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Organizational Politics and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction at Tribhuvan University

Bhakta Prasad Dhakal

Padmakanya Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

ORCID: *https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6120-0746*

Abstract

This paper aims to explore how perceptions of politics within the university setting impact employee satisfaction and morale at Tribhuvan University (TU), Nepal's largest and oldest university. It investigates the relationship between organizational politics and job satisfaction among employees at TU. Organizational politics, as a negative organizational factor, interrupts institutional culture, damages behavior, and disrupts job satisfaction, particularly in terms of motivational factors. It is a pervasive phenomenon that can significantly shape employee experiences, particularly in academic institutions. Collecting the data from 55 staff from TU through multi-stage random sampling, including one Dean's Office, four campuses located in Kathmandu valley, one each campus from Madesh, Koshi, Lumbini, and Gandaki Provinces. A mixed research design was employed, utilizing self-administered surveys that incorporated the Perception of Organizational Politics and a standardized Job Satisfaction Questionnaire. Data were collected from a randomly selected sample of administrative staff. Employees who experience higher levels of internal politics reported lower levels of satisfaction with the motivational factor. Based on these findings, it is recommended that TU leadership address political behaviors and improve transparency to foster a healthier, more productive organizational environment.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, leadership, politics, transparent, Tribhuvan University,

Introduction

This study explores how organizational politics affect job satisfaction among employees at Tribhuvan University (TU) in Nepal. Using a descriptive and causal-comparative design, it surveyed

250 civil servants from five government ministries, with a 76.4 percent response rate. Results show a strong presence of organizational politics, especially in pay and promotion policies. Behaviors like "going along to get ahead" and political maneuvering were common. Although job performance remained average, regression analysis revealed that all three dimensions of organizational politics negatively influenced performance. The study concludes that political behavior harms employee effectiveness. To improve performance and service delivery, leaders must recognize and reduce political interference in the workplace, promoting a fairer, more merit-based culture within Nepal's public sector.

For centuries, politics has existed in various forms across the world. In the workplace, organizational politics refers to informal, often behind-the-scenes efforts to influence decisions, control resources, or gain power to achieve personal or group goals. Previous research (Vigoda, 2000; Vigoda, Vinarski, & Ben, 2003) emphasizes the universal significance of organizational politics across sectors, cultures, and regions. These studies highlight how politics can be used to protect or enhance collective interests when diverse decisions impact competing priorities. Kacmar and Andrews (2001) describe organizational politics as a complex form of workplace power dynamics shaped by direct or indirect, active or passive strategies that individuals use to influence outcomes and protect personal interests. Ng'enoh (2014) adds that such activities often seek to secure advantages or avoid negative consequences.

Organizational politics are an inevitable part of any organization's social framework (Dappa et al., 2019; Pfeffer, 2013). They involve actions that aim to control resources and outcomes (Ferris et al., 2019; Pfeffer, 1981). Abbas et al. (2014) suggest that these behaviors reflect how individuals perceive the manipulative and self-serving actions of their colleagues, often undertaken by "hook or crook." Such subversive activities usually conflict with organizational goals and the well-being of others (Vigoda, 2000). Perceived organizational politics undermine job performance by disrupting the psychological and emotional stability of employees. Organizations that want to mitigate the negative effects of POP should promote transparency, fairness, and participative decision-making to foster a healthier, high-performing workplace environment. From the perspective of agency theory, individuals in organizations act as self-interest maximizers (Khan et al., 2020). The organizational environment shapes these behaviors, giving rise to perceived organizational politics —a known workplace stressor. It negatively affects job performance. Therefore, this study investigates whether perceived organizational politics impact job performance among employees in TU, Nepal.

Review of Literature

Organizational politics are an unavoidable element of workplace dynamics. It influences both individual behavior and overall organizational outcomes. When perceived negatively, the staff can undermine job satisfaction, reduce motivation, and harm performance. Political behavior that prioritizes personal gain over organizational goals disrupts trust, fairness, and collaboration. Both task and contextual performance

suffer when employees feel manipulated or marginalized. Recognizing the presence of organizational politics and implementing strategies to reduce their negative impact is essential. Fostering transparency, fairness, and merit-based practices can help enhance employee performance and support a more productive work environment.

