

Examining The Role of Laissez-Faire Leadership in Organizational Politics: A Moderated Mediated Model

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Abstract

Many factors are thought to be a cause of organizational politics in any organization and in past research, it is empirically tested that leadership is one of those factors. Exploitative and despotic leadership causes politics in organizations but ethical leadership discourages it. However, the role of the laissez-faire leadership style in organizational politics is yet to be thoroughly investigated. This research aims to study the role of Laissez-Faire Leadership in Organizational Politics. Moreover, it also focuses on the mediating role played by Esprit De Corps and the moderating role of Employee GRIT upon the phenomenon of Organizational Politics resulting from Laissez-Faire Leadership on the top. Data was collected through a questionnaire survey from the employees of the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) a Law Enforcement Agency and a Public Sector Organization. Data analysis was done through SPSS and AMOS software. The study findings revealed that Laissez-Faire Leadership results in Organizational Politics and is positively related to it. These findings were found to be in conformity with the Conservation of Resources Theory. The results also confirmed the mediating role of Esprit De Corps in the above-said phenomenon, thus, supporting the Cognitive Evaluation Theory. It was indicated that Laissez-Faire Leadership has a negative relationship with Esprit De Corps and likewise, Esprit De Corps has a negative relationship with Organizational Politics. Moreover, it also confirmed that Employee GRIT does have a moderating effect, on the relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics mediated by Esprit De Corps and is negatively related. This finding corroborated what GRIT theory advocates. In the end, the implications, limitations of this study, and future directions have also been discussed.

Key Words: Organizational Politics, Laissez-Faire, Esprit De Corps, GRIT, Leadership, National Highways and Motorway Police

Introduction

The presence of some sort of politics, be it in the form of diplomacy, agitation, exploitation or even highlighting the genuine issues to the proper forum has been evidenced in the organizations (Bicer, 2020). Thus, it can be clearly seen that organizations have to face many problems in case politics is there. Politics exhibited on the part of a few employees, may result in the politicization of the entire work environment (Riaz et al., 2021). After realizing this fact of the existence or presence of politics in the organizations, what is of paramount importance is that we may look into the fact of what actually it is and what are the causes that result in the cropping up of this phenomenon (Eniola et al., 2015).

Organizational Politics means all those activities that are associated with the use of influence tactics to serve personal interests instead of the interest of the organization as a whole. Many factors affect Organizational Politics; however, the role of leadership is being emphasized here because its significance is more marked.

Leadership style matters a lot if the organizational environment is somehow turbulent. Then choice of leadership style gets even more complex in the politicized environment. In a politicized environment, it is necessary to go for and maintain such a leadership style that improves employee performance (Rathore et al., 2017). According to Kapoutsis and Thanos (2018), if politics is let to creep into the organizations, the whole system breaks down and the organization is torn apart if politics is not controlled. Again multiple factors lead to the creation of politics in organizations; however, the most important one is the type of leadership on the top (Kuipers & Wolbers, 2021). Among different types of leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership is the type that is believed to be providing for the environment, which leads to the cropping up of politics in the organization. This is so because, in such a style of leadership, there is the least interference from the leader, decision power and authority are devolved, and much space is provided for the course of action to be adopted by the lower-tier employees. So there would be grouping among the team members and each group would like to exploit the situation in one's favor (Iqbal et al., 2021). Laissez-faire style causes such an environment where politics penetrate the systems because in such situations there always arises role ambiguity and role conflict among team members which ultimately affects team spirit (Al-Malki & Juan, 2018). Such a scenario is bound to nourish the phenomenon of politics in the organization. Such a style of leadership, no doubt, has many advantages as well like giving a lot of space for innovation and creativity (Rassa & Emeagwali, 2020). However, such advantages might suit the private sector more but not the public sector of Pakistan that is already suffering from a lot of administrative, financial, and productivity-related issues. Therefore, this research shall study the relationship between these variables like Laissez-Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics in the public sector of Pakistan.

