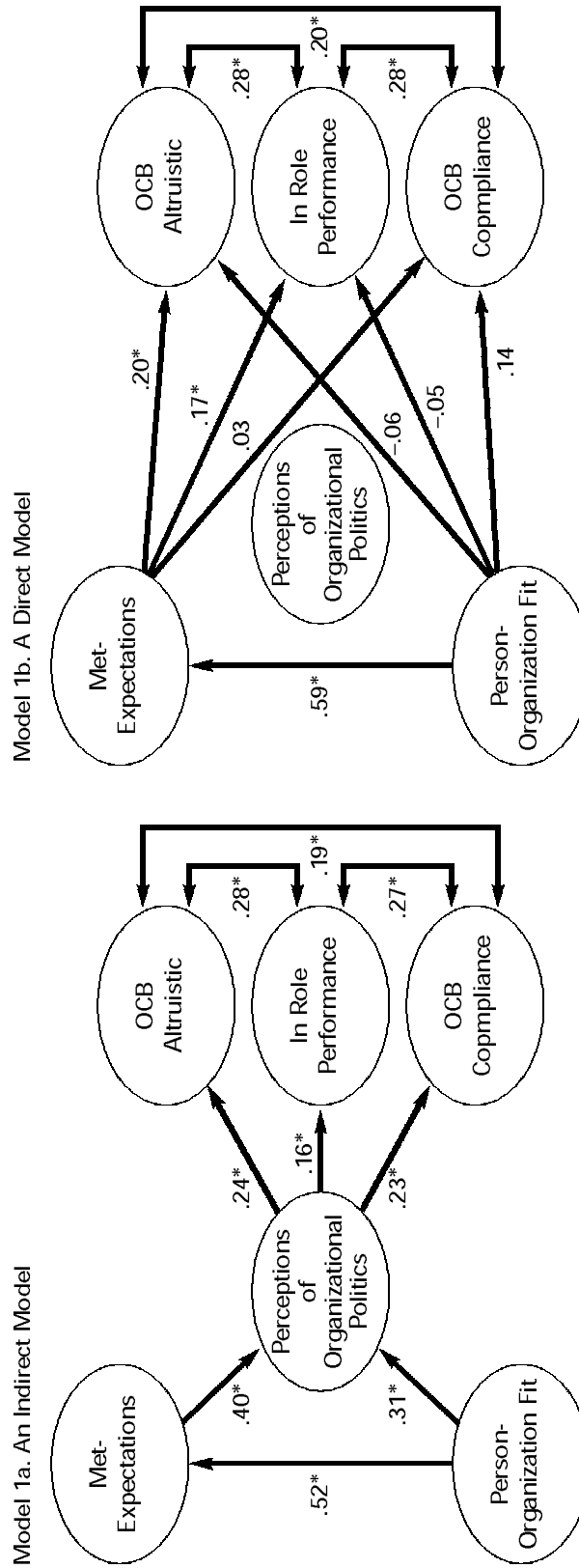
Figures 1a and 1b also provide the structural coefficients for the models. As mentioned, the path coefficients, their significance, and their magnitude furnish the important plausibility criterion for model evaluation. Thus, an additional indication that the mediated model is better than the alternative/direct model can be found in the path coefficients. All the paths in the mediated model (6 out of 6) were significant, as compared with only 3 out of 7 in the direct model. [This excludes paths among the depended variables which

Table 3. Goodness of fit summary for the research models

Model/Description	df	χ^2	χ^2/df	RFI	NFI	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	ECVI	RMSEA
Perceptions of organizational politics and performance: An Indirect model	6	6.89	1.15	.96	.98	.99	1.00	.99	.97	.12	.02
Perceptions of organizational politics and performance: A direct model	4	42.07*	10.52	.63	.90	.65	.91	.96	.77	.25	.18

*P<.001

Figure 1. Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Performance



were set to describe their inter-relationships according to Morrison (1994) and others]. Needless to say, the mediated model also contained a lower total number of paths and therefore was more parsimonious than the direct model. All of these further support hypothesis 3.

