

# Workplace Politics and Employee's Job Performance: Mediating Role of Job Stress, Evidence from Degree Awarding Institutions of Sindh, Pakistan

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**Abstract---** *Integrated with the P-E Fit theory of stress, this research investigates workplace politics and employees' job performance relationship through the mediating role of job stress. A proposed mediation model was tested by collecting supervisor rated survey data through a close-ended questionnaire from 195 participants of different DAI's of Benazirabad, Sindh, Pakistan. Data of this study has been analyzed by using SPSS and Smart-PLS software, with regression and bootstrapping methods to test the proposed hypothesis of this study. Our results suggest that job stress mediates the relationship between workplace politics and employees' job performance. Moreover, the findings of our study indicate that workplace politics also become the cause of stress at the workplace and it harms the individuals psychologically that decrease the performance of individuals. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed separately especially for the public and private DAI's.*

**Keywords---** *Workplace Politics (WPP), Job Stress (JS), Job Performance (JP)*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization affects individual and organizational performance, a lot of factors occur due to this which further causes of low performance. Management of organizations and practitioners of organizational behavior and HRM nowadays especially are in a struggle to find out the causes of low performance. For better performance, there is a need to emphasize the physical and psychological health of employees, and workplace politics predicts job stress that further affects the individual's performance that resultantly reduces the financial and operational productivity of organizations. Employment helps to overcome financial obligations and also allows one to be involved in good companionship as well as contribute to society. Performance refers to the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed. To get the job done business owners need able employees because the overall success of the organization's performance on an employee is very critical. Employee performance is the general attitude that people have about their jobs. Degree awarding institutions especially face the problem of workplace politics that may become the cause of job stress. In developing countries, employees use workplace politics for their negative benefits from their peers in the form of power and position and form the management in the form of a higher salary and other financial benefits.

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The workplace environment is very crucial for an employee to be a good performer, especially where there is a threat to perceptions and realities. Workplace politics is a tool that usually use people in today's business world to influence others negatively or positively. Workplace politics are the practices that generally individuals use for the attainment of power, influencing behaviors, activities, for significant decision making (Dhar, 2011; Tlaiss, 2013; Brouer, Harris, & Kacmar, 2011). According to Kane Frieder et al. (2014:373) perceived organizational politics cannot be classified as a hindrance stressor automatically. Gotsis and Kortezi (2011) suggested that workplace politics is a way to seek once own interest of an employee in a corporation without caring that they are affecting the efforts of the corporation to obtain its goals. Employees tend to experience little workplace politics when they trust their supervisor and show a willingness to help peers (Poon, 2006). Workplace politics has received a huge consideration of social scientists and practitioners in the fields of psychology, organizational, and workplace behaviors. Organizational politics and power have been regarded as critical factors affecting various organizational practices (Kim, 2004). An employee's gaining of benefits or losses in the working environment is determined by seeing how successful that employee handles stress-related and political situations at the workplace (Vigoda, 2002). Employees' responses to stressors will differ as to whether they consider these stressors as personally detrimental (a hindrance) or beneficial (a challenge) (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014:358). Perceived politics can be a hindrance stressor for engaged employees as it represents a barrier to rewards and resources, however, perceived politics can also be a challenge stressor as it creates opportunities for engaged employees (Kane-Frieder et al, 2014:359). As the employee stands more from the situation thus increasing his/her job efforts to gain more that is why it is regarded as opportunity stress by him (Chang et al., 2009:780; Ferris et al., 1996:236).

Today employees who are working around the globe experiencing a universal element which is stress. In developing nations stress has become a major problem for employers who don't realize the influence of stress on employee performance which in turn proves as managerial dilemmas (Subha & Shakil, 2010). In the life of every employee and manager, even executives stress is a universal experience, that may cause a loss of an increase in training cost and talent due to high turnover (Cartwright and Boyes, 2000). As the stress is unavoidable, it comprises a firm menace to the quality of life for employees (Dyck, 2001) not to mention its relation to an increased risk of mortality and morbidity (Siegrist, 1998). Stress outcomes in loss of employment and a high portion of absence, both the goal achievement of organizations and employee performance affects because the ratio of stress affecters is increasing at an alarming rate (Treven, 2002). It has been observed that workplace politics also neutralize the dysfunctional strain that comes from the workplace environment (Ferris et al. 2007, 2012; Perrewe et al., 2000).