A lot of research has been done in the past regarding variables like leadership style and its connection with organizational performance in terms of different aspects associated there with (Jiménez, 2018). Likewise, Organizational Politics has also been studied in previous research in different capacities as an independent, dependent, and moderator variable in different situations. While observing the fact that to what extent, Laissez-Faire Leadership acts as an important factor in bringing about the element of politics within an organization, what would be the interest is to look for any other such factor that could mediate or moderate this phenomenon. Against this backdrop, the relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics with the mediating role of Esprit De Corps is an area that needs to be looked into in the context of organizations particularly the public sector of Pakistan. Such a style of leadership, no doubt, has many advantages as well like giving a lot of space for innovation and creativity (Rassa & Emeagwali, 2020). The Laissez-Faire style of leadership is less common in both public and private sectors. The autocratic style is prevalent in public-sector organizations while the democratic style is commonly found in private-sector organizations (Ejaz et al., 2022). Therefore, the scope of study concerning the interaction between these variables in both the public and private sectors of Pakistan exists. Here the focus of this study, with regard to the role played by Laissez-Faire Leadership in creating Organizational Politics, would be the public sector of Pakistan because the public sector is comparatively worst hit so far as the phenomenon of leadership style and organizational politics is concerned (Abbas & Yaqoob, 2009). Among the public sector, the role played by laissez-faire leadership style in any law enforcement agency gains much importance because the leadership style commonly found and most suitable is commanding style. In case if there is laissez-faire leadership style in any lea, there are more chances of politics to creep in the organization.

Finally, what is important to observe is that in such circumstances where an organization has the manifestations of being entrenched in Organizational Politics, what factor, particularly a psychological one, could act as a moderator to minimize the incidence of politics within the organization or mitigate the negative effects of the phenomenon of politics. Therefore, employee GRIT shall be studied here from this perspective. GRIT has been said to be a unique personality factor that could help increase employee performance and decrease work-related stress (Haist, 2021). Such work-related stress is indirectly associated with the politicized environment. Individuals, who possess higher GRIT, can maintain focus on activities over a longer period despite challenges, setbacks, and adversity (Duckworth et al., 2007). Likewise, in another research (Riaz et al., 2021), where optimism was studied as a moderator in an environment created because of Organizational Politics, it has been emphasized that other psychological reservoirs like GRIT can also be studied as a moderating factor to mitigate the negative effects of such environment. Therefore, in this backdrop, GRIT could be taken here as a moderator

to check to what extent it could help in moderating the incidence of politics in such a scenario and if can it mitigate the negative effects of the negative environment created because if Laissez-Faire Leadership leads to the creation of Organizational Politics.

Theory & Hypotheses Formulation

Organizational Politics

Politics is considered one of the important aspects of any society and has an important role in Public Service. In Organizational Politics, there are always efforts to increase self-interest to the maximum level notwithstanding the fact that means adopted are legal or otherwise. Mintzberg (1983) and Pfeffer (1992) defined Organizational Politics as a phenomenon where power relations and influential tactics are resorted to in the Workplace. If we examine the literature related to Organizational Politics, what we see is that research into Organizational Politics has been done in the past in terms of two categories; one area concerns the nature of actual political behavior, types of tactics and strategies, and consequences thereof. The other category pertains to the perceptions of politics in the work environment by individual employees, the antecedents of such perceptions, and the consequences thereof. During this study, our focus would be on the second category i.e. on perceptions of individual employees due to the leadership style as an antecedent to politics.

Researchers laid foundations of organizational politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Thereafter, efforts began in the late 1980s and early 1990s to develop and validate a reliable measure of perceptions of organizational politics. The initial un-dimensional POPS scale was developed by (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989). During the last two decades, outcomes of perceptions of Organizational Politics have been a common focus. Different factors that contribute to Organizational Politics may include job ambiguity, scarcity of resources, personality traits, uncertainty, and fairness. (Ali et al., 2020) Research work (Vigoda, 2000) suggests that the presence of Organizational Politics in a workplace deteriorates the working attitudes of employees in different ways. Organizational Politics always had a direct impact on the level of performance of employees (Rathore et al., 2017).

Organizational Politics influences the environment and efficiency of the organization in different ways. First of all, it has had a marked impact on appraisal systems. The performance systems of an organization are highly prone to the phenomenon of politics (Naseer & Ahmad, 2016). Research by (Aryee et al., 2004) highlights that the presence of organizational politics in the organization reduces the perception regarding the fairness of procedures in the eyes of the employees. If such perception is developed in the eyes of the employees of any organization, those are bound to get demotivated and lose trust in the management and the systems, Likewise, the impact of Organizational Politics on employee resilience and workplace incivility was studied by (Kumar et al., 2021) and it was found to be significant.

As far as this avenue, that this phenomenon of politics has both positive and negative aspects is concerned, there are arguments in literature both for and against it. There are two ways of viewing organizational politics: either as a symptom of social influence processes that benefit the organization or as a self-serving effect that goes against the organizational goals (Cacciattolo, 2015). This aspect, that Politics in an organization is not always detrimental, has been highlighted by (Ortuno-Ortín & Schultz, 2005) who further explained that it is the balance of power among individuals or groups which decides its impact. This seems logical that we cannot attribute any phenomenon to totally positive or negative altogether. Buchanan (2008) described the political phenomenon as ethical and declared it a necessary change for the overall efficiency of the organization.

