

## **Factors affecting Perceived Organizational Politics among Elementary School Teachers in Lahore, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

This study was aimed at exploring the role of workforce diversity as a key indicator in shaping perception of organizational politics (POP). This study was carried out in elementary schools of Lahore, Pakistan. The study design was essentially cross sectional and for analysis quantitative technique was contended. A survey method was used as a research tool to gather primary data using snowball-sampling technique and a sample of 350 elementary level teachers from six different schools was examined. Findings of the study revealed that workforce diversity has a moderate (significant) positive impact on the perceived organizational politics of teachers at elementary level schools of Lahore, Pakistan. Additionally, dimensions of workforce diversity were investigated with organizational politics exclusively and discovered the significant relationship. Then, regression and multiple linear regression analysis were used to validate the extent of relationship between both variables and the dimensions of independent variable with dependent variable respectively. All of the dimensions of workforce diversity had shown a significant positive impact on perception of organizational politics (POPs), whereas demographics revealed no statistically significant impact on both variables. This research is conducted in a developing country like Pakistan that is a turn-up for the books and have added to the body of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Workforce diversity, organizational politics, inclusion, convergence, positive evaluations

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## Introduction

Workforce diversity in this competitive world has become an emerging concern because it governs a vital role on perceived organizational politics, which ultimately draws a blue print for the progress of any organization. Workforce diversity can be described in many ways based on age, race, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, educational background, marital status, work orientation and personal hobbies too. The simplest way to describe workforce diversity in schools is having a workforce with diverse skill sets, different educational and cultural backgrounds and distinctive set of personal values working together to achieve common goals in a school. Mostly, it is assumed that highly educated teachers in the relevant discipline will add value to the students' academic achievement. However, one of the most important roles of teachers is to manage student's emotional wellbeing at the elementary level schools. According to Kozleski and Proffit (2020), It is observed that most of the time the notion of hiring teachers with emotional intelligence and ability to handle the diversity of students is overlooked. Which bring forth undesirable consequences at elementary school level students.

It is quite difficult to express diversity in limited words because it is a broader term and the characteristics keep on changing. Sometimes difference in ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation determine the identity but sometimes class, family or experiences are the determinants (La Noue, 2018). In simple words, diversity includes different dimensions dealing with preferences, backgrounds, skills and many other factors (Ajeigbe, 2019). Kundu and Mor (2017) stated that diversity encapsulates not only the differences an individual possesses but also their perception about others. It means having different orientation about surroundings, workplace and colleagues also comes under diversity. According to Kerby and Burns (2012), a diverse workforce is an amalgam of creativity, innovation and productivity because it incorporates people from different backgrounds and having different experiences.

The parallel reality of workforce diversity is perceived organizational politics. The notion of organizational politics entails any activity of employees in the organizational setups which facilitates their individual goals over organizational collective welfare (Aidoo & Ama, 2018) . Employees would not hesitate to use even wrong means to gain more power in the organizational decision making. Illegal activities related to self-interests which can put an organization or members in a danger zone can emerge due to politics in the organizational environment (Rosen, Chang, Johnson, & Levy, 2009). It is not difficult to comprehend that when employees with diverse skill sets as well personalities interact, they have different influence in organizational decision making leading to important consequences. Those playing a vital role in the decision

making will be considered by peers privileged and this can leave a feeling of jealousy among others inducing gossips. This growing feeling of being insignificant among employees leads to perceived organizational politics and most of the employees start finding ways to become important in organizations by using different means.

Workforce diversity and organizational politics are of paramount importance as they closely work together in every organization including schools. According to Silvester, (2008) an organization contains workers who share different values, beliefs, standards and behaviors. These diversified people with these variations understand occurrences and activities in different ways and then, contribute to informal politics. Previous studies have set a ground for this emerging subject as workforce diversity provides an atmosphere of diverse interests to perceive organizational politics for its formulation which later on reflects constructive or destructive results on organizational development according to effective or ineffective diversity handling. Above discussion has developed a connection between unavoidable workforce diversity and its impact on organization politics leading us to believe that the outcomes of workforce diversity can fall between negative and positive extremes.