Employee performance has been described and considered both as an idea with numerous measurements and as a worldwide build (Price 1997). Bullock (1952) defined employee performance as the thought of a mind which comes because of the summation and an adjustment of numerous particular preferences experienced regarding the occupation. Performance of employee and organizational performance are the two major parts of performance (Otley, 1999). Moreover, Otley (1999) suggested that employee performance is the core function on which the organizational performance depends and other factors like environment, culture, and the engagement of employees. With the development in today's business world through efficient use of resources and the latest technologies, some of the factors that affect the performance of employees as well as an organization are workplace, environment,

peers, supervisors, and top management. The political view of a top manager and leadership is the fundamental factor that affects employees' performance (Sheard, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2011).

We use the lens of P-E Fit theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) which discusses that employees feel stress and perform low productivity whenever they feel there is a dissimilarity between their perception about the environment of the organization and realities of that environment. Based on the P-E Fit theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) we predicted that job stress mediates the relationship between workplace politics and employees' job performance. This study overcomes the suggestions of Hochwarter, et al., (2020), Ferris, et al., (2019) in their recent meta-analytic study on perception of organizational politics. Consequently, the main objective of this study to examine the impact of workplace politics on employee job performance; also investigate the mediating impact of job stress between the relationship of workplace politics and employees' job performance. This research will contribute to the literature of organizational and workplace politics, by highlighting that how organizations can use workplace politics in the positive for the accomplishment of organizational goals and objective and; for the engagement, creativity of individuals, and for knowledge management practices of in organizations. Furthermore, the findings of our study will also provide practical implications especially for the higher education sector (DAI's).

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Workplace Politics***

According to Ferris and Hochwarter (2011), workplace politics is a behavior that is considered as a burdening stressor observed in uncertain working environments that is focused on securing an advantage over others. According to Winning (1978), workplace/organizational politics are unauthorized activities or brawl of individuals so that they can achieve the level of power. Tactics related with manipulation and control of information, coalition formation, agenda control, the use of outside consultants, negotiation or bargaining, and tactics of timings are some actions taken by the members of an organization to exert impact over organizational decisions or by using power is related to the perception of workplace politics (Elbanna, 2010). A destructive or negative use of power to fulfill personal goals, even to the extent where it sometimes breaks rules, policies, and interests of the organization regarded by authors as traditional political behavior (Child, Elbanna, & Rodrigues, 2010). Workplace politics has two elements stated by Zivnuska et al., (2004), which must be included while analyzing the part of workplace politics and employee's attitudes. The first reality is less important than workplace politics. Later, for individuals, workplace politics might be beneficial, or harmful. It is assumed that workplace politics can be valuable for employees and also can be a huge risk for their careers (Zivnuska et al, 2004). It is a common phenomenon that in organizations employees individually, in the group or form of teams influence others i.e. peers, managers, or management of the organization for their positive or undue goals (Ullah & Ahmad, 2018).

### ***2.2 Workplace Politics and Employee's Job Performance***

According to Otley, (1999) performance of the organizations can be divided into employee performance and organizational performance. Performance of the organization is a dependent factor and the employee performance and environment of the organization are independent factors (Otley, 1999). To understand the factors that affect

motivation the organizations need to analyze the direct impact of motivation on the productivity of a particular unit (Ilgen and Klein, 1998). To encourage employees' behavior to stay constant with the organizational goals set these understandings helps managers to adjust conditions in the work setting. Role consciousness, skills, job motive, and ability are the factors that affect the performance of employees. Other factors are in the individual's environment which hinders or supports and stimulates performance, such factors are the situational factors that affect performance. According to Drory (1993) job performance of individuals influenced due to politics at the workplace and this occur when employees seek justice and equality. Recently studies conducted in different organizational and regional context show that low performance of individuals predicts due to workplace politics (Abbas, & Awan, 2017; Samad, & Amri, 2017; Vimala, 2013; Ugwu, Ndugbu, Okoroji, & Kalu, 2014; Park, & Jee, 2020; Ahmad, Hashmi, & Akhtar, 2016; Rahman, Hussain, & Haque, 2011; Bodla, Afza, & Danish, 2014). Workplace politics in today's organizations is a prevailing issue, a thorough investigation of this issue would help prevent its harmful results. It is further stated by the researchers that employee's perception regarding workplace politics directs to some adverse and negative outcomes, i.e. lesser commitment towards the organization, lowered performance of different tasks, narrowed behavior of citizenship of organization and satisfaction about their job (Anderson, 1994; Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson & Anthony, 1999; Maslyn & Fedor, 1998; Folger, Konovsky and Cropanzano, 1992; Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019). Yet in recent years some studies suggest that positive relationships exist between perceived workplace politics and individual outcomes i.e career advancement, the achievement of organizational and personal goals, enhancement of positive position and power, successful implementation of organizational policies especially during the time of change in procedures and processes (Kane-Frieder, Hochwarter, Hampton, & Ferris, 2014; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007; Hochwarter, 2012; Eldor, 2017; Soares, 2018).

