

Collaborating Effect of Employees' Interpersonal Influence Skills and Perceived Workplace Politics on Turnover Intention

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Abstract

In the literature, there are contradicting findings regarding the impact of perceived workplace politics on employees' outcomes. In this context, this study was carried out to measure the direct and interactive (with interpersonal influence skills) effect of perceived workplace politics on turnover intention. Moreover, this study was dedicated to measuring the remedial role of interpersonal influence skills under the different situations of perceived workplace politics. Applying a survey strategy, 725 responses were collected from the Grade A Nepalese bank employees. Perceptual cross-sectional data were analyzed in SPSS by adopting positivist research philosophy and deductive reasoning approach. This study revealed that employees' perceived workplace politics positively impact their turnover intention. Likewise, interpersonal influence skills moderated the relationship between the perception of workplace politics and turnover intention. Employees' interpersonal influence skills worked as an antidote for the detrimental effect of perceived workplace politics on turnover intention. The antidotal power was measured differently under different conditions (high, medium, and low) of workplace politics. For example, the strength of the mitigation power of interpersonal influence skill is strong when perceived workplace politics is high, but the mitigating power is weak when the perception of workplace politics is low.

Key Words: Interpersonal influence, workplace politics, turnover intention, interactive effect

JEL Classification: M10 M12 M19

Introduction

The term “workplace politics” refers to an employee’s opinion of the actions and behaviors of others in the workplace that are motivated by their own self-interest. Such actions and behaviors often involve the use of coercive methods, such as threatening or humiliating others, to achieve their desired outcomes (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Perceptions of workplace politics are generally regarded as a feature of organizational life by both theorists and practitioners. A politics-free company is implausible since companies are social entities where employees engage individually and in groups to advance their interests (Hochwarter, 2012). Moreover, organizations are political alliances in which choices are made, and objectives are established via negotiation (March, 1962). As a result, believing that one’s company has no politics is delusory, but in the Nepalese organizational setting, scholars and practicing managers have paid less attention to it.

The widespread reality of workplace politics continues to draw significant study interest (Bhattarai, 2022; Hochwarter et al., 2010). The importance of understanding office politics to successful leadership, management, teamwork, and overall organization is becoming more widely acknowledged in the academic and professional communities (Zanzi & O’Neill, 2001). Because there are contradictory empirical evidence and theoretical viewpoints on how workplace politics influence employee outcomes, whether it is a good, terrible, or neutral construct at the workplace. Perceived workplace politics are often, but not always, considered detrimental, divisive, and insulting, as stated by Fedor et al. (2008). It has been stated that “in the workplace, a crucial degree of politics is required to mobilize attention and resources toward the attainment of personal and organizational objectives” (Hochwarter et al., 2010, p. 757). However, empirical research indicates that in most situations, employee perception of workplace politics has a detrimental influence on employee results (e.g., Buchanan & Badham, 2008; Rosen & Levy, 2013). As a result, scientific research and knowledge of how the perception of workplace politics affects turnover intention and how such influence may be minimized have become a top priority in every firm (Bhattarai, 2021a).

We cannot disregard the importance of employee personal influence skills in studying workplace politics and its effect on employee outcomes since these constructs (employee resources) govern the stated relationships (Silvester, 2008). It’s only natural for people to step up and show what they’re made of when they believe their workplace is politically charged. Workers’ interpersonal influence skills contribute to an organization’s politics (Klein, 1988) as remedial tools. As a result, practicing managers may reduce the effect of the perception of workplace politics on employee results by regulating workers’ interpersonal influence skills. However, we have no theory or empirical data to deal with these interactions. As a result, the current study is dedicated to investigating (a) the impact of employees’ perceived workplace politics on their turnover intention, (b) corrective measures for the negative effect of perceived workplace politics on turnover intention, and (c) the role of employees’ interpersonal influence skills under different levels of perceived workplace politics.

Literature Review

Perceived Workplace Politics

Organizations have been defined as political battlegrounds where alliances form and distort in gaining and exerting power, and daily fights are fought to control finite resources (Ferris et al., 2000). Political and non-political conduct may be separated based on the actor's purpose or perception of objectives (Drory & Romm, 1990) or the intention behinds the behaviour. Moreover, the meaning of workplace politics is largely unclear despite the relevance of the political activity to organizational performance. Likewise, there is a significant dispute among authors over the importance of the phrase workplace politics (Dory & Romm, 1990). Madison et al. (1980) concluded from their review of the existing literature on workplace politics that the viewpoints, theories, and list of methods addressing workplace politics do not cover the same phenomena. As a result, claiming or conceptualizing workplace politics in specific terms that are widely recognized and generalized is dangerous.