The public sector in Pakistan is inefficient due to many reasons but the political phenomenon is one of the main reasons for this phenomenon. Haque (1998) declared that employment in the public sector on political grounds is one of the main factors. All over the globe, efforts are being carried out to improve the public sector. In this regard, focus on leadership is also being imparted. Leaders can become the source of politics or can otherwise control this phenomenon effectively. Vigoda and Cohen (2002) highlighted the research finding that there is a high intensity of perception of politics. Likewise, various types of research have been conducted concerning Organizational Politics in the public sector (Riaz, 2013).

Previous literature regarding Organizational Politics, as indicated above, shows that although this phenomenon has already been studied from different aspects detailed concepts and interlinked factors of Organizational Politics

have gained much importance in modern times. Previous research, no doubt, did cover many aspects like certain outcomes concerning Organizational Politics or the nature and characteristics of the relationship between the two. However, there exists a lot of room for research work so far as reasons, particularly leadership styles that lead to this phenomenon, are concerned. Furthermore, this phenomenon gets even more importance if any law enforcement agency is brought under discussion. This is so because, such type of leadership style is bound to impact the incidence of phenomenon of politics because generally commanding style of leadership is suitable and found in LEAs. Therefore, in this study where sample is taken from NHMP, a Law Enforcement Agency, is going to help in understanding the link between leadership style and organizational politics.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Leadership is a combination of specific character traits and skills that help leaders motivate and persuade others to perform certain tasks. They include enthusiasm, willingness to lead, honesty, self-confidence, and cognitive skills. (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016) Leadership may also be understood as activities supporting individual team members in achieving the assigned targets. Employees' professional satisfaction and success always depend upon leadership styles (Zareen et al., 2015). The question of engaging employees includes the analysis and characteristics of factors affecting the level of employee engagement (Drewniak et al., 2020). Reduced engagement, reduced emotional commitment, and mental stress may be caused by a downward shift of tasks or responsibilities that come under the domain of senior manager or leader (Einarsen et al., 2009). Failure on the part of the manager to take responsibility leads to reduced involvement on the part of employees. Reduced levels of engagement emotional commitment and stress may be caused by the style of leadership a manager adopts toward employees (Cooper et al., 2004). As per LMX theory, high levels of LMX are positively related to high levels of employee engagement. (Blomme et al., 2015). In laissez-faire leadership style, engagement and emotional commitment of leader with employees is reduced which increases the propensity of politics in the organization.

Robbins and Judge (2003) explained the Laissez-Faire style is that one in which the leader "Abdicates responsibilities, avoids making decisions". This is a very peculiar style of leadership where the leader is least bothered and concerned about what is going on down the ladder. In the literature concerning management, Laissez-Faire refers to a "hands-off, let things ride" approach (Northouse, 1999). Bass and Avolio (1994) describe Laissez-Faire leadership as "the absence of leadership" and "the avoidance of intervention.

Esprit De Corps

Esprit De Corps is basically "the selfless and enthusiastic devotion of the members of the group or to purposes of the group" (Friedrich, 1965). In the management literature, it has been defined as the sense of team spirit that pervades the organization where everyone works towards the common goal of serving customers (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1996) The term Esprit De Corps is found in the literature of both the Military science and that of organizational studies separately and differently. In Military literature, as per (Blaufarb, 1989) Esprit De Corps is an individual-level concept and covers aspects like enthusiasm, vigor, dedication, spirit, or devotion felt by an individual toward a cause or a goal. Moreover, team cohesion is defined as a group-level concept where bonding together of members in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other and towards the mission (Gross, 2018). The term, Esprit De Corps in the context of organizational studies, is seen as the fourteenth general principle of management outlined by (Henry, 1949) in his Book "General and Industrial Management". Henry Fayol highlighted the significance of team spirit amongst employees of the organization. In organizational literature, there exists an overlap between team cohesion and Esprit De Corps. Few studies take it to be part of the psychological climate of an organization. There is general agreement, however, that Esprit De Corps involves individuals' sense of pride and a sense of accomplishment in doing a job properly. Then, there is an agreement at this level as well that the construct binding the team together at group level is cohesion. The concept of Esprit De Corps is not only applicable in the military or public sector organizations rather is equally applicable in private market settings. Esprit De Corps was studied with market orientation (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) where it was proposed that Esprit De Corps is one of the factors that are consequences of market orientation, the other being organizational commitment (Naz et al., 2019; Schuler & Weber, 2005).