### ***2.3 Job Stress as Mediator***

According to Perrewé and Zellars (1999) negative sentiments outcome when persons observe incongruence with the transaction and observe that the interaction will spoil individuals' objectives. Job stress has been conceptualized by possessing different multidimensions i.e. feel the pressure of work, lack of resources to fulfill the responsibility, role ambiguity, excessive responsibility, tightness in the time frame to accomplish the organizational goals, and objectives (House et al., 1979, p. 141). NIOSH, (1999) defined job stress as exciting responses and damaging psychically and psychologically and this occurs when the requirements of the job do not be equal according to the necessities and skills of staff. Stress affected employees feel less provoked, secured, and creative than others which a cause of their lower association, as a consequence, organizations bear huge losses due to these psychological health problems of personals (Palmer & Stephen, 2004). Dollard et al. (1999) explained that many sources of job stress affect employees in different ways that further resulted in causes of damage physically and psychologically. Various studies suggested that an unenthusiastic shock on the emotional well-being and job performance of the workforce was because of job stress. Moreover, job stress becomes a cause of an increase in employee turnover and a decrease in satisfaction and retention as well (Ongori & Agolla, 2008). An individual feels stress when he/she feels indifference between perception and reality or whenever individuals face incompetence to meet the demands of the work task (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Earlier studies show that workplace politics predict job stress, a high level of workplace politics resulted into a high level of job stress (Goodman, Evans, & Carson, 2011; Swartz, &

Potgieter, 2017) and decrease employee performance (Ahmad, Hashmi, & Akhtar, 2016). Previous literature shows that job stress mediates the relationship of different variables in different organizational contexts, decrease positive outcomes and increase negative outcomes of individuals, i.e. between the relationship of organizational politics, POS, workload and employee health (Tyagi, & Dhar, 2014), between the relationship of organizational support and job demand resources (Al-Homayan, 2013), between the link of work-related dimensions and career commitment (Wickramasinghe, 2016), between the relationship of workload, work condition, and loan collection performance (Ayuvisda, & Made, 2019), between workload and intention to leave (Arifiani, Amalia, Naibaho, & Pitaloka, 2019) and between self-efficacy and work engagement (Pérez-Fuentes, et al., 2019).

#### **2.4 Theoretical Foundation and Hypothesis Development**

Person-environment (P-E) Fit theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) discusses that a person faces stress when he/she feel dissimilarity between the working environment and his/her perceptions and further effect well-being of individuals i.e. OCB, performance and positive outcomes. Additionally, Person-environment (P-E) Fit theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) stated that when there is a difference between reciprocal causation between individual and environment, and when dissimilarity founds between the objective of individual and subjective of environment. That situation becomes the cause of stress and affects the physical and psychological health of individuals which alternatively decreases performance. Moreover, Harrison (1978, 1985) states that when imbalance founds between supplies of the environment of the organization to the individual so that he/she meets the demands and imbalance founds between the capacity of receiving of supplies to meet the demands, then stress occurs. Based on the above discussion of above literature and theoretical foundation of Person-environment (P-E) Fit theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) we propose the following hypothesis and conceptual model:

