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Relationship between Employees' Perception of Organizational Politics and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence is a topic of significance since last two decades and it is believed followed by being proven to be a solution for several problems in an organizational setup. This study was conducted to test the relationship between organizational politics and emotional intelligence in the workplace. The employees' perception of organizational politics was compared for its status between public sector bank employees and new private sector bank employees. 472 samples were used to study the relationship between organizational politics and emotional intelligence among banking sector employees. The samples were chosen by using multi stage random sampling by probability method. Perception of organizational politics was found to have a strong correlation with emotional intelligence. The employees' perception of organizational politics was profound among public sector bank employees rather than new private sector bank employees. Emotional intelligence of the employees needs to be enhanced in order to reduce the organizational politics by providing training on emotional intelligence. This research adds value to the existing literature by highlighting the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational politics. The findings show that emotional intelligence has a strong correlation with employees' perceptions of politics, and this in turn affects the employee attitude in the workplace. The major political practices were compared between public sector banks and new private sector banks and their finding adds value to the Indian literature.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Organizational politics, Employee Attitude, Performance, Perception

Introduction

Power is one's ability to influence other people. Authority is the right to influence another person. When employees in an organization convert their power into action, politics comes into existence. Those with good political skills uses power effectively. Politics is related to use of power. Thus, organizational politics means the use of power and influence in organizations. Self-promotion behaviors, on the other hand, are focused toward attention getting'. Self promoters desire respect rather than affability. Self-promoters engage in specific behaviors with the objective of establishing an image of the political actor as competent, intelligent, and/or extremely dedicated worker.

ISSN: 2420-7608

In the liberalized Economy, both private and public sector nationalized banks are expected to render maximum services to the society. So their work environment is indispensable to unravel the human resources approach of how job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, job anxiety, job burnout, organizational politics plays a vital role to offer good customer service. Role conflict created tension between organization members that interfered with cooperation and thereby led to exercising power and organizational politics. The leadership styles of the organization would sometimes lead to confusion in the organizations. Lack of communication between the members, superiors, and subordinates would also lead to politics. Open conflicts over policies and procedures leads to increasing the degree of politics within the organization.

The Human Resource must be rightly recruited, nourished and utilized. Every organization must have its own human resource policies, procedures, rules, regulations, strategies and so on. Though there are some studies in this field, there are very little in Indian scenario and with respect to the banking sector. Moreover, the information gathered from the available studies are not sufficient for the present scenario, and some gaps are observed in the review of the literature. So this study is conducted to fill the gap in the field of organizational behaviour and HR practices, taking into account of the public sector and new private sector banks of Chennai. Given the pervasiveness and importance of organizational politics in the workplace, this phenomenon is being examined more extensively with respect to the banking sector.

Politics in an organization is a problematic area demanding attention worldwide irrespective of sectors, and countries. Its impact on the work attitude of employees affects the workplace and leads to turnover and absenteeism in the organizations. This study is built on the base that organizational politics is the most prominent problem in the most significant banking sector in an important metropolitan city.

Banking is a labour-intensive industry. As such, the quality of banking services and objectives in achieving the organizational goals in addition to client development involves total involvement of the employees in the process of rendering service. Thus, the existence of a political climate within will irresistibly be the central and to swerve from it is to destroy the fabric of banking itself. Studies dealing with perception of politics in commercial banks in India are scanty. The research problem centers on examining the status of organization politics, by studying the difference in perception of organizational politics between public sector and new private sector banks and the relationship between organizational politics and emotional intelligence in the banking sector.

Organizational Politics

According to Webster Dictionary Politics is defined as “*competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership*”. It is the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non sanctioned influence means. It is a function resulting from differences in the self-interests of

ISSN: 2420-7608

individuals. Politics helps one to recognize and reconcile with the competing interests in an organization. All the people employed in an organization is hired as a whole person which means they are not only hired for their work but also their interests, desires, wants and needs which can lead to different interests because of which politics can generate. Politics in an organization can be both positive and negative. Every employee in organization practices politics in some form or other, only their degree varies. When one views politics positively, then the organization shall have positive force within it and consequently the relationships, norms, processes, performance and outcomes are influenced as they are an integral part of an organization.

Mayer and Allen (1977) gave the comprehensive definition “*Organizational politics is the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through the non-sanctioned influence means*”. Perception of organizational politics is the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political and therefore unfair (Ferris et al. 1989). More specifically, perceptions of organizational politics are subjective interpretations of the extent to which the work environment is characterized by co-workers and supervisors who engage in political behaviors or by organizational policies that encourage such behaviors. In the present study employees’ perception of organizational politics was studied among banking sector employees in an Indian context as banks act as a major form of service sector that should be healthy enough to provide quality service to the society. This is mainly dependant on the happiness of the employees in the banks. The employees’ happiness is ensured if a political free environment prevails in workplace.

