

Perceived Organizational Politics, Defensive Silence and Ineffectual Silence with Superior Trust as a Moderator in Indian Banking Sector

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ABSTRACT

Purpose –In organizations, different departments, teams, groups and individual compete with each other due to availability of limited resources. For obtaining the aims at any cost, organizational politics begin and employees perceive most of the time it is as a negative phenomenon. That's why sometimes they don't provide important information to their organization. Ultimately, it will be harmful for that organization. This study seeks to examine how perceived organizational politics impacts defensive silence and ineffectual silence with superior trust acting as a moderator in the context of India.

Research Methodology – The present research involves of Indian private sector bank's employees above the scale 1. The sample consisted of 160 employees. The proposed model was tested using SPSS version 26. In addition, to test moderation effect MS excel was used.

Findings – Results suggested that employees of banking sector in India are remain silent or play a defensive mode when they have lack of trust in superior and feel politics as a negative phenomenon. Also, they feel that their ideas, suggestions do not mean anything for their organization. Further, trust in superior, moderate the relation between POP and defensive silence and ineffectual silence.

Research limitations/Implications- This research did not examine all sectors of the economy and therefore the research results are tentative. It is advised that the model should also be measured in several other organisations, enterprises and countries.

Practical implications – Organizations want to compete with its rivals and become successful in the market. Without the information, knowledge sharing, voice, and opinions of employees, it is impossible to achieve this target. So, there is need to incorporate such policies which reduce the impact of negatively perceived organizational politics and build trust among employees and their supervisors.

Originality/value – The literature on employee silence is enhanced by the current study by endeavouring to integrate both perceived organizational politics and trust in the superior, a perspective that has been infrequently explored in the Indian context.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Politics, Defensive Silence, Ineffectual Silence, Trust in Superior

INTRODUCTION

Some form of politics will appear where humans are participating and it is believed that it influences their behaviors as well as their work performance (Gandz & Murray, 1980). Politics prevails when individuals or groups compete for limited resources because organizations are complex social institutions subject to competition among departments, teams, units and individuals, thus organizational politics is an inevitable reality and organizational outcomes, expectations, relationships, efficiency and processes are greatly influenced and affected (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

The presence of politics is a persistent challenge in businesses, as reported by 88% of managers who acknowledge its existence in their organizations (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007). According to (Mintzberg, 1985) Organizational politics is defined as a series of actions undertaken to promote or safeguard self-interest, whether on an individual or group level, often at the expense of organizational objectives. Organizational Politics is seen as to be a detrimental use of one's own resources to satisfy personal interests within an organization (Asad et al., 2020).

Many studies also found that people behave according their attitude formed and perception about any situation compare to the actual situation (Adams et al., n.d.; Breaux et al., 2009; Ferris et al., 2002; Porter, 1976). In the opinion of employees, they take it as a negative form that will create negative variable at organizational atmosphere or in organizational environment and it is termed as perceived organizational politics (POP). Politics in organization is perceived by every employee differently rather than same. Hence, it is more accurate to use the term 'perceived organizational politics' rather than simply 'organizational politics.' (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992).

Numerous studies have been undertaken to demonstrate the impact of POP on various aspects of organizations. There is positive as well as some negative impacts explored by different scholars. Studies conducted by (Ferris et al., 1996; Gandz & Murray, 1980; Pfeffer, 1981) defined that there are positive influences of organizational politics on individual as well as on organization. The reason given by researcher for positive impact on individual and organization that there is a subjective evaluation of organizational behaviour, change activities and organizational behaviour due to inclusive role played by politics. Additionally, studies showed that organizational politics had detrimental effects on both individuals and the organization, including higher stress, a decline in organizational commitment, employee turnover and absences from work, dissatisfaction with work, a decline in organizational efficiency, and employee and organizational silence (Kacmar & Cropanzano, 1995; Kacmar & Ferris, 1993; Khalid & Ahmed, 2016; Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005).

Employees are most important assets of any organization. They provide valuable feedbacks, information, ideas, and, their opinions to the organization. With the help of these an organization will achieve success in competitive era (Brinsfield, 2013). But sometimes, employees perceive organizational politics as negative phenomenon and don't share such information or feedback to the organization (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016) and remain silent. This will negatively impact an organization. So, it is necessary to understand what type of silence employees have and to what extend perceived organizational politics impact it.