### **Problem Statement**

Workplace environment including schools is in a continuous flux and it poses challenges on the teachers' behaviors. One of the challenging aspects in the schools is to manage workforce diversity during Covid-19. Teachers' want inclusion in decision making, more understanding, convergence of their ideas and positive evaluations. Like any other organization, school teachers also want to have their say in the decision making, being understood by their school heads, and feel supported in their efforts to improve the educational standards of school. However, one of the biggest realities of workplace including schools is organizational politics, which dampen the teacher's motivation to contribute wholeheartedly. The current research will look into the following problem:

“Does workforce diversity effect perception of organizational politics among teachers’ at elementary schools in educational sector of Lahore, Pakistan.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research finding will make it intelligible that how workforce diversity plays and molds organizational politics to avoid possible disadvantages and increase possible chances of gaining advantages and achieving goals in elementary schools. Study findings will help better understand that how workforce diversity and organizational politics together can affect school teachers 'and ultimately children mental health and character building which is compulsory for future growth.

## Literature Review

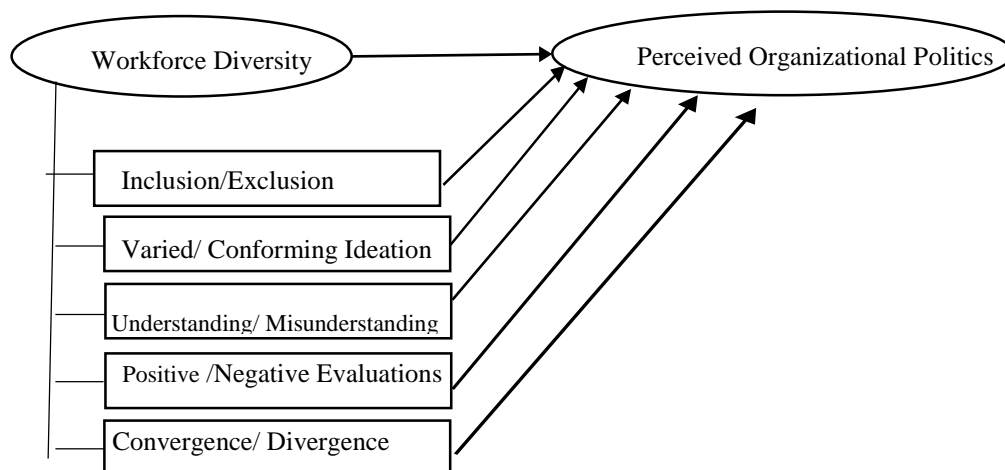
Kundu and Mor (2017) stated that differences in people's behavior is based on diversity and it is the altercating player behind academic, political and legal controversies (Gray, 2016). The characteristics which a diversified workers group is actually indicating variation in people regarding, age, sexual inclination, ethnicity, brought up, gender, abilities and many other factors (Chin, 2010). In this, way both overt and covert differences cast an impact on workers and on their changing interests. This ultimately provide an open invitation to politics in any firm (Aidoo & Ama, 2018). Now, it can be deduced from prior researches that values differ from one individual to another and these differentiating values give rise to organizational politics. Political understanding and behavior varies from one context to other. In one culture, it is different and in other culture, depending on factors related to work and situation, it changes. That is why; pointing out the fundamental variables related with political perception is hard in different cultural contexts (Adnan Riaz, 2013). Shea-Van Fossen (2010) highlighted cultural circumstances of employees' can also generate organizational politics.