**H1** *Workplace Politics negatively influence the Employee's Job Performance.*

**H2** *Job Stress mediates the relationship between Workplace Politics and Employee's Job Performance.*

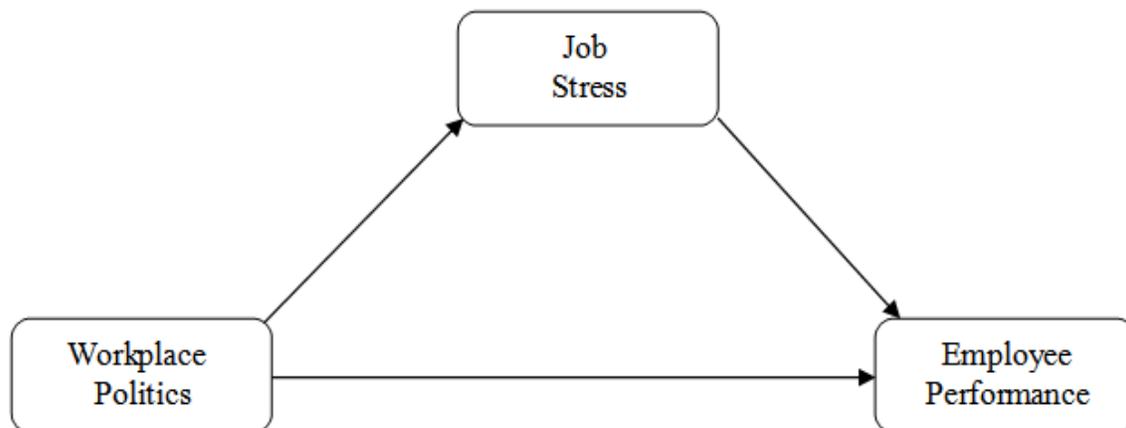


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Population and Sampling

The target population of undertaken study based on Administrative Staff and Faculty members of Degree Awarding Institutions (DAI's) of Shaheed Benazirabad, Sindh, Pakistan.

1. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University (SBBU)
2. Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering Science & Technology (QUEST)
3. Peoples Medical University & Hospital for Women (PUMHS)
4. University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences (UVAS)
5. Details of DAI's employees of administrative staff and faculty members are as under:

Table 1: Population & Sample Size

	Administrative Staff	Faculty Members	Total
Population	127	225	352
Sample Size	60	120	188

Data has been collected by using stratified random sampling and which further equally proportionate to strata. There were two sections of the questionnaire, the first portion of the questionnaire contains information about the importance of study and demographic details of participants of this study. The second section of the questionnaire contains items of each scale for the opinion of participants. Data of this study was collected from multiple resources to overcome the common method bias, for the independent variable (workplace politics) and mediating variable (job stress) data has been collected from administrative staff and faculty members, on the other side data for the dependent variable (employees' job performance) was collected from the respective immediate officer or supervisor of that administrative staff member or faculty member. A total of 250 questionnaires for this study were distributed among all selected DAI's to get an opinion from their administrative staff and faculty member, 195 questionnaires were received from participants of DAI's which were complete from all aspects. The majority of participants were male 150 (76.92%) and 45 (23.08%) were female.

#### 3.2 Measurement Tools

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and items were measured on a five-point Likert scale from SD to SA. Measurement scales for this study were adopted from previously published studies and literature.

**Workplace Politics** was measured on 08 items scale of Kacmar and Ferris (1991) has been adopted and responded were asked to represent their opinion, that how frequently they engaged in these attitudes narrated in workplace politics scale items.

**Job Stress** was analyzed on 08 items scale adopted from DASS of Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) and responded were asked to disclose their opinion about the statements narrated in the questionnaire.

**Employee's Job Performance** was measured on 14 items scale of Koopmans et al. (2014) and immediate officers or supervisors were asked to rate the performance of their respective subordinates keeping in mind their performance for the last one year.

## IV. RESULTS

### Reliability Test

When measuring a huge survey most of the time alpha reliabilities are over 0.70 painstaking great. Alpha reliability employed as a part of primary research around 0.70 or better for this case (Nunnally, 1978). The value of Cronbach's alpha for the current study for each variable is given below:

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Workplace Politics	.74	08
Job Stress	.76	08
Employees' Job Performance	.87	14

As shown in **Table 2**, the Cronbach's alpha for the 15-items of workplace politics is .74, which is good, for the 12-items of job stress is .76, yet very good and for the 07-items of since this is mediating variable, on the other hand, for the 07-items of employees job performance is .87 which is also perfect according to standards as narrated by (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3: Regression Analysis (Unstandardized Direct Path Coefficients)

Direct Paths	Coefficients	SE	T	P
WPP JS →	.565	.045	12.537	.000
WPP JP →	-.463	.076	-5.979	.000
JS JP →	-.331	.093	-3.563	.000

**Table 3**, indicates the regression results of this study, which shows that all relations between the variables are significant. According to the results demonstrated in table WPP have a positive and significant influence on JS where  $\beta = 0.565$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , also WPP have negative and significant influence on JP where  $\beta = -.463$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and JS have also negative but significant impact on JP where  $\beta = -.331$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Thus, it proves the first hypothesis of this study.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