Workplace politics may be seen in two ways: as a symptom of a social influence process that benefits the company or as a self-serving consequence that undermines organizational objectives (Olorunleke, 2015). Existing literature, on the other hand, defines workplace politics as strategic actions that promote or defend one's self-interests; these behaviors may contradict collective organizational objectives or other people's interests (Vigoda, 2000). Politics at work has a bad reputation for being counterproductive because of its negative impact on worker productivity, management effectiveness, and equity. However, there is emerging evidence that workplace politics can be productive, inevitable, and even beneficial in a company (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010).

Turnover Intention

The intention to quit the existing company is referred to as turnover intention. Scholars have established that behavioral intentions are the strongest predictor of turnover, highlighting turnover intention as a vital component in modeling employee turnover behavior (Egan et al., 2004). Turnover costs are high from a financial standpoint, but they are often disguised by management in the accounting system. According to Holtom et al. (2008), no profit and loss statement precisely captures voluntary turnover cost. The actual but unmeasured costs of lost customer service continuity or essential implicit knowledge are seldom calculated because they are buried in line items such as recruiting, selection, temporary employment, and training. This is because staff turnover represents a significant expense to businesses in actual and intangible terms, severely impedes efficient and effective customer service, and diminishes competitiveness. Additional staffing or overtime expenditures to remedy shortages; replacing an experienced worker with a recruit without expertise; service interruptions; increased turnover among the existing workforce; bad morale; and damage to the company's brand and image are all examples of such expenses (Hendrie, 2004).

Interpersonal Influence Skills

Interpersonal influence skills are a kind of political ability. Pfeffer (1981) was the first to bring the phrase "political skills" to the scientific literature as part of his political perspective on organizations. Pfeffer (1981) used the term "political skills" to characterize the networking and social skills required by workers to traverse complicated organizational contexts effectively. Later conceptions emphasize political competence as a construct of interpersonal style. For

instance, according to Zellars et al. (2008), it is an interpersonal style construct that combines social intelligence with the capacity to adapt behavior to a variety of situational demands in a manner that seems genuine, fosters trust, and yields effective influence over others. Similarly, Perrewe et al. (2004) characterize it as “the capacity to comprehend people at work successfully and to utilize such understanding to encourage others to perform in ways that advance one’s personal and organizational goals.” Political skill is a comprehensive pattern of social competencies with implications for oneself and others. It represents manifestations of cognition, emotion, and conduct (Ferris et al., 2007).

According to Ferris et al. (2005), political skills are a combination of four characteristics: social intelligence, interpersonal influence skills, networking ability, and appearance sincerity. Interpersonal influence skill is defined as the capacity to exert a strong effect on others subtly and persuasively, as well as the ability to correctly adjust and calibrate one’s behavior to each scenario to elicit specific reactions from others.

Perception of Workplace Politics and Turnover Intention

Employees may leave the company to avoid political actions. One kind of withdrawal is the turnover intention, which is the strong and deliberate desire to leave the current organization, whether physically or mentally (Kacmar et al., 1999). Employees who see the organization as political, unequal, or advancing just the ambitions of its influential members may be urged to quit it mentally as much as physically (Cropanzano et al., 1997).

Researchers (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 1997; Hochwarter et al., 1999; & Kacmar et al., 1999) conducted empirical research on the favorable influence of perception of workplace politics on turnover intention. However, Harrell-Cook et al. (1999) found that perception of workplace politics did not affect turnover intention. Furthermore, Larwood et al. (1998) investigated the detrimental effects of perceived workplace politics on the choice to leave. The empirical research indicates that correlations between perceptions of workplace politics and plans to leave the organization range from -0.05 to 0.60 (Larwood et al., 1998). Most studies have discovered a positive association between the perception of workplace politics and the desire to leave; nevertheless, substantial empirical evidence is not favorable (i.e., unimportant and maybe harmful). As a result, such a broad range of effects, especially concerning direction, argue for more research without a directional hypothesis. As a result, this research hypothesizes that workers’ perceptions of their job as political may influence their decision to quit their present business. As a result, Hypothesis 1 is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Employees’ perception of workplace politics impacts employee turnover intention. This indicates that if workers view their work environment as political, their desire to leave will be strongly influenced. The direction of the effects as positive or negative is determined by whether they see workplace politics as a challenge or a hindrance stressor.