Trust has garnered considerable attention in recent decades owing to its any organization. It is also recognized as a foundation for the success of a firm (Avram, n.d.), as the actual operation of the foundation of an organization relies on the trust that individuals devote in it (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Darrough, 2006; Hartzler, 2003; Kramer & Tyler, 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Within an organization, the subordinate-supervisor relationship is a basic type of relationship. The reliance and vulnerability of employees to their supervisors underscore the pivotal role that trust plays in these hierarchical relationships. (Wei, 2003). Therefore, it is vital to look at how trust is built between subordinates and superiors and to understand how this trust affects subordinates' opinions and actions. Present study was conducted on bank employees so 'Trust in superior' was used instead of 'Trust in supervisor'. Numerous studies have been conducted related to perceived organizational politics and its outcomes but only few studies conducted with silence (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016; Park & Keil, 2009; Sheth & Kim, 2017) and there was no study was conducted in the Indian context related with these two variables i.e., POP and employee silence. In the current study, the focus was on investigating the impact of POP on ineffectual and defensive silence with superior trust as a moderator.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Organizational Politics (POP)

According to (Pfeffer, 1981), "Organizational politics is all about studying organizational power in action". (Ferris et al., 2000) defined that perceived organizational politics entails an individual's attribution of behaviours driven by self-serving motives.

In the study of (Kacmar & Baron, 1999)) revealed that if organizational politics perceived negatively then its effect on employees' performance, their satisfaction regarding job, turnover intention and so on. Studies have pointed out many adverse effects of organizational politics, such as increased tension (Ferris et al., 1996), decreased organizational engagement (Agarwal, 2016; Cropanzano et al., 1997), turnover and absenteeism intention (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Kacmar & Ferris, 1993; Vigoda, 2000), job dissatisfaction (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Kacmar & Baron, 1999), decreased performance (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005) organizational silence, employee silence (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016) and so on.

Employee Silence

Albert Hirschman (1970) first coined the term 'Silence' in organizational context. Employee Silence was proposed by (Pinder & Harlos, n.d.2001). The term "organizational silence" is employed to address phenomena at the organizational level, whereas "employee silence" is utilized to analyse occurrences at the individual level. (Tangirala & Ramanujam,

2008) defined employee silence as “employees’ intentional withholding of critical work-related information from other members of their workgroup”. Different authors explored different dimensions of employee silence but the current study include only two dimensions to examine i.e., defensive and ineffectual silence. The proposed research framework shown in Figure 1 (see figure 1)