Organizational Politics and Job Satisfaction

Organizational politics are an inherent part of any workplace. According to Khan et al. (2020), no organization is free from political behavior, making it essential to examine its impact on employee performance. A wide range of studies (Bozeman et al., 2001; Ferris et al., 2002; Indartono & Chen, 2011; Chang et al., 2012) emphasize that individual differences in perception and behavior significantly shape how organizational politics affect job performance. Gandz and Murray (1980) noted that such perceptions are often seen as subjective and biased rather than objective. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2017) and Ullah et al. (2019) observed that political activities in organizations often serve personal, rather than organizational, interests. Cropanzano et al. (1997) described organizational politics as a form of social influence, wherein individuals engage in self-serving behavior to gain or protect rewards. Supporting this, Harris et al. (2005), and Daft (2010) agreed that organizational politics often serve self-interest rather than group success.

Job performance is broadly defined as the act of performing work duties (Campbell, 1990) and refers to the extent to which employees achieve job-related goals (Jacobs et al., 2013; Shrestha, 2020). Performance is typically categorized into two dimensions: task performance and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Task performance includes core job functions and activities that contribute directly to organizational output (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Contextual performance involves discretionary behaviors like helping others, volunteering, and adhering to rules that support the organizational environment (Aguinis, 2009; Samad & Amri, 2011). Organizational politics are often linked to negative job outcomes. Ferris et al. (1989) developed a model showing how POP can reduce job satisfaction, increase stress, and lower performance. These perceptions influence how employees feel about their organization, supervisors, and colleagues, ultimately decreasing their motivation and productivity (Robb, 2012). Several studies (Ferris et al., 2002; Zhonghua & Chen, 2014) confirm that higher levels of perceived politics lead to adverse outcomes, most notably declines in job performance. Thus, understanding and managing organizational politics is critical for enhancing both employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

A detailed study of organizational politics and its impact on job satisfaction offers valuable insights into how perceived organizational politics affect faculty job satisfaction in universities (Khan et al. 2022). The research highlights that faculty members often view internal politics as a barrier to fair decision-making, career growth, and transparent communication. This perception contributes to lower morale, reduced motivation, and overall dissatisfaction with their roles. The study employs a structured methodology to analyze the relationship between political behavior and job satisfaction, using statistical tools

to validate its findings. It emphasizes that high levels of perceived organizational politics negatively influence employees' attitudes and workplace experiences. The authors suggest that leadership should promote fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness to mitigate the harmful effects of political behavior. Overall, this study contributes meaningfully to understanding organizational dynamics in the public education sector. Using Work Adjustment Theory (Dawis et al. 1964), later expanded by Lofquist and Dawis (1969), this study explores job satisfaction. The theory explains that individuals must adapt to multiple environments, and adjustments in one may strain another. Job satisfaction results from congruence between an individual's needs and the work environment (Dawis, 1980, 2005), fostering balance and fulfillment.

Research Methods

A mixed-methods approach is a distinct research methodology with its philosophical foundations and procedures. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), it guides data collection and analysis from multiple sources within a single study, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods for comprehensive inquiry.

A mixed-methods design effectively addresses complex research problems by integrating multiple paradigms (Fetters, 2016), combining qualitative and quantitative data for deeper insights. It also provides methodological flexibility and a strong logical foundation for understanding specific cases in depth (Maxwell, 2016). This paper aims to look for adequate knowledge in the sense of organizational politics and its effect on job satisfaction at TU, Nepal. For this, 55 staff working at TU from the Dean's Office, four campuses from Kathmandu, one each campus from Madesh, Koshi, Lumbini and Gandaki provinces respectively. The respondents are not selected on equal footing. The number of respondents ranges from four to seven only. The research design adopted in this study consists of a descriptive and causal-comparative research design. Causal-comparative research is a non-experimental research design used to identify cause-and-effect relationships and it attempts to determine the cause or reason for existing differences in behavior or outcomes between two or more groups. Schenker and Rumrill (2004) states that causal-comparative designs generally involve the use of pre-existing or derived groups to explore differences between or among those groups on outcome