Interactive Effect of Perceived Workplace Politics and Interpersonal Influence Skills

A significant study has been conducted in academic interest during the last 30 years exploring the moderators, predictors, and effects of views of workplace politics and other work result linkages. In general, poor impressions of politics have led to bad outcomes and attitudes, such

as an increase in turnover and a fall in performance (Hochwarter et al., 2010). However, bad results may not occur for all people in all situations. It is believed that political expertise is essential for efficiently dealing with job pressures because political skill is the capacity to successfully comprehend people at work and utilize that understanding to persuade others to behave in ways that benefit one's personal and organizational goals (Ferris et al., 2005).

According to Kimura (2014), politically savvy persons are more likely to successfully govern interpersonal relationships due to their capacity for interpersonal influence skills. Furthermore, interpersonal influencing capacity makes encounters more predictable, reducing the stress generated by ambiguity. Consequently, when presented with workplace pressures, persons proficient in interpersonal influence skills feel higher levels of comprehension and control, resulting in less strain than unskilled people (Perrewe et al., 2004). These comprehensions and authority originate from their natural social awareness and networking abilities. Interpersonally influential persons, in particular, may get an accurate image of the work environment and the motives of those functioning in the environment. According to the Ferris et al. (2007) model, Interpersonal influence skills should reduce stress by giving individuals and their workplaces a sense of control. Individuals with interpersonal influence skills have peace of mind and a sense of safety (Perrewe et al., 2004). As a result, persons with good political skills should see environmental stresses as less dangerous and more complex. Politics is unpleasant and dangerous because it creates confusing relationships between performance and results, increasing uncertainty in work contexts (Ambrose, 2012).

On the other hand, interpersonally influential People have an in-depth grasp of the workplace, which enables them to appropriately assess both their own work environment and the motivations of others (Ferris et al., 2005); as a result, the effects of perceived workplace politics on employee outcomes will be improved (Bhattarai, 2021b). Using Vroom's (1964) expectation theory paradigm, it may be argued that certain people have skills that enable them to operate successfully in a political setting (Ferris et al., 2007). Based on these theoretical analyses and actual evidence, this research proposes Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2: Employees' interpersonal influence skills moderate the relationship between perceived workplace politics and turnover intention. Workers' interpersonal influence skills help to enhance the association between perceived workplace politics and the desire to leave. If the direct effects of perceived workplace politics on turnover intention are adverse, political skills may help to mitigate such impacts. If perceived workplace politics and turnover intention are functional, then political skills help to strengthen relationships.

Methods

Measures

Demographic Variables

As control factors in this research, demographic characteristics such as gender, age, tenure, unionization, union membership, and employee categorization were included. These demographic characteristics were shown to be related to the independent, dependent, and moderating variables. Demographic factors were coded with dummy variables for statistical purposes.

Perception of Workplace Politics

A six-item variant of Vigoda (2001) was used to assess perceived workplace politics. This study adds three more items to the six-item measure made by Vigoda to ensure the construct's content validity. These additional items are as follows: (1) "In this organization, people do what is best for them, not what is best for the organization," (2) "Here, people are more concentrated on pleasing senior and powerful people who can help them," and (3) "Here, individuals are stabbing each other in the back to look good in front of others." On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement. The construct's alpha coefficient was calculated at .94.

Interpersonal Influence Skills

Ferris et al. (2005) devised four-item measures to assess the interpersonal impact and it is adopted in this study. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statements. The coefficient alpha for interpersonal impact in this research was .84. "I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me" is an example.

Turnover Intention

The turnover intention has been evaluated using five measures developed by Khatri et al. (2001), defined as the behavioral desire to leave a company. This research adds one item to the Khatri et al. scale to confirm the construct's content validity. "I do not see a promising future in this company," is the added items. The construct's coefficient alpha was discovered in this investigation. .90. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5, respondents were asked to assess how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Population and Sample

The study's population consisted of employees from Nepalese Grade A banks. The sample was chosen in two phases, using a combination of the purposive and convenience sampling approaches. At the outset, all commercial banks were purposely divided into two groups: unionized and non-unionized. This classification was created to include responders from both sorts of banks. Seventeen commercial banks were chosen to poll their staff, representing both types of institutions. In the second stage, using the convenience sample approach, 1199 workers were chosen for the survey from the specified 17 commercial banks. Respondents were obtained from workers of the selected banks operating in Kathmandu and outside Kathmandu.