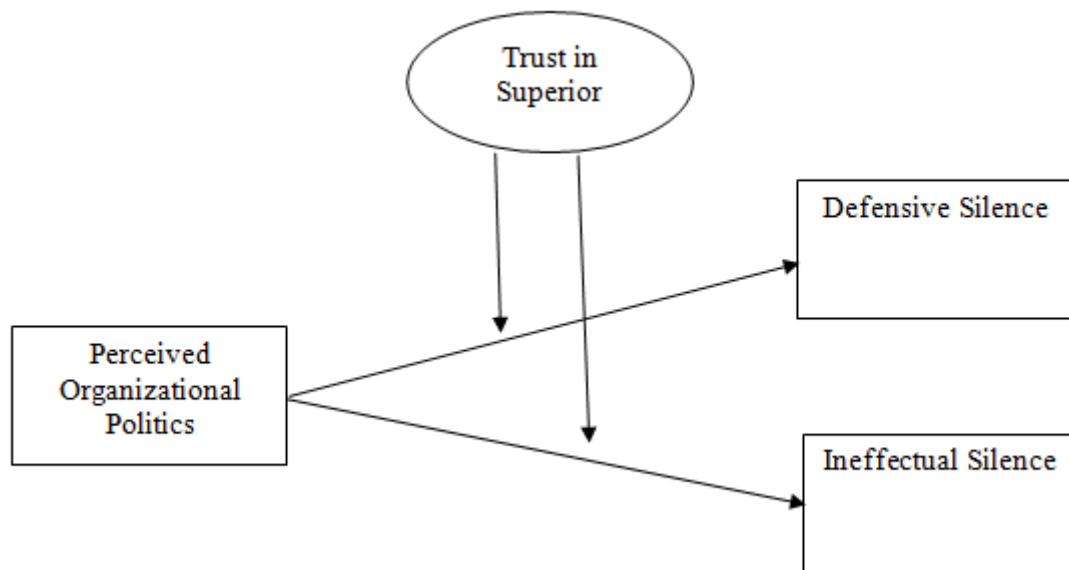


Figure 1: Proposed framework of the study

Source: Authors’ own compilation

Perceived Organizational Politics and Defensive Silence

This dimension is a common focus of research on silence. Defensive silence is a dimension of employee silence. Employees remain silent at their workplace due to reprisal or punitive action may be taken against them (Brinsfield, 2013). It is proactive in nature and used as self-protection in uncertain politically laden environment. (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) describe a ‘climate of silence’ on two beliefs in which one is voicing one’s opinion and concern is dangerous.

(Oestreich & Ryan, 1991) conducted a study among 260 employees in of different organization in United State. Survey participants indicated that they were reluctant to voice related to workplace problems like decision procedures, disparity in pay, and organizational inefficiencies. The findings revealed that individuals refrained from raising these issues out of fear of facing negative repercussions for speaking up. (Chang & Levy, 2018) defined it through ‘Mum-effect’ which means act as self- protecting behaviour. Individuals often opt to refrain from sharing their thoughts or expressing concerns out of fear of potential reprisals or punitive actions directed towards them. (Dyne et al., 2003; Edmondson, 1999).

Hence, from the various studies based on literature review, the following hypothesis was postulated:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational politics (POP) and defensive silence.

Perceived Organizational Politics and Ineffectual Silence

Within this context, the prevailing belief is that speaking up or voicing opinions would not contribute to any meaningful change regarding the focal issue, situation, or concern within the organization.

In the study of (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991) it was conceptualized that employees refrain from raising issues because they harbor the belief that speaking up would not bring about any meaningful change. These problems include ineffective management, unequal compensation, inefficient organizational processes, and poor organizational performance in decision-making processes.

In their study, Morrison and Milliken (2000) coined the phrase "climate of silence," referring to the widespread perception that raising one's voice would not result in organizational change.

They didn't speak up, therefore. Dyne et al. (2003) define acquiescent silence as withholding relevant ideas, facts, or opinions out of a sense of resignation.

Hence, from the various studies based on literature review, the following hypothesis was postulated:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational politics (POP) and ineffectual silence.

Moderation of Trust in Superior

Rousseau et al. (1998 p.395) explained trust as “A psychological state characterized by the intention to embrace vulnerability grounded in positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.” In trust there are at least two parties are involved and the relationship of trust between these parties are affect by variety of factors such as ability, benevolence and integrity (Schoorman et al., 1996), competence and leadership in organization, openness, identification (Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001). Trust has two types: i) trust in organization, ii) trust in superior/supervisor.

Trust in organization play a crucial role for its stability and employee’s welfare (Cook & Wall, 1980). (Gambetta, 1988; Tan & Tan, 2000) defined organizational trust as How employees perceive the trustworthiness of the organization. This will affect the organizational perceptions (Muchinsky, 1977). When employees thought organizational trustworthiness as supportive, constructive increase their commitment.

Many authors define the relationship of trust with different organizational variables and show that one of the key elements that affects an organization's overall performance is trust. Trust in supervisor/superior defined by (Colquitt et al., 2007) that when a subordinate trusts their supervisor, it boosts job performance and contributes to OCB. Trust motivates the subordinate to nurture a positive relationship with the supervisor and stay committed to the organization. (Brower et al., 2009) and this will facilitate putting in additional effort to generate organizational value (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). They are more motivated and give it their all because of the trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

In the absence of trust between supervisors and subordinates, the latter may not feel motivated and may refrain from exerting additional efforts in their roles (Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). In a study conducted by (Poon et al., 2006) involving 155 white-collar employees from various organizations, the results indicated that trust antecedents, including the supervisor's propensity for trust and their ability, benevolence, and integrity, positively predicted employees' affective commitment but did not impact their willingness to assist colleagues. A different study by Davis et al. (2000) found a strong relationship between employee perceptions and trust in general manager's competence, kindness, and integrity. Furthermore, the study discovered that employee intentions to remain silent are negatively impacted by their level of trust in a leader. (Şener et al., 2018). On the basis of these studies, it can be proposed that:

H3: Trust in superior moderates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and defensive silence i.e., trust in superior has a negative impact on independent and dependent variables.