In line with the theory, ME and POF showed a negative relationship with perception of organizational politics ($-.40$; $P < .05$ and $-.31$; $P < .05$ respectively). These findings support hypothesis 1, which suggests that employees with high job congruence perceive their work environment as less political and more fair. In addition, perception of organizational politics was negatively related to job performance. It was negatively related to the two OCB constructs ($-.24$; $P < .05$ with OCB altruistic and $-.23$; $P < .05$ with OCB compliance), and also to in-role performance ($-.16$; $P < .05$). These findings support hypothesis 2, which expected to find a negative relationship between perception of organizational politics and employee performance. In addition, these relationships support the positive relationship between job congruence and job performance as was suggested in hypothesis 1. Further support for this hypothesis can be found in the positive relationship between ME and OCB altruistic, and ME and in-role performance ($.20$; $P < .05$ and $.17$; $P < .05$ respectively) as described in model 1b. Note that these paths, together with the path between POF and ME ($.59$; $P < .05$), were the only significant relationship found in the direct model. In sum, the path coefficients of the mediated model strongly demonstrate its superiority over the alternative/direct.

Discussion

This study tried to support the idea that internal politics should be considered a prominent behavior with significant consequences on employee performance in public administration systems. Building on other studies that found a relationship between politics and performance, the current study supported the notion that perception of organizational politics is a good mediator between constructs of job congruence and employee performance. These findings affirm the complex relationship between politics and performance that was mentioned in other studies.^{107,108}

Recent findings are also in line with this research. Some found different levels of organizational politics (work-group and organizational) and indicated that they are related to different outcomes in the workplace.¹⁰⁹ Another study tested the assertion that the efforts of first-line supervisors to enhance agreement on organizational goal priorities among their employees would decrease the impact of organizational politics on outcomes for those employees.¹¹⁰ Having examined five organizations, this study supported the notion that individual-level performance may be an outcome of organizational politics. The study also demonstrated that perceptions of politics and actual employee-boss goal congruence have interactive effects on organizational commitment and job performance. As one may observe, the concept of congruence is mentioned as a critical element that relates organizational politics with performances. For individuals holding priorities different from those of their boss, politics may have had some impact on commitment and job performance. For those holding priorities similar to those of the boss, politics had comparatively little impact. Drawing on

the above, future studies, which examine attitudes and behaviors at the workplace, must not neglect the effect of job congruence and political perceptions on employees' performances.

Moreover, studies have overlooked the relationships between these constructs in the public sector, and only scarce empirical evidence exists today on the nature of internal politics in public administration systems. What is the reason for this? As mentioned earlier, studies on OP started to flourish only in the late 1970s and were conducted mostly in private organizations. Since the public sector represents classic bureaucracy with high formal structures, many scholars assumed that internal politics played only a secondary role in these organizations and hence paid little attention to the examination of this sector. Another reasonable cause for the lack of studies on OP in public organizations may be rooted in the environment of modern societies. A recent study argued that the magnitude and rapidity of technological change occurring within industry has created an environment rife with ambiguity, hence rife with political behavior.¹¹¹ Thus, many studies examined OP in the private-industrial sector but somehow have neglected its investigation in public organizations, which have also undergone fundamental changes in the recent years. Many scholars also presumed that internal politics in public administration systems is extremely sensitive and highly difficult to measure by conventional methods of the social sciences. This speculative assumption discouraged many from obtaining original field data on this behavior. Limitations of time, heavy bureaucracy, and the small likelihood of finding willingness to cooperate in such studies also restrained the advancement of knowledge in this field.

Despite the above obstacles, this study has succeeded in obtaining useful information regarding internal politics in two public organizations. Since these data were collected in two separate surveys and from two different sources (employees and supervisors), they have stronger validity and reliability than evinced so far in other studies, which mostly applied self-reported data. Job congruence, especially ME and POF, were found to be good predictors of perceptions of politics. These findings contribute to the basic model of Ferris and his colleagues by adding two new constructs not mentioned up to now in the study of OP. These variables are based on the expectancy theory and they reconfirmed its usefulness for the understanding of power relations, politics, and influence in organizations. Thus, ME, POF, and other factors that may better reflect job congruence deserve further inquiry in other studies. Furthermore, perception of politics was successfully related to the objective information on formal and informal performance of public personnel. The CFA, which was conducted for the OCB and in-role behaviors, certified the use of separate measures for every one of the performance constructs in this study. The findings also provided support for the idea of mediation, which has been recently promoted elsewhere.^{112,113}