Administration of the Questionnaire

Non-managerial workers have received particular attention among employees since they perceive substantially more politics than managers, as indicated by Zhou and Ferris (1995). However, while choosing the sample responses, gender, age, department, education, and designation were all considered. Six demographic characteristics were included in the questionnaire. Except for the demographic information, all perceptual answers were acquired on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Each sampled bank's chief executive officers (CEOs) were asked to help administer questionnaires. The CEO of each bank designated a referral person to support the distribution and collection of questionnaires at the researcher's request. One thousand one hundred ninety-nine questionnaires were delivered to each responder individually

with the assistance of a reference person. Each responder was given one week to complete the questionnaire. Out of the 1199 surveys sent, 725 replies were deemed adequate.

Common Method Variance

This research applied procedural remedies to reduce common technique bias, as Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggested. By including negatively phrased questions in the questionnaire, to decrease the potential influence of answer pattern biases, around 34% (10 items) of the questionnaire were reverse scored. Questionnaire were counter balanced in order to mix the items so that respondents could not recognize the corresponding construct of the particular items.

Beside remedial measure, Harman's one-factor test, which employs principal component factor analysis on all variables in the model, was utilized in this study to measure the level of common method bias. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), Harman's one-factor (or single-factor) test is one of the most extensively utilized methodologies researchers have used to evaluate the issue of CMV. One may get the conclusion that the bias is significant when the analysis from Harman's one-factor test maintains only one component, or when a single factor explains the bulk of the covariance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The research found eleven components were kept in this study, and the first component explained just 23.17 percent of the total variance in the data. The first component is responsible for explaining less than fifty percent of the total variance. This finding suggests that the bias is not significant enough to render the research incorrect, even though it may lead to some little overestimation of regression coefficients (Cho & Lee, 2012).

Results

Model 1 in Table 1 has been used to measure the association of demographic variables with turnover intention. This model depicted that out of various demographic variables, the coefficient of Gender ($B = .21, p < .01$), coefficient of unionization ($B = -.56, p < .001$), and coefficient of membership of the union ($B = .49, p < .001$) were statistically significantly associated with turnover intention. A total 9 percent of variation ($R^2 = .09, p < .001$) in turnover intention has been explained by demographic variables.

Model 2 in Table 1 has been used to measure the direct association of perception of workplace politics with turnover intention after adjusting for the impact of the demographic factors. According to this model, the coefficient of perception of workplace politics was statistically significant in predicting turnover intention ($B = .45, p .001$). Thus, there was a positive relationship between workers' perceptions of workplace politics and their desire to leave the company. Consequently, hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Model 4 in Table 1 has been used to evaluate the moderating function of interpersonal influence skills within the straight connection between the perception of workplace politics and turnover intention. This model shows that the moderating role of interpersonal influence skill in the relationship between perception of workplace politics and turnover intention was statistically significant ($B = -.30, \Delta R^2 = .05, p < .001$). Hence, employees' interpersonal influence skill mitigated the association between their opinions on workplace politics and their desire to leave. Consequently, hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Figure 1 displays the graphic interaction of perceptions of workplace politics, turnover intention, and interpersonal influence skills as independent, dependent, and moderating variables. Graphical presentation of the interactive effects of perception of workplace politics and interpersonal influence skills to predict turnover intention has been shown in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, graphs representing the high, medium, and low interpersonal influence skills are not parallel and sloped positively. Interpersonal influence skills representing graphs was becoming less steep with the increase in interpersonal influence skills (low to high), which means interpersonal influence skills has buffering moderation in the relationships between the perception of workplace politics and turnover intention.

Table 1

Regression Result Testing Direct, Mediation, and Moderation Models: Association of Perception of Workplace Politics, Interpersonal Influence Skills and Turnover Intention