H4: Trust in superior moderates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and ineffectual silence i.e., trust in superior has a negative impact on independent and dependent variables.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample & Procedures

The study conducted on the banking sector of India. A total of 200 Questionnaire were distributed to the top and middle level employees and 160 were selected for the final study. Scale I banking employees such as tellers, clerks were not considered into this study. Out of the total sample, there was 60% male respondents and 40% female respondents. In terms of age, approximate 57% data collected form the age group of 20-30. The average experiences of respondents were 8 years.

Measures

To measure the independent, dependent and moderator variables, Five-point rating scale was used in where 1= ‘strongly disagree’ and 5= ‘strongly agree.’

Perceived organizational politics: To measure this variable scale developed by (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997) was used which comprised 15 items. The scale demonstrated a reliability of 0.80.

Defensive and Ineffectual Silence: To measure these, scale developed by (Brinsfield, 2013) was used which comprised 5 items related to defensive silence and 6 items related to ineffectual silence. The scale demonstrated a reliability of 0.75.

Trust in Superior: To measure this 4 items scale developed by (Schoorman et al., 1996) was used.

RESULTS

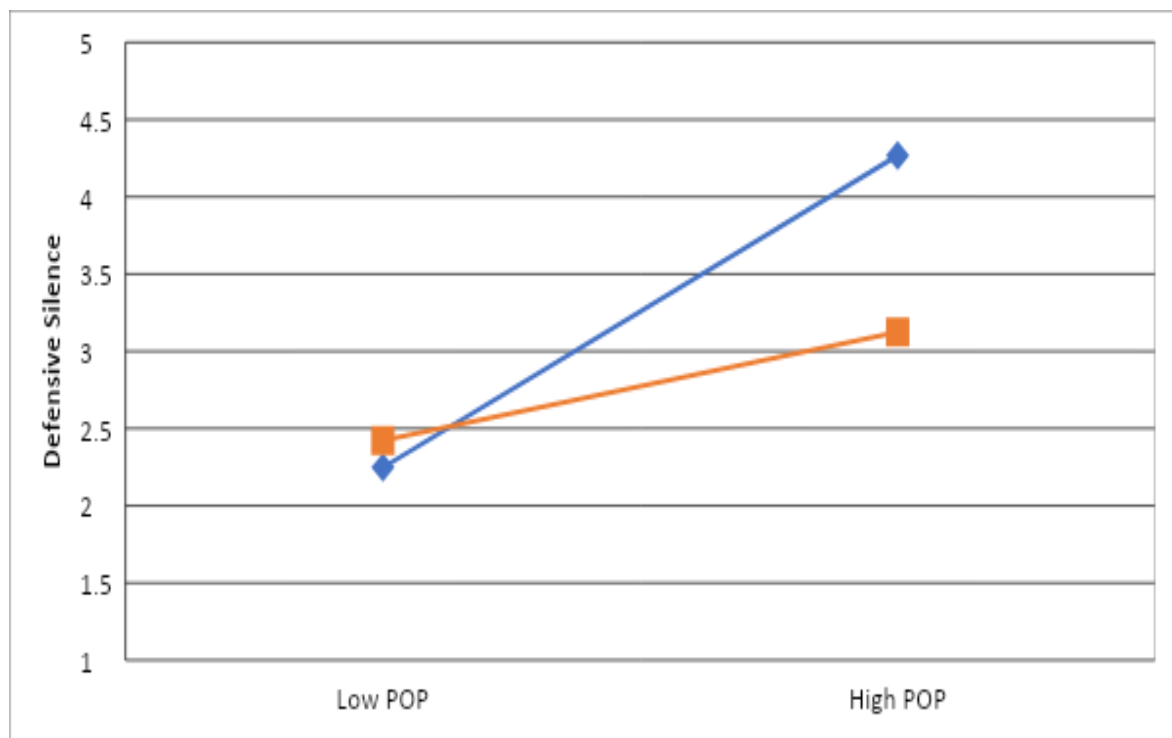
Descriptive statistics: Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables (see table 1). As per the hypotheses, it was found that perceived organizational politics positively and significantly correlated with defensive silence ($r=0.43$, $p<0.01$) and ineffectual silence ($r=0.37$, $p<0.01$). Trust in superior negatively correlated to perceived organizational politics ($r= -0.48$, $p<0.01$), defensive silence ($r=-0.41$, $p<0.01$), and ineffectual silence ($r= -0.27$, $p<0.01$). It was observed from the table that POP has correlation with defensive silence and ineffectual silence respectively 43 percent and 37 percent. POP has also negative correlation with trust in superior i.e., 48 percent. From the above findings, we can conclude that employees of banking sector in India are remain silent or play a defensive mode when they have lack of trust in superior and feel politics as a negative phenomenon.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis technique employed to find predictive impact between the two sets of variables. From the Table 2 (see Table 2 & 3), it is indicated that perceived organizational politics explained 19 percent variance in defensive silence ($F= 36.34$, $p< 0.05$), and 14 percent variance in ineffectual silence ($F= 25.24$, $p< 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that H1 and H2 i.e., perceived organizational politics has a positive relationship and impact on defensive silence and ineffectual silence.