Table 1

Demographic Variables

Measures	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	41	74.54
	Female	14	25.45
Age	20-30	17	30.91
	30-40	26	47.27
	41 & above	12	21.82
Qualification	SLC/SEE	16	29.09

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	PCL & +2	21	38.18
	Bachelor & above	18	32.73
Service years	1-10	13	23.64
	11-20	26	47.27
	21 & above	16	29.09
Position	Assistant	15	27.27
	Head assistant	26	47.27
	Officer & above	14	25.45

Note. Field study, 2025.

Research Framework

Kulachai (2025) states that the concept of organizational politics is anchored in the understanding that power and influence within organizations are often distributed unevenly. This research followed a job satisfaction framework, beginning with an extensive literature review on job satisfaction to inform the conceptual foundation of the Job Stress–Strain–Outcome (JS-Q) perspective. Core components of job satisfaction were identified and used to generate questionnaire items, which were categorized into job factors and organizational factors. The respective domains under job factors are workload, work variety, and work routine. Similarly, categories under organizational factors are: Empowerment and participation, individual development, training, facility to health, education for children, reward and punishment, working team, leadership and development, and organizational communication. General political behavior is the common factor of perceived organizational politics that hurts job satisfaction. Based on the study of various literature, the research framework is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Perception of Organizational Politics and Job Satisfaction
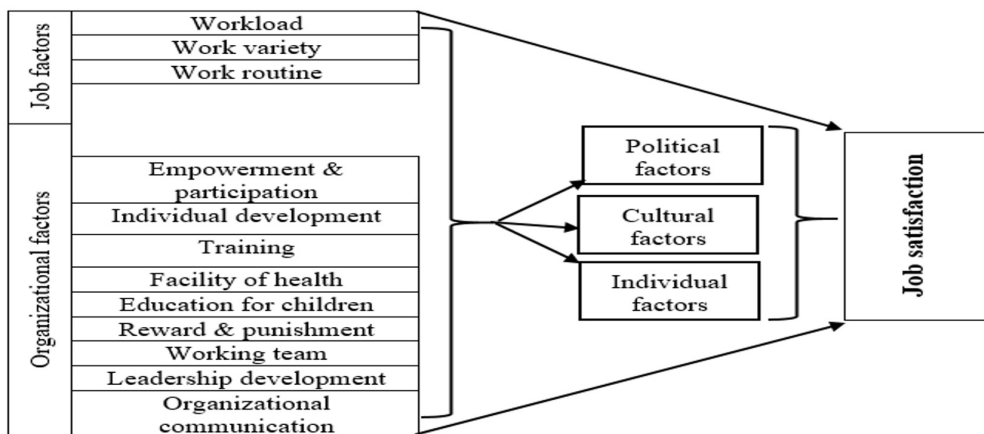
In order to evaluate and address the study's goals, various descriptive and inferential statistics were used. All the items of this study were measured using

a five-point Likert scale [**1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly agree (SA)**].

The following table deals with the key aspects of the organizational working environment, including workload, job variety, routine, empowerment, development, training, health and education support, recognition systems, teamwork, leadership, and communication, highlighting areas of strength and those requiring significant improvement.

Table 2

Mean Scores

Category	Statement Summary	Mean Score
Workload	Reasonable workload	2.07
	Job demands not fixed	3.00
Work variety	Variety of tasks	3.00
	Use different skills	2.06
Work routine	Routine isn't organized	3.47
	Clear responsibilities	3.65
Empowerment & participation	Less chance of encouragement	4.02
	Involved in decision-making	2.61
Individual development	Opportunity to grow	3.80
	Potential is recognized	2.14
Training	Adequate training	1.98
	Training doesn't meet needs (reverse-coded)	3.66 → 1.34
Facility to health	Health-related benefits	2.38
	Well-being valued	2.02
Education for children	Educational facilities for children	1.85
	Satisfied with children's education support	1.88
Reward & punishment	Good performance recognized	2.33
	Fair disciplinary measures	2.26
Working team	Supportive colleagues	3.82
	Teamwork encouraged	2.91
Leadership & Development	Effective & ethical leadership	1.93
	Leadership supports staff	2.02
Organizational Communication	Communication is clear and timely	2.52
	Informed about policies	2.28