Emotional Intelligence

Intelligence in handling emotions play a major role in ensuring the happiness of the employees. When an employee stumbles in workplace emotionally it signifies that intelligence in handling that is lagging. Emotional intelligence is a topic of importance since 1990s. It is considered as a concept for handling organizational issues in several contexts. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as “*the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth*”. Organizational politics is considered a consistent organizational problem which still remains a problem to believed with rather than be solved. Emotional intelligence may be considered as one aspect that may help in handling it effectively and hence both these variables are tested in this study.

Literature Review

Relevant review of literature is necessary to proceed with the present study and to justify it to the current scenario. Organizational politics has been a topic of research since 1970s but in vain to have found a solution to its negative and eroding impacts to the organizational setups. Emotional intelligence has been found to be a significant variable being studied in relevance to organizational politics. Studies done by Day and Carroll (2004), Law et al. (2004)

ISSN: 2420-7608

concluded that emotional intelligence has a direct effect on work outcomes. Studies by Law et al. (2004), Sy et al. (2006) in their studies have explored the direct effects of emotional intelligence on work outcomes.

The studies by Chang et al. (2009), Cropanzano et al. (1997), Ferris et al. (1996), Miller et al. (2008), Vigoda (2000; 2001), suggest that emotional intelligence affects work outcomes indirectly, through its effect on perception of organizational politics. According to Liu et al. (2006), political acts by oneself and others can be viewed as work events that trigger emotional reactions, which serve as a core mechanism through which POP affect attitudes and behaviors such as burnout, cynicism, job satisfaction and affective commitment. The study also argued that emotion and emotional behaviors serve as intermediate linkages in the association between POP and various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) studied the relationship between Emotional intelligence and organizational politics and found an insignificant relationship. Other findings from the same study showed that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational commitment, as well as the relationship between political skill and absenteeism among public personnel.

Meisler (2012) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and political skill. A significant relationship was found between emotional intelligence and political skill. Galit Meisler and Eran Vigoda-Gadot (2013) states that a mediation effect of perceived politics on the associations between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior prevails in organizational settings.

Discussed review clearly indicates that need to study the relationship between organizational politics and emotional intelligence since last two decades. This study is a valuable contribution in terms of the study done in an Indian context by testing the relationship between organizational politics and emotional intelligence.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Politics in banking sector.
2. To study the Employees' perceptions of organizational politics in the public sector banks and in the new private sector banks, in Chennai city.

Hypothesis of the Study

H₁: There is correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Politics.

H₂: Employees' perceptions of organizational politics do differ in the public sector banks and in the new private sector banks, in Chennai city.

ISSN: 2420-7608

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Data Collection

Descriptive research design was chosen. Primary data was collected using questionnaire and secondary data was collected from existing information not restricted to company manuals, journals, in-house magazines, web sites.

Sample Design

Data was collected selectively from banking sector employees from the most predominant metropolitan city namely Chennai, in south India. 750 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents out of which 472 usable responses were received, out of which 58% were male responses and 42% were female responses, 88% were married and 12% were unmarried. Multistage random sampling by probability method was exploited for choosing Chennai city, Tamilnadu, India as place of study and the Banking sector as the sector of study.

Statistical Tools Used

Pearson's correlation was used to study the relationship between Organizational politics and emotional intelligence. Significant difference between public and private sector banks with respect to organizational politics was analyzed using t-test.

Research Measures

Organizational Politics

The perception of politics scale (POPS) was developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and modified by Kacmar and Carlson (1997). The total of 38 and 15 items were considered for the present study after slight modifications as per Indian scenario. The questionnaire modified by Sowmya & Panchanatham (2011) was tested for its reliability, was exploited for the study. Its cronbach's alpha co-efficient was 0.844. Sample items were: "pay and promotion policies are always political", "my co-workers help themselves."

Emotional Intelligence

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Law, Wong and Song (2004), Wong and Law (2002) was used to measured the emotional intelligence. It has 16-items self-report scale consisting of four dimensions: Self—Emotions Appraisal (SEA), Others—Emotions Appraisal (OEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE), and Use of Emotion (UOE).

Analysis and Discussion

Correlation coefficient analysis was used to test the H_1 and Table 1 presents the correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational politics.

H_1 : There is correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational politics.