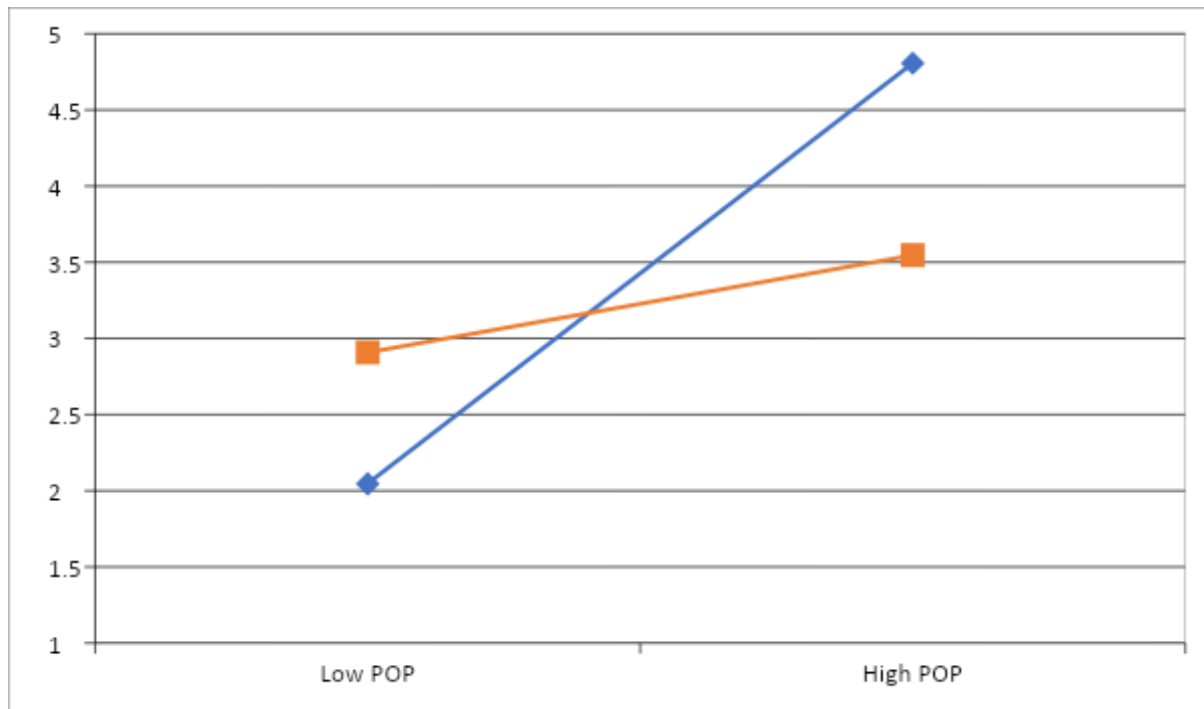
To test the moderation effect multiple hierarchical regression (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was performed. In the first stage of regression, (POP) was regressed against the defensive silence and ineffectual silence. Subsequently, in the second stage of regression, both POP and Trust in superior were independently regressed. Finally, in the third regression, POP, trust in superior and their interaction term (POP*Trust) were entered in the regression. The results suggest that trust in superior has significant moderation effect in the relationship between POP and defensive silence and ineffectual silence. The beta coefficients for POP*Trust (interaction term) were significant for defensive silence ($\beta= -0.25$, $p<0.05$) and for ineffectual silence ($\beta=- 0.55$, $p<0.05$). Thus, H3 and H4 were supported (see Table 4, Figure 2 & 3).