The mean scores reveal the low job satisfaction at TU, with poor scores in leadership, training, rewards, and welfare. High perceived organizational politics, limited recognition, inadequate support, and low participation undermine morale. Only teamwork opportunities show moderate positivity amid generally unfavorable workplace conditions.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results reveal significant challenges within the organization's culture that must be addressed to foster a more inclusive, ethical, and effective environment. Limited staff involvement in decision-making, perceived favoritism, and lack of transparency are undermining trust and motivation. Leadership practices appear inconsistent, and systems for recognition and accountability are

viewed as inequitable. Communication gaps further exacerbate these issues, allowing political behavior to thrive. Additionally, professional development is either inadequate or selectively offered, leading to feelings of neglect. To build a healthier organizational climate, these structural and cultural deficiencies must be urgently and comprehensively addressed.

The results of Table 3 s informs writing by illustrating how organizational gaps—such as lack of encouragement, biased leadership, poor communication, and unequal development opportunities—contribute to perceptions of political behavior. These insights support arguments on power dynamics, disengagement, and inequity, providing a strong foundation for research focused on workplace culture and reform.

Table 3

Key Indicators of Organizational Politics at Tribhuvan University

Empowerment & Participation	Leadership & Development	Reward & Punishment	Organizational Communication	Training & Development	Individual Development
Less chance of encouragement – 4.02 (High agreement)	**Effective & ethical leadership – 1.93**	**Good performance recognized – 2.33**	**Communication clear and timely – 2.52**	**Adequate training – 1.98**	**Opportunity to grow – 3.80**
This score suggests a **strong perception of being unmotivated or ignored,** possibly due to favoritism or exclusionary practices.	**Leadership supports staff – 2.02**	**Fair disciplinary measures – 2.26**	**Well-informed about policies – 2.28**	**Programs meet needs – 1.34 (reverse coded)**	**Potential recognized – 2.14**
Involved in decision-making – 2.61	Both are critically low. Suggests **leaders may be perceived as biased, ineffective, or politically motivated.**	Suggests **inequitable reward and punishment systems,** likely favoring certain individuals.	Lack of transparency and poor communication can **fuel political behavior** as information becomes a form of power.	Shows that professional develent is neglected or **selectively provide**	A disconnect: while some growth is possible, **staff feel their capabilities aren't acknowledged,** likely due to **political biases.**

Indicates **low involvement in decisions,** suggesting centralized power and lack of participatory culture.

The data reveals that there is a politically influenced environment at TU. High agreement on lack of encouragement (4.02) and low scores in leadership (1.93), communication (2.52), and participation (2.61) indicate staff feel excluded and unsupported. Reward and punishment systems (2.33, 2.26) appear biased, undermining fairness and morale. Training (1.98) and professional development (1.34) are viewed as insufficient and unequally accessed. Although there is some opportunity to grow (3.80), recognition of potential remains low (2.14). Overall, centralized power, favoritism, and poor communication contribute to dissatisfaction, signaling the presence of organizational politics that hamper employee motivation and development.

This analysis from Table 4 reveals that it is significant for understanding how perceived political behavior within organizations negatively impacts job satisfaction. It highlights how unethical leadership, biased reward systems, poor communication, limited participation, unequal development opportunities, and inadequate support services contribute to employee disengagement, mistrust, and reduced performance. These findings offer critical insights for developing more transparent, equitable, and supportive organizational practices to enhance workforce morale and effectiveness.

