

# Understanding the Relationship between Organizational Politics and Leadership Styles

Ahmad Bemisal Durrani

(M.Phil. Scholar)

National College of Business Administration & Economics, Multan Campus, Pakistan

---

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between perceived organizational politics and its relationship with leadership styles (Transformational & Transactional) in public sector organizations. The most effective leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used for the purpose of data collection. The questions were about superior's styles of leadership and five point item scale was used to measure organizational politics. The permission was taken and the data was collected with high discretion. The sampling technique used was "Convenient Sampling" in two local government public Universities. The data was analyzed in SPSS v 20, and mean, correlation and standard deviation tests were applied. The research gave the two types of finding, one with transformational leadership style and the other with transactional leadership style. The results showed the positive relation of organizational politics with transactional leadership and negative relation with transformational leadership. Other techniques can also be used like interviews and observational methods but they are time consuming. We can also increase the sample size and add the variable of Performance. It would be helpful for manager to understand that which leadership style supports more the different political situations. The results are specifically based on public sector universities which give the clear result of relationship between perceived organizational politics and leadership styles.

**Keywords:** Organizational politics, Leadership Styles, Transformational Leaders, Transactional leaders

---

## I. Introduction

Leadership is known to have a major stimulus on the performance of Organizations, managers and employees [1]. Many theorists tried to define leadership classes like democratic, autocratic, and to relate them with numerous pieces of organizational outcomes [2; 3]. Mainly the scholars have touched two foremost and most vital leadership styles: transactional and transformational [4; 5]. These theories advocate that transformational leadership has a stouter optimistic effect on employee work behavior, environment, and eventually affects their work performance in contrast to transactional leadership. Various studies have lately pointed to organizational politics as an imperative originator of employees' performance [6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14]. Numerous studies have depended on the definition of organizational politics as behavior deliberately designed to exploit self-interests and therefore in encounter with the mutual organizational goals [15]. That is why this standpoint provides negative judgment for many organizations members and also several studies have related organizational politics to the theory of equity, fairness and justice [9; 16; 17]. Some of the research explains perceived politics in organizations with the impression of control and stimulus too guided to accomplish the best [18; 19]. This study intends by offering the test of challenging model for the relationship between leadership, and perceived organizational politics.

## II. Background Study

### Leadership:

House & Aditya [20] delivered a historic analysis on different leadership studies and theories. According to them, two approaches have subjugated leadership literature. So, the first approach has highlighted the leader's behavioral characters, and the other one is about different leadership styles. They based the words of House [21 p. 413] to express their definition who suggested that leadership is behavior "that gives drive, meaning, and direction to collective activities by uttering a shared vision that calls to ideological morals, drives, and self-perceptions of followers." By adding more, he proposed that such behavior causes amplified awareness of organizational values, struggle, and the self-interest for mutual benefits.

Nowadays, almost every study on organizational leadership starts with the idea that the capability to stimulate people to accomplish tasks in a specific time with the help of motivational approaches instead of Control or supremacy [22; 23]. This definition gives subordinate freedom to perform task of one's own choice and helps them largely to reject the use of authority, force, or powerful actions used by managers, who are deliberated "leaders". Such explanations also provide obvious division between leadership and coercive procedures. However, it connects leadership with added informal influence, control and reduced formal authority, which embrace the political environment in organizations. There happens a big vagueness when

individuals perform out of obedience to power; it is very uncertain that whether they are acting of their own will or punishment fear by their managers [24]. Therefore, present theories on leadership pay more focus on transformational leadership than other type of leadership [1].

Never the less, modern theory of leadership still emphasis on transformational leadership and transactional leadership, as essentials in the field. Burns [4] was the pioneer to announce these concepts, later Bass and Avolio made development to comprehend the “full range model of leadership” [5; 25; 26]. Burns [4] called transactional an influence transactional leadership, i.e. That the employees will respect leader’s will as they intend to believe such actions are beneficial. The second style is an emotive anticipation, and it is called transformational or charismatic leadership by Burns. This style represents the bond of the leader to his subordinates. This style opposes the manipulating relationship of leader on employee, and drives them to achieve challenging goals. A transformational leader charges the hopes of his subordinates, transforms their beliefs and values positively, and elevates them Maslow’s need hierarchy. Burns [4] says that the transformation procedure stands on the base of hierarchy of needs. That is why the transformational leadership is the outcome of the leader’s charisma, belief, persuasive vision.

There were eight types of leadership behavioral styles proposed by Avolio and Bass [25] which enhanced our knowledge about leadership. They conducted an open ended questionnaire research by including 78 managers regarding the most elegant characters of leader. This study was based on Bass’s [5] original model named “The Full Range of Leadership Model”.