Khalid and Ishaq (2015) has brought this fact that political behavior and strategies are present in every organization, which prominently affect performance of employees at the workplace when they perceived it. Politics arise naturally due to workforce diversity and the differences in perception, knowledge, views, skills etc. among employees. Yang (2016) deduced from expectancy theory that employees are not certain that their efforts will be acknowledged (i.e., expectancy), accomplishments will be rewarded (i.e., instrumentality) or recompense will be desirable (i.e., valence) in a highly political work place. Employees confronting unjust behaviors in organization are more prone to perceive organizational politics and adopt political tactics to thrive in their organizations. Ferris and Kacmar (1992) supported this fact in their second study, who figured out a negative link between supervisor relationships, work group cohesion and promotion opportunity with perceived organizational politics. According to Raiz (2013), employees commonly believe that supervisors are biased in promoting them regardless of their good performance. However, organizations have some moral values and principles through which they can access every decision, which can save it from deleterious consequences and unfair handlings (Freeman, Martin, & Parmar, 2007). It is a common desire of employees that the workplace should be fair and heads should observe equality (Yang, 2016). Therefore, to make employees contented with their job and organizations to be successful, head should opt all means to create a balanced environment by reducing politics in an organization.

Shahzad and Malik (2019) emphasized to promote equity and fairness to manage. Legal discrimination can never suffice in maintaining a balance, which includes males,

females, old, young or physically crippled people in some cases. Some people really face hard time in sketching a line between discrimination and prejudice. In reality, former is a behavior and later is an attitude. Attitude provides a basis for behaviors, which means negative attitude results in negative responses (Bozhko, 2014). It signifies the importance of constructive behaviors at the workplace to bring the desired outcomes. Furthermore, a three-dimension framework for managing school teacher's diversity has been suggested by Carver-Thomas (2018). it entails (a) creating roadmaps for teachers along their career; (b)formulating employment policies and cultivating newly hired teachers with ease and (c) maintaining conducive work environment for teaching staff by dynamic leaders. This framework is very comprehensive for school teachers in terms of keeping them motivated along with their jobs while taking care of their career path and addressing any grievances in their daily routine.

### Research Methodology



*Figure 1: Conceptual Model of WFD and OP*

Workforce diversity is the independent variable here and it has five dimensions, which are described in figure 1. Moreover, the dependent variable is perceived organizational politics. The above figure 1. proposes a direct relationship between workforce diversity and perceived organizational politics. This study has attempted to validate the conceptual model in the local context. The current study adopted a quantitative technique and is descriptive by nature. The data collection tool was a questionnaire survey and it comprised of forty-four (44) closed ended items. A likert scale for each question was used with five options as strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The construct of workforce diversity was measured by a

standardized instrument developed by Linda Larkey (1996) which was adapted for the current research and a standardized instrument for organizational politics developed by Ferris and Kacmar (1992) was adapted too. The population comprised of all elementary level schools of Lahore, Pakistan. However, keeping in view the time constraint for the current study a sample of six schools was selected. About 450 questionnaires were circulated among the elementary school teachers in the selected schools and 350 were found completed in all respects to be used for the further analysis. After data collection, data was checked for its reliability and normality. After ensuring normality Pearson correlation was carried out to determine the direction, significance and strength of the relationship between variables under investigation.

### Data Analysis

Table 1

#### *Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.83	44

A value of 0.83 suggests that instrument is very reliable.

### *Hypothesis 1*

**H1:** There exists a relationship between workforce diversity and organizational politics.

Table 2

#### *Correlation Analysis of Workforce Diversity and Organizational Politics*

		WFDC	OPC
Workforce Diversity	Pearson Correlation	1	.780
	Sig(2- tailed)		.000
	N	350	350
Organizational Politics	Pearson Correlation	.780	1
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000	
	N	350	350

As shown in this table no 2, the value of "Pearson Correlation" is 0.780 at a significance level is .000 indicating there exists a strong positive relationship between workforce variety and organizational politics. Hence, H1 is accepted. Moreover, the magnitude of 78% of correlation between two variables specify the significance of the study. It serves as a guideline for the fellow scholars and practitioners on how to manage politics in the organizations.