Table 4

Overall Impact on Job Satisfaction

Area	Perceived Political Behavior	Job Satisfaction Impact
Leadership	Lack of ethics and support	Demotivating, reduces trust
Rewards & Recognition	Biased systems	Demoralization reduces performance
Communication	Lack of clarity, transparency	Uncertainty and distrust
Participation	Limited decision-making involvement	Powerlessness and disengagement
Training & Development	Unequal access	Career stagnation, resentment
Support Services (Health, Education)	Poor staff welfare policies	Dissatisfaction with organizational care

The impacts of job satisfaction highlight that organizational politics at TU negatively affect job satisfaction. Perceived unethical leadership, biased reward systems, and lack of transparency create distrust and low morale. Limited participation in decision-making fosters disengagement, while unequal access to training leads to career stagnation. Additionally, poor support services for health and education contribute to dissatisfaction. These political behaviors undermine trust, fairness, and motivation, ultimately reducing staff performance and weakening institutional effectiveness. In addition, political organizational factors, cultural factors, including gender and other components, and individual factors are responsible for hampering job satisfaction at TU.

Some visible indicators of organizational politics of Tribhuvan University are as follow:

From the above table, we identify the following major indicators of organizational politics at TU (See Appendix: 1).

1. **Poor Leadership**

   - Very high disagreement regarding ethical, effective leadership and support for staff development.
   - Indicator of authoritarian or politically influenced leadership with poor role modeling.

2. **Ineffective Reward & Punishment System**

   - Majority feel unfairness in both performance recognition and disciplinary actions.
   - Suggests favoritism, nepotism, and inconsistent policy enforcement.

3. **Lack of Transparency and Communication**

   - Staff feel uninformed about policies and find communication lacking.
   - Classic sign of power being centralized or selectively distributed.

4. **Inadequate Training & Development**

   - Training is seen as irrelevant and insufficient.
   - Indicates a lack of merit-based professional development opportunities.

5. **Lack of Support for Staff Welfare**

   - Dissatisfaction with health and children's education facilities.
   - Suggests institutional neglect and non-meritocratic allocation of resources.

6. **Disempowerment in Decision-Making**

   - Majority disagree that they are involved in decisions.
   - Typical of political environments where few control decisions without broader participation.

Discussion

The data from TU reveals several strong indicators of organizational politics that adversely impact employee morale, trust, and performance. The most prominent issue is the perception of poor leadership, with a significant majority expressing dissatisfaction with the ethical standards and support provided by university leaders. This lack of effective leadership sets a foundation for political behavior, where decisions are likely influenced by favoritism rather than merit. The reward and punishment

system is seen as inconsistent and unfair, suggesting a lack of transparency and objectivity in performance evaluation and disciplinary actions. Employees also report inadequate communication from management, leaving them poorly informed about institutional policies and decisions—another hallmark of a politically charged work environment.

Training and development opportunities are viewed as insufficient and irrelevant, with staff feeling their potential is neither recognized nor nurtured. Additionally, dissatisfaction with health and educational support benefits highlights systemic neglect of employee welfare. These patterns point toward a centralized power structure, limited participation in decision-making, and unclear role expectations—conditions ripe for organizational politics. To mitigate these issues, Tribhuvan University must prioritize ethical leadership, establish transparent systems, invest in staff development, and foster inclusive communication practices that rebuild trust and professionalism across all levels.

The analysis of mean scores from the survey conducted at TU reveals significant concerns regarding organizational politics and its adverse impact on job satisfaction. Several key areas exhibit characteristics of unfair political behavior, which appear to be eroding trust, fairness, and engagement among staff of TU. The data indicates that employees perceive a lack of ethical and supportive leadership, with mean scores of 1.93 and 2.02 for ethical leadership and leadership support, respectively. This perception contributes to a demotivating working environment where trust in institutional leaders is diminishing. When leadership is seen as biased or

ineffective, employees are less likely to feel job satisfaction, which negatively affects their morale and willingness to contribute for achieving organizational goals.

The reward and recognition system at the university is another area of concern. Scores of 2.33 and 2.26 for fair performance recognition and disciplinary measures, respectively, suggest that rewards and penalties are not being administered equitably. This perceived bias undermines a merit-based culture and can lead to resentment among staff. When employees believe that recognition is driven by favoritism rather than performance, their motivation to excel declines, ultimately affecting overall institutional productivity. Effective communication is a cornerstone of transparent governance, yet this study found communication to be lacking, with scores of 2.52 and 2.28 for clarity and being informed about policies. A lack of timely and transparent communication fosters uncertainty and distrust within the organization. Employees may feel excluded from critical decisions or unaware of changes that affect their roles, which can foster misinformation and increase reliance on informal, often politically charged, communication networks.