This model includes three leadership styles:

- Transformational Leadership
- Transactional Leadership
- Laissez-Faire Leadership

These three styles, works in a sequence according to leader’s action and effectiveness requirement. Transformational leadership is the most effective style in this model after that transactional then come laissez-faire. We can find every style in every leader which is the basic theme of this model. Researcher experimented, this assumption and found transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire [27].

### **Organizational politics:**

A great pool of information has been gathered recently about perception of organizational politics and its bridge with organizational performance. Usually studies gave their attention to employee’s perceptions of organizational politics (POP), which according to Ferris et al. [15] “Behavior decisively predicted maximizing self-interests and so controverting the communal organizational goals or the individual’s curiosity”. Block [28 p. 5] articulates, organizational politics is ultimately a negative thing and claimed that “If I stated you, that you were a very political person; you would take it either as an offense or at best as assorted blessing”. Researchers, who advanced these concepts, resulted that politics in work is alleged by employees as a self-serving behavior to take advantages and to accomplish targets on the cost of others and sometimes conflicting the interest of whole organization e.g. [29; 30; 31; 32; 33; 34; 9; 17]. This behavior was habitually allied with manipulation, slander, subversive ness, and other illicit ways of misusing control to attain others objectives [18].

According to Ferris et al [15] perceived organizational politics is worthy indicator of organizational politics. Another study [35; 36] have used the theory of procedural justice to argue that organizational politics is related to the leader-member exchange relationships as well as to the efficiency of human resource systems and to decision-making processes. Grand perceptions of organizational politics caused by the absence of minimal justice and fairness that is why loaded organizational performance. Lewin’s [37] proposals gave the base to all the studies that people do not react to reality itself instead they do respond to their perceptions of reality. Similarly, politics in organizations that how people see it instead of reality. Studies proposed that formal and informal performance of work can also be connected through perception of justice, fair and politics [38; 33]. Many studies repeated these ideas broadly [39; 35; 9; 40; 17].

### **III. Research Model**

The model nominated as figure 1 basically describing the links between leadership styles & politics in organizations. House & Aditya [20] Ammeter et al. [41], Actually put base of this idea which helped to construct a political theory of leadership in organizations. This model helps us to understand the connections between leadership styles and organizational politics. The model is standing on the pillars of few theories like the expectation theory [42], the leader-member exchange theory [1; 43] and the social-exchange theory [44].

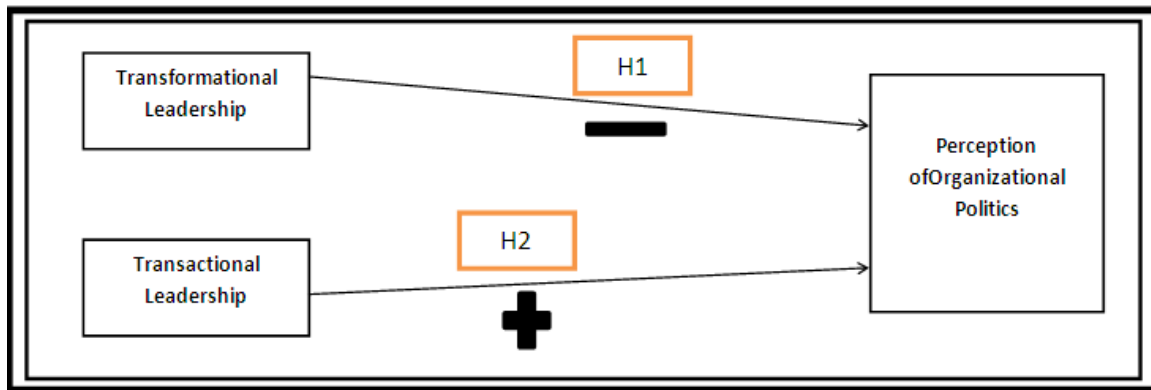


Figure 1: Research Model Design

These theories suggest that it is the duty of leaders to build an organizational environment which is communal, reasonable, and also complete the potentials and essentials of the individuals and the management, as well as the entire organization. Leaders and members are requiring an equal relationship which is healthy for the advancement of organization. It is possible that the organizational politics levels and positively influence performance can have a reduction effect by enrichment of fair social exchange relationship.