An indirect effect of Workplace Politics on Employee's Job Performance through Job Stress			
Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
-.19	.05	-.29	-.09
<i>N= 195; "Bootstrap sample size=5000"; "LL=lower limit"; "UL=upper limit"; "CI=confidence"</i>			

**Table 4**, demonstrates the mediation analysis of this study, the indirect effect of the mediating variable is reported here. Mediation analysis was performed by using the bootstrapping method of (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2004) by using a 5000 bootstrap sampling method. Values of the indirect effect of JS (LLCI = -.29, ULCI = -.09) between the relationship of WPP and JP are significant, which shows that there is partial mediation. Thus, it also proves our second hypothesis.

**Robustness Test (Smart PLS-Algorithm Bootstrapping)**

The researchers also analyzed data through Smart-PLS to validate the results drawn for the current study.

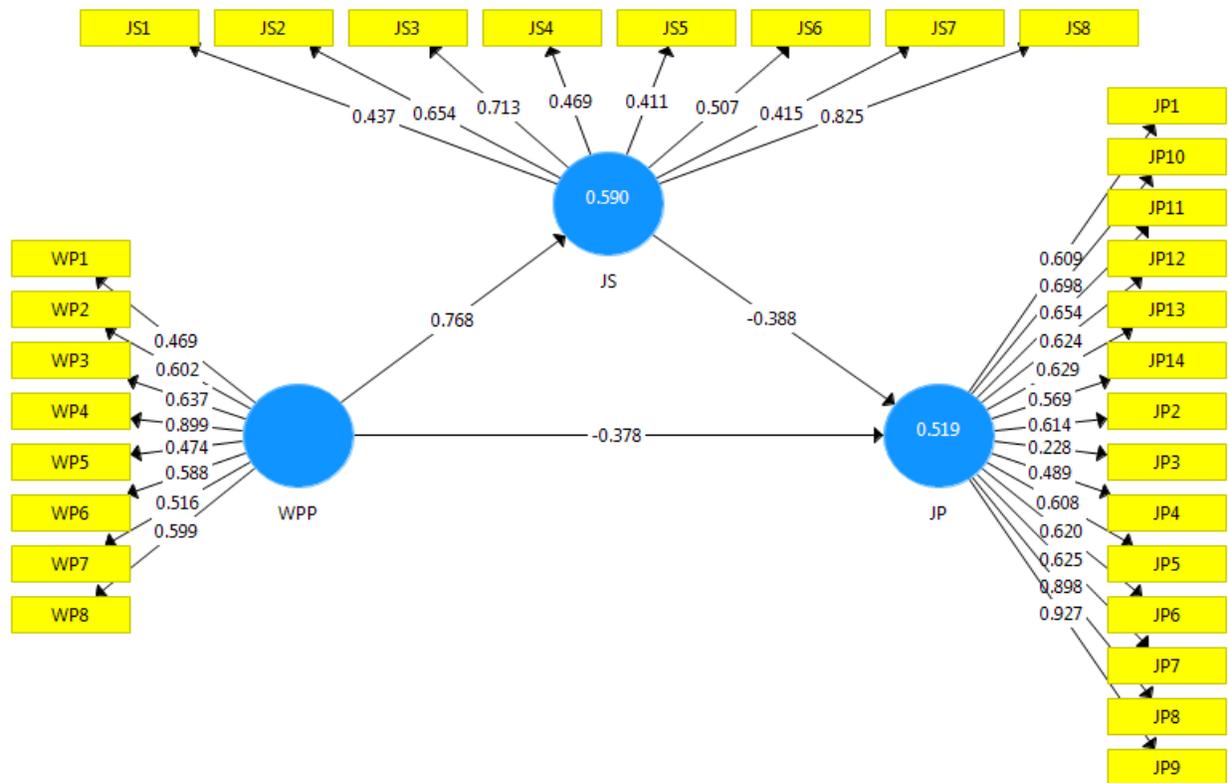


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model

Figure 2, shows the results of the mediation analysis which analyzed through the algorithm method of Smart-PLS. Values show that all relationships are significant where WPP positively influence the JS ( $\beta = .768$ ), and negatively influence the JP ( $\beta = -.378$ ), whereas JS negatively influence the JS ( $\beta = -.388$ ). These results also prove the results which we have done for mediation by using (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2004) bootstrapping method.