Participation in decision-making is also limited. With a low mean score of 2.61, the findings suggest that employees are not actively involved in processes that directly affect their work. This exclusion contributes to feelings of powerlessness and disengagement, key indicators of a politically charged environment. When staff feel that their input is neither sought nor valued, it discourages initiative and reduces their sense of ownership

in institutional progress. Moreover, training and development opportunities are perceived as inequitably distributed, evidenced by a score of just 1.98 for adequate training and an adjusted 1.34 for training programs meeting professional needs. Unequal access to development resources not only limits career advancement but also breeds resentment among staff who feel overlooked. This form of organizational politics restricts professional growth to a select few, often chosen through informal networks rather than merit.

Support services related to health and education scored low (2.38 for health benefits and below 2.00 for education-related support), suggesting inadequate welfare provisions. Poor staff welfare policies further contribute to job dissatisfaction, as employees feel their well-being and family needs are not prioritized. This lack of institutional care adds to the perception of a politically indifferent system. This study reveals that organizational politics at Tribhuvan University significantly undermines job satisfaction. Key factors such as unethical leadership, biased reward systems, poor communication, limited participation, unequal development opportunities, and inadequate welfare services contribute to a politically charged environment that hinders both individual and institutional growth.

Organizational politics is a specific aspect of interpersonal relationships, involving active or passive participation in power dynamics and dominance strategies (Vigoda-Gadot & Talmud, 2010). These behaviors often aim to serve personal interests or avoid unfavorable outcomes (Ferris et al., 2002; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). This study reveals that

strong organizational politics exist in government offices, especially in pay and promotion policies. Practices like "going along to get ahead" are common. While job performance is average, inferential results show a significant negative impact of organizational politics on performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this paper show that TU on the basis of using the perception of organizational politics scale (POPS) and the job satisfaction questionnaire (JSQ) clearly indicate that the institution is grappling with serious organizational challenges. A consistent pattern of low mean scores across leadership ethics, communication, participation, reward fairness, and professional development reflects a deeply rooted perception of organizational politics. These results suggest that TU lacks effective and positive institutional policies that support job satisfaction. The POPS results point to widespread perceptions of favoritism, exclusion from decision-making, and inequitable treatment—hallmarks of a politically charged workplace. Simultaneously, the JSQ-based findings show that staff morale, motivation, and satisfaction are notably low due to inadequate recognition, limited career development opportunities, and poor staff welfare services. Employees report feeling demotivated, disengaged, and unsupported, particularly in areas like leadership, training, and access to benefits such as health and education support.

These conditions create a climate where organizational politics thrive, undermining trust and accountability, and eroding the core values of transparency and fairness that are

essential in any academic institution. The misalignment between employees' expectations and the university's internal systems not only affects job satisfaction but also impairs productivity, innovation, and long-term institutional success. Therefore, TU must review its governance structures and human resource policies. Emphasizing ethical leadership, inclusive decision-making, merit-based rewards, and staff welfare reforms will be crucial to restoring employee trust and creating a more positive, performance-driven institutional culture.

To promote organizational integrity, transparent decision-making must be enforced by involving staff in policy formulation and leadership selection. Reward systems should be revised to ensure fair, performance-based recognition. Leadership accountability must be strengthened through comprehensive training in ethical and inclusive practices. Communication should be improved through regular updates, policy briefings, and active feedback mechanisms. Equal access to development opportunities must be guaranteed through standardized training, promotion, and support. These measures will cultivate trust, fairness, and a culture of inclusive growth.

Unhealthy political activity hampers both individual and group performance by creating a tense and hostile work environment (Enyinna et al., 2014). In contrast, positive political behavior within transparent policy settings fosters collaboration and innovation, enhancing competitiveness. Leaders and administrators in government offices must address unnecessary workplace politics to allow civil servants to concentrate on service delivery. Reducing political interference will lead to improved public satisfaction and a more productive, harmonious work atmosphere.

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