Transformational and Transactional leadership both have different types of associations with the perceptions of organizational politics. The transformational managers have the tendency to control the politics in organization through their extraordinary qualities and characters [5]. Transformational style energizes the ethics and helps to share optimistic vibes by lowering down the feelings of dependency [16]. That is why the transformational style helps to build an affirmative organizational environment and reduces the perception of organizational politics. So the first hypothesis will be:

**H1.** Transformational leadership has a negative association with Perceived politics of Organization.

Transactional leadership, on the other side appears to a powerful politics of organizational, and has the qualities of motivating employees by offering different rewards and uses the cooperation techniques which are according to organization's political climate. In support of this argument, Pillai et al. [45] found a positive relationship between transactional and transformational leadership on one hand and expressions of fairness and justice on the other. Given that organizational politics is strongly related to fairness and justice in the workplace, one may suggest that leadership style is also related to organizational politics. However, in light of Vigoda-Gadot [24] research, it is suggested that transactional leadership has a positive link with the perception of organizational politics. So the second hypothesis is:

**H2.** Transactional leadership is positively associated to with Perceived politics of Organization.

#### IV. Methodology

##### Sample, Procedure and Measures

This study is based on a survey of two government public universities i.e. Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan ([www.bzu.edu.pk](http://www.bzu.edu.pk)) and University of Education ([www.ue.edu.pk](http://www.ue.edu.pk)), Multan Campus, Pakistan. Bahauddin Zakariya University contains more than 60 departments and approximately 500 faculty members including visiting members. In University of Education, Multan campus, approximately 10 departments are working and near about 250 faculty members including visiting faculties. To collect the data convenient sampling was adopted and 300 questionnaires distributed, out these, 270 questionnaires were selected. Normally, there were 25 to 30 years old responded and 68% were holding the M.Phil./M.S. qualification. From the total, 76% were male and 79% were married. Most of them were working in the same organization for more than six years.

To measure transformational & transactional leadership styles Multifactor leadership Questionnaire form (Shot 5X) was used which was based on five point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4 (Never to Always) and the reliability was 0.80 %. This questionnaire was first built by Bass [5] and it was altered by the Bass and Avolio [26]. This questionnaire includes 32 items of which 12 questions for transactional leadership measurement and 20 to the measurement of transformational leadership. The reliability of transformational was 0.93 and for transactional was 0.85.

The perceived organizational politics was measured by six- item scale which was constructed by Hochwarter et al. [46]. The scale was based on five points Likert scale ranging 1 to 5 (Strongly disagree to strongly agree).The reliability of the scale was 0.86

### V. Results

Table 1 contains the values of mean, standard deviation (S.D), correlation. The Mean score of transformational leadership (M = 3.40) validate that respondents were almost agree about this variable. While, transactional leadership (M = 2.21) and organizational politics (M = 2.42) validate that respondents were almost disagree.

We also see a strong negative association between transactional and transformational leadership styles (r = -0.58; p < 0.01).

Transformational leadership is showing a negative relation with the perceptions of organizational politics (r = -0.61; p < 0.01). On the other hand, transactional leadership style, is showing positive relation between the perceptions of organizational politics (r = 0.50; p < 0.01).

**Table 1**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
Transactional Leadership	2.21	0.75		
Transformational Leadership	3.40	0.64	-0.58**	
Perception of Organizational Politics	2.42	0.74	1.50**	-0.61**

Notes: \* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01 are all two tail

### VI. Discussion

This study is a pleasant struggle to enhance the facts about leadership styles and perceived politics in organizations. The results of model helped us to understand the relationship between leadership styles and organizational politics. With examination of our research findings we came to understand that transformational leadership style has negative connection with perceptions of organizational politics and transactional leadership style has a positive association with the organizational politics. The table 1 results support these arguments. Therefore it is now a fact that leaders with transformational style have the qualities of pleasant environment, cooperative behavior which downsize the perceptions of politics in the organization. On the other hand, transactional leadership style has influencing characteristics enrich the political climate in the organization [45; 47].

### VII. Research Limitations & Implications

The study has some limitations like the sample size can be increased and can be used in corporate sector. The corporate sector carries much politics than other sectors. The second limitations was the external validity like many of the employees were newly employed or on visiting faculty, that is why to increase the external validity this research should be conducted in other sectors. If we see the methodology, we used convenient sampling with questionnaires. We can use different types of sampling i.e. cluster or stratified sampling and apply observations or personal interview methods.