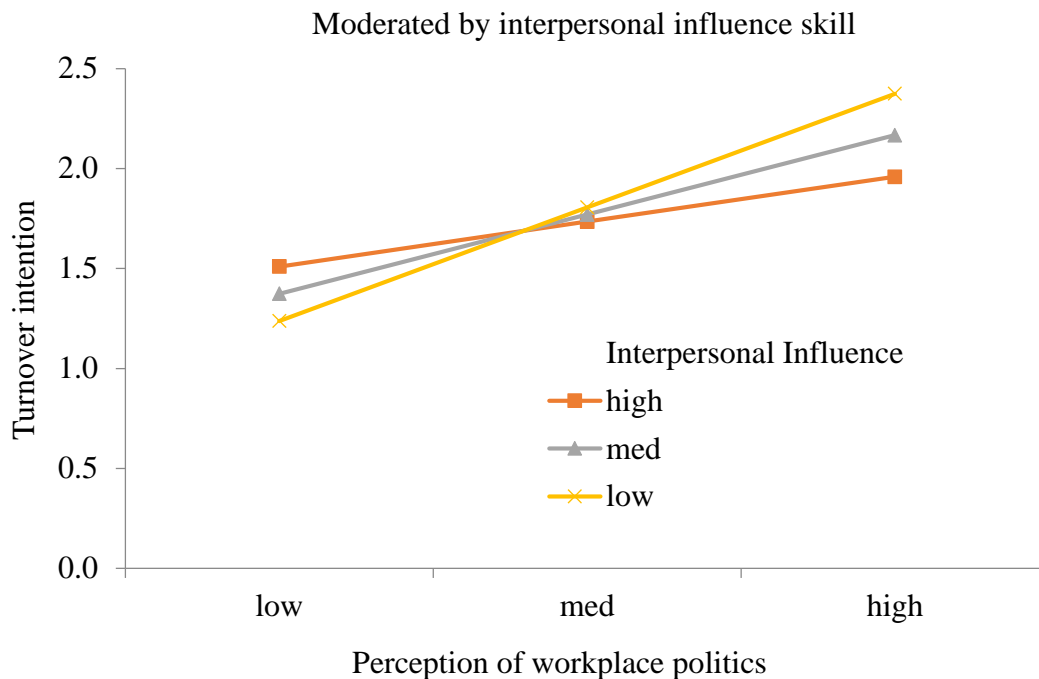
Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention			
	Model 1 (B)	Model 2 (B)	Model 3 (B)	Model 4 (B)
Step 1: Demographic control variables				
Gender	.21**	.20**	.20**	.20**
Age	.01	-.19**	-.20**	-.19**
Tenure	.01	.13	.14	.00
Unionization	-.56***	-.33**	-.34**	-.20
Membership	.49***	.45***	.45***	.37***
Designation	.08	.08	.08	.06
Step 2: Main effect				
Perception of workplace politics		.45***	.46***	1.51***
Step 3: Main effect				
Interpersonal influence skills			-.03	.78***
Step 4: Interactive effect				
Perception of workplace politics X interpersonal influence skills				-.30***
ΔR^2	.09***	.125***	.001	.05***
R^2	.09	.214	.215	.27
F	11.77***	113.91***	.29	49.14***

***, **, *, significance at .001, .01, and .05 levels, respectively

Graph representing low-value interpersonal influence skills was comparatively steeper than mid-value and low-value representing graphs. This indicated that there was a relatively strong positive prediction of the perception of workplace politics on the turnover intention of those employees who had a low level of interpersonal influence skills. In the opposite order, there was a relatively weak positive prediction of the perception of workplace politics on the turnover intention of those employees who had a high level of interpersonal influence skills.

Figure: 1

Graphic Presentation of Moderating Role of Interpersonal Influence skills in the Relationship between Perception of Workplace Politics and Turnover Intention



Likewise, for the employees who perceived a medium level of workplace politics, it does not matter whether networking ability was either low, medium, or high; the mitigating result was the same. But for the employees who perceived high and low level of workplace politics, for them mitigating the power of interpersonal influence skills in the relationship between perception of workplace politics and turnover intention were meaningful. Moreover, as depicted in Figure 1, for the employees who had more than a medium level of perception of workplace politics, for them, at a fixed level of perception of workplace politics (e.g., high level); an increase in interpersonal influence skills caused to decrease in the impact of perception of workplace politics on turnover intention. But, for the employees who had less than a medium level of perception of workplace politics, for them, at a fixed level of perception of workplace politics (e.g., low level); increases in interpersonal influence skills caused to increase in the impact of perception of workplace politics on turnover intention.

Discussion

This research found that perception of workplace politics positively influenced turnover intention, as predicted. This suggests that increasing workers' perceptions of workplace politics lead to their desire to leave. This study consists of several studies (e.g., Ahmed, 2018; Kacmar et al., 1999; & Randall et al., 1999). However, Cropanzano et al. (1997), Harrell Cook et al. (1999), and Hochwarter et al. (1999) found that perception of workplace politics did not affect turnover intention. Furthermore, Larwood et al. (1998) investigated the harmful influence of workplace politics on employee outcomes.