Table 1: Correlation between Organizational Politics and Emotional Intelligence

Variables	N	R	P
Organizational Policies and emotional Intelligence	472	0.504**	0.001
Coworker Behaviour and emotional Intelligence	472	0.600	0.000
Going along to get ahead and emotional Intelligence	472	0.450	0.000
Supervisor Approach and emotional Intelligence	472	0.605**	0.001
Individual Influence and emotional Intelligence	472	0.871	0.000
Organizational Influence and emotional Intelligence	472	0.780	0.000
Organizational Politics and emotional Intelligence	472	0.650	0.000

*P ≤ 0.05, **P ≤ 0.01

It can be interpreted from Table 1 that the correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational politics is significant at $p < 0.05$ level. From the table it is visible that and the finding also suggests that there is significant relationship between factors influencing employees' perception of organizational politics with emotional intelligence. From Table 1 it is evident that there is significant correlation between organizational politics and emotional intelligence. Therefore, the H_1 is accepted and it means that if an emotionally intelligent employee handles organizational politics effectively in the banking sector.

Sowmya et al. (2011) in their study identified six factors influencing employees' perception of politics in banking sector using the same tool applied in this study. The factors were organizational policies, coworker behaviour, going along to get ahead, supervisor approach, individual influence and organizational influence. However, the perception of politics between both the sectors was not compared. The same factors derived from 38 items were compared between new private sector employees and public sector banks.

Significant difference between public and private sector banks with respect to organizational politics was analyzed using t-test. The organizational politics perceived by the public sector and private sector banks in a different context and their significant difference and its existence is identified through the t-test and the results are shown below:

Public Sector Employees - 202
Private Sector Employees - 270

To find out the second hypothesis of the study, t-test was used and the t-test is given in Table 2.

H_2 : Employees' perceptions of organizational politics do differ in the public sector banks and in the new private sector banks, in Chennai city.

Table 2: Comparison of Employees' Perception of Politics between Public sector & New Private Sector Bank Officers

S. No	Factors of Political Perceptions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig
1	Organizational Policies	202	4.5401	.71012	3.383	.031
		270	3.8868	1.07576		
2	Coworker Behaviour	202	3.7850	.84761	3.290	.000
		270	3.7908	.72131		
3	Going along to get ahead	202	4.1720	.68300	10.320	.000
		270	3.6840	1.25035		
4	Supervisor Approach	202	4.3905	.78548	4.200	.000
		270	4.2500	.78379		
5	Individual Influence	202	2.5600	1.25960	3.1032	.000
		270	3.0255	1.11243		
6	Organizational Influence	202	3.6007	.66797	4.454	.661
		270	3.4096	.79852		

*P ≤ 0.05

From Table 2, it is found that the mean values range from 2.56 to 4.54 and the respective standard deviations also show the consistency of the opinion. The t-values are systematic and statistically significant at 5% level between public and private sector bank employees across each of the six items tested above. The mean wise comparison indicates that the employees perception of politics was higher in new public sector banks than private sector banks which is similar to findings of a study done in Israel by Vigoda et al (2005). The H₂ is accepted at 5% level of significance, as employees' perceptions of organizational politics do differ in the public sector banks and in the new private sector banks, in Chennai city.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the above findings that employees' perception of politics has been topic of research since 1970s with results emphasizing that it cannot be overcome instead to be lived with. This study argues strongly that if a person is emotionally intelligent overcoming organizational politics in workplace will not be a problem. This study also compared the major political practices in new private sector banks and public sector banks. It was found that the public sector bank employees perceived more politics in workplace than the other set of employees. The new private sector bank employees expressed that they could always leave the job if politics in workplace was intolerable. Whereas, the public sector bank employees perceived that cost of leaving the job was higher than managing politics in the workplace.

The researcher suggests through this study that emotional intelligence if suitably utilized overcoming politics in workplace will not be a great task whichever sector it may be. It is proven in this study in banking sector that organizational politics can be reduced if emotional intelligence is available among the employees. The studies by Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) suggest that if one's own emotions can be controlled as against the emotions of others by having emotional intelligence. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) also suggest that controlling of emotions is possible by having emotional intelligence. The study by Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) was done among private sector employees in an Israeli context. In contrast, this study was done in an Indian context among private and public sector employees. The lacunae in this study is that, if training is given on emotional intelligence will it reduce

ISSN: 2420-7608

perception of organizational politics is yet to be studied. Moreover, studies in Indian context of organizational politics are hardly available which shows a wide scope to be explored in future.

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ISSN: 2420-7608

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