### VIII. Conclusion

The findings of the study unveiled that politics in organizations have a negative association and positively related to transactional leadership. We also came to know, that there is a negative association between transformational and transactional leadership due to difference of characters. In light of this study, there may be a less political climate under the roof of transformational leadership which has an ultimate optimistic impact on overall organizational performance. And this performance can be negatively affected by transactional leadership, as it has positive relation with political environment in organization.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge my respected teachers, **Mr. Ali Asad (Lecturer, NCBA&E, Multan Campus)**, **Mr. Adeel Akhtar (Assistant Professor, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan)** and **Mr. Yaseen Jamal (Assistant Professor, Govt. College of Commerce, Multan)** whom knowledge, support and guidance enlightened and motivated me to accomplish this research paper.

## References

- [1]. Leader-member exchange as a mediator of relationship between transformational leadership and followers performance and organization citizenship behaviour. **Wang, H., Law, K.S., Hackett, R.D., Wang, D. and Chen, Z.X.** 3, 2005, *Academy of management journal*, Vol. 48, pp. 420-432.
- [2]. Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social cultures. **Lewin, K., Lippit, R. and White, R.K.** 1939, *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 10, pp. 271-99.
- [3]. **Blake, J.J. and Mouton, J.S.** *The Managerial Grid*. Houston, TX : Gulf Publications, 1964.
- [4]. **Burns, J.M.** *Leadership*. New York, NY : Harper & Row, 1978.
- [5]. **Bass, B.M.** *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*. New York, NY : Free Press, 1985.
- [6]. Organizational politics tactics and characteristics of its actors. **Allen, R.W., Madison, D.L., Porter, L.W., Renwick, P.A. and Mayes, B.T.** 1979, *California Management Review*, Vol. 22, pp. 78-83.
- [7]. The experience of workplace politics. **Gandz and Murray, V.V.** 1980, *Acadmy of Management Journal*, Vol. 23, pp. 273-51.
- [8]. Organizational politics: an exploration of managers' perceptions. **Madison, D.L., Allen, R.W., Porter, L.W., Renwick, P.A. and Mayes, B.T.** 1980, *Human Relations*, Vol. 33, pp. 79-100.
- [9]. Perceptions of organizational politics. **Ferris, G.R. and Kacmar, K.M.** 1992, *Journal of management*, Vol. 18, pp. 93-116.
- [10]. Perceptions of organizational politics: an investigation of antecedents and consequences. **Parker, C.P., Dipboye, R.L. and Jackson, S.L.** 1995, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 21, pp. 891-912.
- [11]. Organizational politics: the state of the field, links to related processes, and an agenda for future research. **Kacmar, K.M. and Baron, R.A.** 1999, *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, Vol. 17, pp. 1-39.
- [12]. Do politics perceptions relate to political behaviors? Tests of an implicit assumption and expanded model. **Valle, M. and Perrewe, P.L.** 2000, *Human Relations*, Vol. 53, pp. 359-86.
- [13]. A comparison of situational and dispositional predictors of perceptions of organizational politics. **O'Connor, W.E. and Morrison, T.G.** 2001, *The Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 135, pp. 301-12.
- [14]. "Perceptions of organizational politics: additional thoughts, reactions, and multi-level issues. **Adams, G.L., Ammeter, A.P., Treadway, D.C., Ferris, G.R., Hochwarter, W.A. and Kolodinsky, R.W.** 2002, *Research in Multi-Level Issues*, Vol. 1, pp. 287-94.
- [15]. **Ferris, G.R., Russ, G.S. and Fandt, P.M.** "Politics in organizations", in Giacalone, R.A. and Rosenfeld, P. (Eds), *Impression Management in the Organization*. s.l. : Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ., 1989, pp. 143-70.
- [16]. "Perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS): development and construct validation. **Kacmar, K.M. and Ferris, G.R.** 1991, *Educational & Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 51, pp. 193-205.
- [17]. **Vigoda-Gadot, E.** *Developments in Organizational Politics*. Cheltenham : Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003.
- [18]. Intraorganizational influence tactics: exploration in getting one's way. **Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S.M. and Wilkinson, I.** 440-52, 1980, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 65.
- [19]. **Pfeffer, J.** *Management with Power*. Boston, MA : Harvard Business School Press, 1992.
- [20]. The social scientific study of leadership: quo vadis? **House, R.J. and Aditya, R.N.** 1997, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 23, pp. 409-73.
- [21]. **House, R.J.** *Leadership in the twenty-first century*. [ed.] A. Howard. *The Changing Nature of Work*. San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass, 1995, pp. 411-50.