The unemployment rate in the relevant job market may explain the negligible association between the perception of workplace politics and turnover intention. When the labor market is tight, it is natural for workers to strive to keep their present position since stress from politics

is less detrimental than unemployment; the converse is true when the labor market is loose. Employee political will is another potential explanation for negatively forecasting workplace politics on turnover intention. Political will is an actor's desire to devote energy to pursue political objectives (Treadway et al., 2005), whether personal, organizational or both. Employees with strong political will want to remain and work in a political atmosphere because it allows them to practice political behavior to their advantage. As a result, before generalizing the present results on the influence of workplace politics on turnover intention, more research would be more accurate if it was conducted while controlling for the effect of workers' political will and the country's unemployment rate.

This research, as predicted, evaluated and discovered the moderating impact of interpersonal influence skills on the link between the perception of workplace politics and the intention to leave. This suggests that the existence of workers' interpersonal influence skills affected the direct effect size of perception of workplace politics on turnover intention. In other words, when the perception of workplace politics interacts with workers' interpersonal influence skills, the direct impact of the perception of workplace politics on turnover intention is influenced. The moderating of interpersonal effect on the link between perception of workplace politics and turnover intention was investigated in this research.

Findings from this study are consistent (or inconsistent) with the few prior studies that have been conducted with varying employee behavioral and attitude outcomes regarding the moderating role of interpersonal influence skills in the relationship between perceptions of workplace politics and turnover intention. A study by Abbas et al. (2014), for instance, found that workers who are both politically savvy and highly self-confident are more likely to stay with the company even though office politics are widely believed to be at an all-time high. Just as Jam et al. (2011) found no correlation between workplace politics perception and political competence and turnover intent or contextual performance, they found a positive correlation between these two variables and job satisfaction and emotional commitment. Crawford et al. (2019) found the same thing, confirming a strong relationship between the perception of workplace politics and political competence and self-rated deviance. Still, no such interaction exists between these factors and supervisor-rated deviance. Similarly, Kapoutsis et al. (2011) have investigated how political expertise and awareness of office politics interact to affect productivity on the job. Increases in political ability were related to improved job performance when perceptions of workplace politics were low but had no effect when perceptions of workplace politics were high, as assessed and explained by Kapoutsis et al. (2011).

Workplace politics may be seen as a danger if workers feel they have little (or no) influence over the process and a more political atmosphere, as described by Ferris et al. (1996). However, more positive effects are expected if workers have a firm grasp of the factors that contribute to political conduct and a strong sense of agency in the situation. This study adds to the growing body of research that experimentally tests the role of knowledge and agency as mediators between workers' perceptions of office politics and their own experiences and results. Employees in this research reframed the pressure they felt due to office politics as opportunities, helping to reduce the negative impact on their purpose to leave their current position. This means that employees are less likely to leave their jobs because of their perceptions of office politics because they have the interpersonal influence skills to either steer the situation in their favor (control the process and outcomes) or neutralize the self-serving

behavior of others. Therefore, the potential explanations for moderating the negative impact of perceived workplace politics on turnover intention may include individuals' interpersonal influence ability to a greater or lesser extent.

Conclusion

This study has confirmed that an increase in employees' perception of workplace politics causes to increase in their turnover intention. This finding consists of most of the prior studies but not with all. Hence further testing is necessary for generalization. Further analysis can be significant if it is carried out considering the employees' political will and the labor market condition (e.g., unemployment rate) in the relationship between perception of workplace politics and turnover intention.

This study found that the direct detrimental effect of workplace politics on turnover intention has been mitigated when the perception of workplace politics interacts with employees' interpersonal influence skills. These findings are partially consistent with the prior study. Therefore, further studies under different contexts are necessary for its generalization.

In the literature on workplace politics, this study has added a number of novel findings. Firstly, employees with a high level of interpersonal influence skills are less affected by the perception of workplace politics but more when they have a low level of interpersonal influence skills. Secondly, the strength of the mitigation power of interpersonal influence skill is strong when perceived workplace politics is high, but mitigating power is weak when the perception of workplace politics is low. Thirdly, at a fixed level of perception of workplace politics (e.g., high level), the detrimental effect of workplace politics on turnover intention will be improved as the level of interpersonal influence skill increases. As such findings were not empirically tested before, further studies can be replicated under different contexts to strengthen the results.

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