Table 3  
*Correlation Analysis of Dimensions of Workforce Diversity and Organizational Politics*

		Inclusion / Exclusion	Conforming / Varied Ideation	Understanding / Misunderstanding	Positive / Negative / Evaluation	Convergence / Divergence	Perceived Organizational Politics
Inclusion / Exclusion	Pearson Correlation	1	.362**	.383**	.374**	.400**	.520**
	Sig(2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
Conforming / Varied Ideation	Pearson Correlation	.362**	1	.468**	.366**	.367**	.590**
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
Understandi ng/ Misundersta nding	Pearson Correlation	.383**	.468**	1	.513**	.255**	.571**
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
Positive / Negative Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.374**	.366**	.513**	1	.308**	.530**
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
Convergence / Divergence	Pearson Correlation	.400**	.367**	.255**	.308**	1	.480**
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
Perceived Organization al Politics	Pearson Correlation	.520**	.590**	.571**	.530**	.480**	1
	Sig(2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 represents sample size with N, which is 350 for all hypothesis, and it highlights the existence of statistically significant correspondence between dimensions of employee's diversity and organizational politics at  $P < .000$  level of significance, which is less than 0.1 that depicts the significance.

**H2:** Inclusion/ exclusion and organizational politics are related.

Relationship with respect to direction and strength is shown by the Pearson correlation value for organizational politics and inclusion/exclusion dimension, which is 0.520, illustrates a moderate positive linear relationship in them. Consequently, H2 is accepted.

**H3:** Conforming ideation and organizational politics are related.

Second dimension i.e. varied/confronting ideation, has Pearson value of 0.590, which points out strong positive linear relationship between them. So, H3 is accepted.

**H4:** Understanding/ misunderstanding and organizational politics are related.

There is also a strong positive linear relationship between third dimension i.e. understanding/ and H4 is accepted.

**H5:** Positive/ Negative evaluation and organizational politics are related.

Pearson's value 0.530 is for fourth dimension i.e. positive/negative evaluations which points out moderate positive linear relationship between them. Resultantly, H5 is accepted.

**H6:** Convergence/ divergence and organizational politics are related.

Moderate positive association exists for convergence/ divergence and organizational politics has a magnitude of 0.480 at  $P < 0.000$ . Consequently, H6 is accepted.

This section examines the regression, which is the amount of variation caused in dependent variable due to independent variable.

### **Workforce Diversity and Organizational Politics**

**H7:** Workforce diversity is positively associated with organizational politics.



Table 4

*Regression analysis of workforce diversity and organizational politics*

		Sig
R Square	.529	.000
Durbin-Watson	1.828	
F-Change	334.767	.000
Unstandardized Coefficients B	.663	.000

Based on table 4 we can safely interpret that 52.9% change in organizational politics is caused by workforce diversity, which is fairly a significant contribution. Durbin-Watson value is 1.828, which points out that data is not auto correlated and H7 is accepted.

Table 5

*Multiple Linear Regression of WFD and OP*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.168	.126		9.250	.000
Inclusion/Exclusion	.132	.03	.180	3.869	0.00
Varied/ Conforming	.162	.03	.252	5.292	.000
Ideation	.152	.02	.260	5.195	.000
Understanding/ Misunderstanding	.092	.02	.154	3.198	.002
Positive/ Negative Evaluations	.118	.03	.178	3.934	.000
Convergence/ Divergence					

*Dependent Variable:* Organizational Politics *Predictors:* (Constant), Inclusion/exclusion, Varied/ conforming ideation, Understanding/ Misunderstanding, Positive /negative evaluations, Convergence/ divergence

The level of significance is less than 0.5 for all dimensions and 0.132 is the value of unstandardized coefficient B for “Inclusion/ Exclusion” that means 0.132 units increase in organizational politics, pointing out a positive relationship between two variables. 0.162 is the value of unstandardized coefficient B for “Varied/Conformation Ideation” It indicates that 1unit increase in “Varied/Conformation Ideation” lead to 0.162 units increase in organizational politics, pointing out a positive relationship between two

variables. 0.152 is the value of unstandardized coefficient B for “Understanding/Misunderstanding”. It indicates that 1 unit increase in “Understanding/Misunderstanding” leads to 0.152 units increase in organizational politics, pointing out a positive relationship between two variables. 0.092 is the value of unstandardized coefficient B for “Positive/ Negative Evaluation”. It indicates that 1 unit increase in “Positive/ Negative Evaluation” lead to 0.092 units increase in organizational politics, pointing out a positive relationship between two variables. 0.118 is the value of unstandardized coefficient B for “Convergence/Divergence”. It indicates that 1 unit increase in “Convergence/Divergence” lead to 0.118 units increase in organizational politics, pointing out a positive relationship between two variables.