Figure 2: Moderation Effect of Trust in Superior on the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Politics and Defensive Silence



Source: Data derived from Excel worksheet

Figure 3: Moderation Effect of Trust in Superior on the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Politics and Ineffectual Silence



Source: Data derived from Excel worksheet

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

	Mean	S.D.	Gender	Age	Experience	POP	Defensive Silence	Ineffectual Silence	Trust
Gender	1.40	0.49	1						
Age	1.68	0.96	-0.21	1					
Experience	2.39	0.82	-0.66	0.45**	1				
POP	3.48	1.19	-0.13	-0.12	0.10	1			
Defensive Silence	3.71	0.99	-0.70	-0.66	0.09	0.43**	1		
Ineffectual Silence	4.09	0.97	-0.50	-0.82	0.11	0.37**	0.12	1	
Trust	2.36	1.43	0.05	0.04	-0.63	-0.48**	-0.41**	-0.27**	1

n= 160, **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). POP= Perceived Organizational Politics

Source: Author's own compilation from SPSS output

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Perceived Organizational Politics and Defensive Silence

Predictor: POP, Dependent Variable: Defensive Silence

R	R Square	F	t	p
.432	.187	36.337	6.028	0.00

Source: Derived from SPSS Output

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Perceived Organizational Politics and Ineffectual Silence

R	R Square	F	t	p
.371	.138	25.238	5.024	0.00

Predictor: POP, Dependent Variable: Ineffectual Silence

Source: Derived from SPSS Output

DISCUSSION

After a thorough literature review, it was discovered that perceived organizational politics (POP) is positively correlated with employee silence. (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016). To the author's knowledge, this study represents the first endeavor to investigate the impact of POP on dimensions of employee silence within the Indian banking sector. Perceived organizational politics is antecedent of job satisfaction, job anxiety, employee turnover etc. Organizational politics impact negatively on the organizational outcomes but there are some studies (Chang & Levy, 2018) revealed that the relationship of POP vary which depend upon different culture and outcomes.

Table 4: Moderating Effect of Trust in Superior on the Relationship between POP and Defensive Silence, Ineffectual Silence

Steps	Dependent Variables	Defensive Silence	Ineffectual Silence
		n= 160	n= 160
Step 1	Control Variables		
	Gender	-0.62	-0.42
	Age	-1.34	-1.67
	Experience	1.49	1.87
	R ²	0.27	0.03
	R ² change	0.27	0.37
	F	1.43	2.01
Step 2	Independent Variables		
	Perceived Organizational Politics	0.35	0.29
	Trust in Superior	-0.15	-0.12
	R ²	0.24	0.15
	R ² change	0.53	0.11
	F	9.96**	5.90**
Step 3	Interaction Term		
	POP*Trust	-0.25	-0.55
	R ²	0.30	0.16

	R ² change	0.51	0.01
	F	10.69**	4.98**
Standardized regression coefficients are shown. R² values are unadjusted. * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 All two-tailed tests.			

Source: Authors' own compilation Derived from SPSS Output

Recent studies revealed that POP has negative impact on different organizational outcomes like increased stress (Ferris et al., 1996), reduced organizational commitment (Cropanzano et al., 1997), intention to turnover and absenteeism (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Kacmar & Ferris, 1993; Vigoda, 2000), job dissatisfaction (Cropanzano et al., 1997), decreased performance (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005) organizational silence, employee silence (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016). The results of present study also support and add into these outcomes. In summary, the study furnishes sufficient evidence to substantiate that the perceived organizational politics positively related with the defensive silence.