The present findings reveal that politics contributes to our understanding of organizational dynamics and outcomes. The most profound finding of this study is that internal politics extensively exists and does make a difference in public administration systems. The significant paths of the indirect/research model showed that politics had a modest negative effect on formal performance (in-role behavior). It also maintained a stronger negative influence on informal performance as represented by the two OCB dimensions. These findings contradict a recent study that found an insignificant relationship between perception of pol-

itics and OCB among manufacturing employees and students who were working part-time.¹¹⁴ The findings here imply that politics may function as the *silent enemy* within organizations and can be even more destructive for public administration systems than for private organizations. According to Hirschman's theory, the option of exit is more realistic for employees in the private sector.¹¹⁵ Public sector employees do not tend to give up work security and tenure even if they feel that politics is all around and sometimes personally harms them. Normally, they choose to respond with more passive behaviors like neglect or apathy, which are less risky. Today, most of the public sector still does not reward employees according to their performance at work. The absence of direct linkage between performance and compensation may lead public employees to show more neglect of job assignments and duties in comparison with employees from private organizations. In many cases, labor unions provide some informal legitimacy for such behaviors and protect even the less performing employees. As a result of internal politics, the public sector may comprise more "unsatisfied-neglecting types" than "unsatisfied-leaving types" of employees. Another aspect of neglect in the workplace is the informal way of decreased motivation to engage in volunteer and spontaneous behaviors like OCB. This lack of motivation functions as a silent enemy because it is usually not measured by existing performance evaluations, which apply mostly to formal outcomes. However, organizations with lower levels of OCB lose some elementary parts of internal health and recreation capabilities, and thus are considerably harmed.¹¹⁶

It is also important to note that the silent effect of internal politics can spill over beyond the formal boundaries of public organizations. Attitudes and behaviors of public servants toward citizens/clients partially reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration. Higher levels of internal politics may lead employees to exercise lower levels of performance. When public officials show hampered formal or informal outcomes, the citizens are negatively affected. They obtain inferior services from discouraged public servants, and as a result, may develop a negative perception towards the entire public system. Thus, internal politics highly contradicts modern approaches to the management of public agencies (e.g., the quality movement of the 1980s and 1990s and the new public management approach [NPM]). Together with the discouragement of service orientations of public personnel, internal politics may have a negative effect on entrepreneurial activities and spontaneous and creative ideas that are vital for the prosperity of modern society and a healthy public administration. Practitioners and managers in the public sector must not ignore internal politics and should be aware of its hazardous consequences on both public personnel and citizens. Of course, these implications deserve further examination in future studies, which will be able to compare the current results with findings from the private arena.

Limitations and suggestions for further study

Three main limitations of this study must be considered. First, the study focused on perception of organizational politics but did not examine the entire political environment of public organizations. Perception of organizational politics is an important construct of OP but it does not fully describe other political rituals inside and outside organizations (e.g.,

influence tactics between internal and external stakeholders). To do this, other measures should be developed and examined more thoroughly. Among these constructs, it is highly recommended to evaluate actual political behaviors, influence tactics, and power strategies, and to relate them to perceptions of organizational politics. As was suggested elsewhere, this line of research will provide insights into the relationship between perception of politics and actual political behavior, and the way they relate to organizational outcomes.¹¹⁷ While some literature exists on this topic, it is still a vague domain waiting to be explored.¹¹⁸

Another limitation of this study is the fact that it was conducted in a non-American culture, which makes the comparison with other studies more problematic. Nevertheless, other studies can benefit from a fresh source of data on OP. An examination of internal politics in a non-American environment can advance our understanding of the differences in political behavior across cultures. It may also help creating a more robust theory of the field. This line of research is important since studies have shown the significant role of culture in shaping the political behavior of individuals and institutions outside organizations.^{119, 120}

The third limitation of this study lies in its relatively narrow examination of other variables that are thought to affect politics and performance in the workplace. The basic theory of Ferris, Kacmar, and their colleagues, as well as studies which followed it, mentioned many constructs that should be taken into consideration in this regard. However, as in other studies in the field of organizational behavior, it is impossible to test all of them in a single effort. Nevertheless, the theoretical model suggested here emphasized the functionality of job congruence in explaining perception of politics and employee performance. The findings demonstrated the usefulness of this idea, so further studies should follow it and examine the job congruence-politics relationship more extensively. The theoretical conception, as well as the findings may also provide such studies with a new point of departure for proclaiming and establishing the central role of internal politics in public administration systems.

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Author

Eran Vigoda

Department of Political Science

University of Georgia

Baldwin Hall

Athens, Georgia 30602 1615, USA

Tel: 706-542-2057

Fax: 706-5424-421

Eran Vigoda received his Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Haifa-Israel. He is now a visiting professor in the department of political science, University of Georgia. His current research interests include, organizational politics, political behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and employees' performances in the public sector. His recent work has been published in *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *Public Administration Quarterly*, *Public administration*, and *Public Productivity and Management Review*.