### **Conclusion**

This study explores elementary school teacher’s perspective pertaining to the impact of workforce diversity on organizational politics in schools. The rationale behind is that presence of diversity in elementary level teachers brings diversity in beliefs, value and backgrounds and so, biased behavior of colleagues as well as heads instill a feeling of being discriminated and are mostly misunderstood because of the differences they possess. They feel being discriminated and do politics in order to converge all attention on them. Pros and cons of diversity are undeniable. On one hand, it brings different and unique minds, personalities and ideas at one place. It is the positive side of diversity, which stands in support to the study of Magras (2018) that benefits depend on the extent to which environment of organization is inclusive. If employees can fully participate in terms of talent, skills and ideas to bring success then, environment is inclusive. It is hard to achieve but once attained can result into creativity and innovation through different skills, experiences and talents. On the other hand, it also brings politics, which is later on proved by test results and coincides with this research that organizational gain through diversity depends on a firm’s management techniques and political nature of diversity as it provides the foundation of conflicts and informal politics (Ajeigbe, 2019). Moreover, Job satisfaction is an important aspect of employees’ life, which can drop significantly due to organizational politics (Ingsih et al. 2020).

The study further revealed that the principals of public and private sector schools do not possess the requisite skills for diversity management in the local context of Lahore, Pakistan. Moreover, this situation urges that new effective methods should be introduced to handle workforce diversity to substitute old techniques to produce a positive effect in the local school environment. Employees want to have say in decision making without discrimination but when opposite to that occur the seed of organizational politics not only spurts but also grows. Best way to avoid this feeling of disparity is to create a balance between every employee from different background and by providing

equal opportunities to everyone. Incentives and rewards for their efforts maintain their morale high. This way of proper diversity management can lead to positive organizational politics and hence, add value to the organization. This study focuses on public and private schools so principals should take the responsibility of creating a balanced and healthy working environment where all teachers' can fully exercise their potential especially elementary level teachers' as they play a pivotal role in developing the initial and essential parts of children's personality. Moreover, it is evident that teachers indulged in politics cannot focus on their job of educating students properly, which destroys the raw and unpolished minds of children. Head of the schools can take few important measures to make teachers feel inclusive, which includes rotating roles of teachers during meetings, letting teachers voice their grievances, encouraging their innovative ideas and being transparent while awarding them any incentive of recognition. These measures will reduce the perceived organizational politics among teachers. Elementary school teaching plays a vital role in a child's character building and infuses confidence among them. Elementary teachers can either make or break children personality. Therefore, Elementary level teaching is of paramount significance for students, teachers and heads. This research can provide better understanding of politics and its potential outcomes and help administration, teachers and heads to avoid negativity and to make better learning environment for students. Hence, this study contributes to the pool of knowledge in elementary level teaching.

### **Research Limitations**

This research was possible by gathering data from elementary level teachers of some private and public schools of Lahore but reluctance and biasness shown by teachers in fulfilling the questionnaires have been a hurdle in proving the reliability and generalizability of its results. Only six schools of Lahore are assessed for data sample but for better results more number of institutes should have been studied.

Data sample only encapsulates schools of Lahore but removal of geographical limits can increase its efficiency. The snowball sampling technique had its own limitations.

### **Recommendations and Future Implications**

Large number of respondents can be consulted for further research. Insignificant association between demographics and both variables (workforce diversity and organizational politics) is highlighted by statistical analysis and the tests employed. Future research can dive into finding the rationale behind this trivial relationship through qualitative study.

Moreover, a longitudinal research can be ensued by fellow scholars in this context. Multiple techniques of studying can be employed for deeper understanding of this phenomenon. In addition to, researchers can upgrade the level of study by making it comparative one by including high-level school-teachers' college and university teachers working at different public and private level. Furthermore, colleges, health centers, universities, law firms, civil service agencies and WAPDA can be other targeted areas for future research.

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