- [22]. Transformational leadership theory: using levels of analysis to determine boundary condition. **Yammarino, F.J. and Dubinsky, A.J.** 1994, *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 47, pp. 787-811.
- [23]. **Kotter, J.P.** *Leading Change*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard Business School Press, 1996.
- [24]. Leadership style, organizational politics, and employees performance An empirical examination of two competing models. **Vigoda-Gadot, Eran.** 5, 2007, *Emerald Group Publishing Limited*, Vol. 36, pp. 681-683.
- [25]. **Avolio, B.J. and Bass, B.M.** *The Full-Range of Leadership Development*. Binghamton, NY : Center for Leadership Studies, 1991.
- [26]. **Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J.** *Leadership and Research: Perspectives and*. [ed.] M.M. and Ammons, R. *Chemmers. Transformational leadership theory: a response to critiques*. Chemmers, M.M. and Ammons, R. Los Angeles, CA : California Academic Press, 1993, pp. 49-80.
- [27]. Transactional versus transformational leadership: an analysis of the MLQ. **Den Hertog, D.N., Van Muijen, J.J., and Koopman, P.L.** 1997, *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 70, pp. 19-34.
- [28]. **Block, P.** *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skill at Work*. San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass, 1988.
- [29]. Discriminating among organizational politics, justice, and support. **Andrews, M.C. and Kacmar, K.M.** 2001, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 22, pp. 347-66.
- [30]. The ethics of organizational politics. **Cavanagh, G.F., Moberg, D.J. and Velasquez, M.** 1981, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 6, pp. 363-74.
- [31]. **Cropanzano, R.S. and Kacmar, K.M.** *Organizational Politics, Justice, and Support: Managing The Social Climate of the Workplace*. Westport, CT : Quorum Books, 1995.
- [32]. Multi-level theorizing about perceptions of organizational politics. **Dipboye, R.L. and Foster, J.B.** 2002, *Research in Multi-Level Issues*, Vol. 1, pp. 255-70.
- [33]. Perceived political climate and job attitudes. **Drory, A.** 1993, *Organizational Studies*, Vol. 14, pp. 59-71.
- [34]. The dimensions of politics perceptions and their organizational and individual predictors. **Fedor, D.B., Ferris, G.R., Harrell-Cook, G. and Russ, G.S.** 1998, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 28, pp. 1760-97.
- [35]. Perceptions of organizational politics: prediction, stress-related implications, and. **Ferris, G.R., et al.** 1996 b, *Human Relations*, Vol. 49, pp. 233-66.
- [36]. **Folger, R., Konovsky, M.A. and Cropanzano, R.** A due process metaphor for performance appraisal. [ed.] L. and Staw, B. *Cummings. Research in Organizational Behavior*. Greenwich, CT : JAI Press, 1992, Vol. 14, pp. 129-77.
- [37]. **Lewin, K.** *Principles of Topological Psychology*. New York, NY : McGraw Hill, 1936.
- [38]. The relationship of organizational politics and support to work behaviors, attitudes, and stress. **Cropanzano, R., Howes, J.C., Grandey, A.A. and Toth, P.** 1997, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 18, pp. 159-80.
- [39]. Reactions of diverse groups to politics in the workplace. **Ferris, G.R., Frink, D.D., Bhawuk, D.P.S. and Zhou, J.** 1996 a, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 22, pp. 23-44.
- [40]. Stress-related aftermaths to workplace politics: the relationships among politics, job distress and aggressive behavior in organizations. **Vigoda, E.** 2002, *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 23, pp. 571-91.
- [41]. Toward a political theory of leadership. **Ammeter, A.P., Douglas, C., Gardner, W.L., Hochwarter, W.A. and Ferris, G.R.** 2002, *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 13, pp. 751-96.
- [42]. **Vroom, V.H.** *Work and Motivation*. New York, NY : Wiley, 1964.
- [43]. **Graen, G.B.** *Role making processes within complex organization*. [ed.] M.D. Dunnette. *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Chicago, IL : Rand-McNally, 1976, pp. 1201-45.
- [44]. **Blau, P.M.** *Power and Exchange in Social Life*. New York, NY : Wiley, 1964.

- [45]. Fairness perceptions and trust as mediators for transformational and transactional leadership: a two-sample study. **Pillai, R., Schriesheim, C.A. and Williams, E.S.** 1999, *Journal of Management*, Vol. 25, pp. 897-933.
- [46]. Perceived Organizational Support as a mediator of the relationship between politics perceptions and work outcomes. **Hochwarter, W.A., Kacmar, C., Perrewe, P.L., Johnson, D.** 3, 2003, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 63, pp. 438-456.
- [47]. Leadership and procedural justice climate as antecedents of unit-level organizational citizenship behavior. **Ehrhart, M.G.** 2004, *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 57, pp. 61-94.