



Umbrella Summary

Perceptions of Organizational Politics

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What are perceptions of organizational politics?

Perceptions of organizational politics (POP) is defined as an individual's subjective assessment of the degree to which their work setting is believed to be self-serving of some individuals and groups, to the detriment of others (Ferris, Harrell-Cook, & Dulebohn, 2000). A popular and recommended 15-item measure assesses POP through three factors: general political behavior, going along to get ahead, and pay and promotion (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Example items from each factor include, "People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down," "Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system," and "The stated pay and promotion policies have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined" (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997).

Why is POP valuable?

POP is important because it is associated with an array of job attitudes, stress indicators, and behaviors. Specifically, POP is strongly connected to lower perceptions of organizational trust and support and moderately associated with (a) higher intentions to leave and (b) lower feelings of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bedi & Schat, 2013). It is moderately associated with job stress and burnout, such that employees who perceive more politics are likely to have higher perceptions of stress and burnout (Bedi & Schat, 2013). Finally, POP is modestly connected to lower job performance and moderately associated with fewer citizenship behaviors (Bedi & Schat, 2013), which are discretionary extra-role behaviors, such as such as volunteering and helping others, that benefit the group and organization.

What contributes to POP?

Due to the nature of organizational politics and the type of research that is typically conducted, there is little evidence as to what actually causes perceptions of organizational politics to be higher or lower. However, there are many additional factors that are associated with POP and seen as potential influences. These factors fall into three categories: organization, job/work environment, and personal. At the organization level, POP is strongly related to centralization of power and to procedural justice (Atinc, Darrat, Fuller, & Parker, 2010). When power and control are distributed across an organization (versus being centralized at the top) and when organizational procedures are consistent, fair, and transparent, employees have lower POP

(Atinc et al., 2010). To a much smaller extent, POP is also lower when an organization's rules and standards are formalized and clearly communicated to employees (Atinc et al., 2010). In the category of job and work environment, there are many factors that are associated with POP. In the following circumstances, employees are likely to have lower POP: their job expectations are met; there are opportunities for development and advancement; they participate in decision making; they have good relationships with their leaders and cooperative, trusting relationships with coworkers; and their jobs involve higher autonomy and feedback (Atinc et al., 2010). Finally, there are a few personality variables that appear to make some people more or less likely to perceive politics in their organization. Specifically, people who have a cynical, untrustworthy view of human nature are likely to experience higher POP, as are people who are prone to negative moods and emotions (Atinc et al., 2010). Conversely, people who believe they are in control of their environment and people who are prone to positive moods and emotions are likely to experience lower POP (Atinc et al., 2010).

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ POP is associated with (a) higher intentions to leave, job stress, and burnout (b) lower perceptions of organizational trust and support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and citizenship behaviors.
- ▶ There is little evidence as to what actually causes perceptions of organizational politics but many organization, job/work environment, and personal factors are seen as potential influences.
- ▶ Practitioners or researchers who would like to assess POP should consider the 15-item Perceptions of Politics Scale by Kacmar & Carlson (1997).

References

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