**V. FINDINGS**

The present study investigates the influence of workplace politics on employee’s job performance, we also investigate out the mediation effect of job stress between the relationship of workplace politics and employee’s job performance. The proposed hypothesis of this study also supported by the findings of this study. The first hypothesis of this study predicted that there is a negative effect of workplace politics on employees’ job performance. The results of this study prove that there is a negative effect of workplace politics on employees’ job performance (Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009; Rosen, & Hochwarter, 2014; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). As workplace politics enforces individuals for illegal power or influence on others i.e. management, managers, or peers, so that they can obtain the undue benefits, that further affect the individual’s performance that also leads to a negative effect on organizational performance and goals as well.

The second hypothesis of this study was about the prediction of the mediation effect of job stress on the relationship between workplace politics and employees' job stress. The findings of this study also prove that job stress partially mediates the relationship between workplace politics and employees' job performance (Tongchaiprasit, & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016; Khan, & Ali, 2016; Tziner, & Sharoni, 2014; Tyagi, & Dhar, 2014). The mediation results of this study also suggest that workplace politics becomes the cause of job stress, that ultimately affects the physical and especially psychological health of individuals, as a result, they feel unable to perform according to the goals and targets of the management.

Empirical evidence of this study reveals important theoretical and practical implications for DAI's of both the public and private sectors. The findings of this study reveal that perception of workplace politics high in individuals raise stress that further decrease performance. Because workplace politics decrease the cognitive abilities of individuals of decision making and this creates stress that ultimately affect individuals and organizations as well. Due to workplace politics, individuals pay the cost in the form of psychological stress, and organizations pay the cost in the form of financial loss due to high turnover or on replacement of employees.

### ***5.1 Theoretical and Empirical Implications***

The results of this study deliver new intuition by explaining the mechanism of job stress that how workplace politics indirectly affect the job performance of individuals. Our findings of this study also explain that whenever individuals face difficulty obtaining illegal or unlawful power to influence others then they feel stress that ultimately decreases the positive outcomes i.e. employee job performance. The findings of this study also add knowledge and contributed to the Person-environment (P-E) theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) that the mechanism of job stress decreases performance with workplace politics. Inline with Person-environment (P-E) theory (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Caplan & Harrison, 1993) which explains that dissimilarity of perception and realities arouse stress because workplace politics gives support to the inner of individuals to get unjustified benefits and in case of failure they suffer from loss of psychological strength that decreases performance.

Empirical evidence of the current study also shown a light on practical implications for DAI's for both public and private sectors. Our study argues that the management of DAI's provide training quarterly and biannually to their faculty and staff so that they got the awareness that how they can positively utilize workplace politics for their benefits and the benefits of organizations. Management of DAI's also provides awareness with a different mode of communication that how to minimize workplace politics and their negative effects i.e. job stress. Top management of both and public sector DAI's must arrange psychological test and interview at the time of recruitment during screening process so that they can get information about the psychological characteristics of the candidates which management can handle during the initial training of candidates before joining of professional duties. Management of DAI's also provides training and awareness to the faculty members and administrative staff that how they can handle and reduce their job stress by utilizing different coping strategies and mechanisms.

### ***5.2 Conclusion***

Many aspects determine workplace politics that occur in an organization. It is a self-serving action through which individuals fulfill their interests by harming others' benefits. Thus, it is quite tough to evaluate the levels of

workplace politics and their impacts on individuals and as well as on organization. This study explained the results of workplace politics on employee performance in public sector universities (DAI's) of Shaheed Benazirabad. Findings reveal that individuals or groups using power to influence other individuals to avail their demands become harmful employee performance. In the presence of many other factors, job stress is another factor that occurs due to the powerful influence of individuals over other staff members also results in a huge performance loss of an employee, and it affects the level of performance of the individuals directly or indirectly. The presence of workplace politics in the institutions provides insecurity, less commitment, and individuals perceive that the organization has done nothing for them and consequently their performance falls drastically. Scope for future studies can be importantly integrated for eliminating the influence of workplace politics and enhancement of employee performance especially in universities for both employees and organization itself. Furthermore, the examination of the influence of workplace politics on other life events and their performance can be carried out. Additionally, it is suggested that future research may be conducted to find out the mechanism that how individuals and organizations can overcome the harmful effect of workplace politics. Future research may also be conducted to find out that is there any influence of personality traits (dark triad) between the relationship of workplace politics, job stress, and employee performance.

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