Theoretical Implications

Information sharing has become an important asset in this competitive era and organizations focus specifically on people who are eager to seek knowledge and willing to learn. Therefore, managers of the organization motivate workers to express freely at all levels of the company. When employees share or communicate the information to the organization, that organization may take advantage and benefit from this. Any organization must motivate its employees to become innovative with new ideas, encourage them to take risk and provide them opportunity to improve their knowledge-based skills. Employees share information with their subordinates, managers, and organization when they trust in them and have job satisfaction. However, the current research finds out the relationship of POP with dimension of employee silence with superior trust as a moderator. Job satisfaction is indirectly related with employee silence and trust in superior. So, the current research finds out the indirect relationship of POP and Job satisfaction with the help of employee silence.

According to the study of (Gandz & Murray, 1980), workplace politics is the reality of the organizations and this statement gained support (93.2%) and acceptance. Indians consider politics as a morally valid way of doing things (D'cruz & Bharat, 2001). According to the study (Sinha & Sinha, 1990), Indians think workplace realities don't really affect organizational politics because they perceive it as given. On the other hand, the current study's findings contradict the hypothesis. The variation explained by perceived organizational politics on defensive silence 42% and on ineffectual silence 37%, which imply that like western culture, POP also impact on the Indian organization's employees. Thus, our research contributes to the literature that in the banking sector of India, perceived organizational politics has significantly impact on their employees and these employees remain silent when they subjectively view the organizational politics. As a result, the current study offers evidence in favor of the theory already in place and recommends that future studies take into account how perceived organizational politics impact organizational outcomes.

Managerial Implications

In each organization, politics is pervasive and, to some degree, essential for the functioning of organizations (Fedor & Maslyn, 2002; Mayes & Allen, 1977). For example, managers use it to give rewards to preferred workers through performance appraisal, sending notes to obsolete skilled employees, and to establish paper trails explaining planned termination (Longenecker et al., 1987). This study demonstrates that when an organization has an uncertain environment due to perceive negatively political activities, employees act in defensive mode and remain silent or not provide important information to the organization. If employees not provide their ideas, opinions or other important information to the organization, then that organization cannot survive in competitive environment. So, it is necessary for the organization to reduce negatively perceived organizational politics and encourage employees' feedback behaviour (Rosen et al., 2006).

Trust plays an important role in an organizational development. In the absence of trust, it is not possible to achieve organizational goals. So, it is necessary for managers to build trust in their subordinates by providing every possible help. Studies suggest that trust environment in organization can be create with the help of fair policies for example policies related with recruitment, selection, pay, and promotions etc.

In the organization, employees should be participated into the decision-making or can be said that employee empowerment should be in the organization. It will encourage employee to raise their voice and they will consider

themselves as an important part of the organization. It will reduce the ineffectual silence among the employees. Also, employees encourage to provide feedback at every stage which reduce the phenomenon of defensive silence.

This study suggests that negative perception about organization politics should be minimized, terminate those employees and groups who indulged in self-serving behaviour from long-time which is not good for organizational performance and its retention rate. Also, manager should encourage employees to provide feedback and raise voice about unethical activities in organization, build up the trust of employees in the organization as well as in supervisor/superior. This will help an organization to make itself internally stronger and compete with its rivals in challenging environment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research did not examine all sectors of the economy and therefore the research results are tentative. It is advised that the model should also be measured in several other organisations, enterprises and countries. For better understanding of causal relationship among the POP, defensive silence, ineffectual silence and trust in superior, the data should be used longitudinal. In the present study, only a limited number of outcomes were tested. A wide variety of organizational and individual outcomes will be included in future research. The study combines only two dimensions of employee silence. So, we recommend all dimensions explored by (Brinsfield, 2013) should be included in future research to measure the impact of POP on all these dimensions. These all dimensions will be able to define why an employee remain silent collectively and from which dimension he/she consider important. Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT) developed by (Brashers, 2007) should be considered into the future research for better understanding the reasons why an employee perceives organizational politics so negatively. The spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) address that an individual expresses his/her opinions according to how he or she perceive the public opinion. So, in future research, this theory should be considered for better understanding of the perception of an individual and his/her thought process about a particular individual, a group or an organization.

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