The unity of individuals in organizations, teams, and groups coupled with loyalty to the organization and team

spirit lead towards Esprit De Corps in an organization which is instrumental in achieving its goals (Watba & Farmer, 2006). This is the foundation of a strong organization. Until and unless employees have these two traits, one the Esprit De Corps and the other loyalty, the organization is not going to sustain or thrive (Stewart & Barrick, 2000). The true value of this trait is tested whenever there are tough circumstances faced by the organization. In such, situations, team spirit acts like a bond to hold employees together and plays a key role in keeping them motivated towards continuing to thrive despite the uncertain or tough circumstances (Narayanan et al., 2012).

GRIT

GRIT is comprised of two components: Passion and Perseverance. GRIT is perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Passion is the main and prime aspect of GRIT. Recent research defines work passion as “an individual’s emotional and persistent state of desire based on cognitive and affective work appraisal” (Phillips et al., 2017). This highlights the fact that a constant desire for activity results in an internal emotional attachment that gradually becomes stable and persistent (Hauer et al., 2021). Duckworth (2016) argued individuals who have higher GRIT develop and pursue long-term objectives that are associated with higher-level goals. Such goals drive the behavior of the employees. High-GRIT individuals possess traits like resilience, flexibility, and willingness to adapt which help them remain focused on purpose-driven goal accomplishment (Duckworth, 2016). Second component of GRIT is perseverance where there is sustained and enduring effort as a product of internal purpose-driven desires and not the external concerns like a fear of being reprimanded. So GRIT which is basically “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth et al., 2007) has a lot of relevance with the behavior and attitudes of employees in organizations (Mueller et al., 2017).

So far as GRIT is concerned, it is not confined to any one specific segment of the organization. It includes right from top leadership to middle managerial level and at lower level employees. Any member of the team of any organization, right from the top leader to worker or low-level employee of the organization, is supposed to have GRIT and can possess GRIT. However, in terms of GRIT in an organizational context, most focus is on the supervisory and employee level. Findings of the research by Widodo and Chandrawaty (2020) show that both employee and supervisor GRIT have neutralizing effects when operating in politically- fraught work settings. This is so because, in situations where politics has somehow crept into the organization, until and unless all employees including supervisors and low-level employees are held together at a common agenda of dealing with the situation, good results cannot be expected.

Laissez-Faire Leadership to Organizational Politics

Leadership is always a prerequisite to achieving the mission and vision of the organization (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Organizations have to face many problems like low productivity, high turnover of employees, and an uncongenial environment because of the lack of effective leadership. It is the leadership style that takes the employees along (Al Khajeh, 2018). In the politicized environment, it becomes imperative to look for such a leadership style that improves employee performance. The relationship between authoritative and Laissez-Faire leadership styles on the thriving of employees in the workplace along with the moderating role of personality traits has been studied by once legitimate demands of employees are not met, then the environment in the organization becomes uncongenial for progress and growth. Effective leaders who possess political skills have the ability to moderate and minimize the negative effects of the perceptions of Organizational Politics. Leadership gives all employees a sense of belonging.

In modern times, the role of a leader in an organization has become more significant. According to (Mintzberg, 2010) true leaders are those who engage others. The style of management has now changed. Leaders now need to be caring, engaging, and interacting. Only such a leader can bridge the gap between the management and employees and win the hearts of all. This approach serves the purpose of any organization more effectively than the leader that adopts a Laissez-Faire style. Perceptions about the politics in an organization matter a lot so far as the impact on the organization is concerned (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Baron, 1999). The leader has to take care of the fact that how employees perceive the status of fair play and justice in the organization (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010). By taking care of the perception of politics in the organization, the leader ensures employee satisfaction. So, leadership style has a marked role in this regard (Saleem, 2015). Laissez-faire leaders make the

feeling of “internal politics within the organization” exist in employees. This affects organizational performance and job-related attitude adversely (Mathotaarachchi, 2017). Conferring from COR theory cognitive distraction among Laissez-Faire leaders would result in passivity like politics among employees. When employees face resource drain, employees often respond defensively, trying to protect their remaining resources from depletion (Hobfoll, 2001). Transformational leaders inspire their followers to convert their self-interest to the accomplishment of company goals (Bass, 1985). While transitional leaders propose a mutual agreement to the followers i.e. awarding rewards for the work accomplished (Bass, 1990). These leaders motivate employees by rewards and punish them if cannot achieve the target. Laissez-faire leadership is more toward lack of clarity, paying little attention to targets (Bass, 1990). As laissez-faire Fair Leaders are cognitively drained, employees may choose to engage in organizational politics that will effectively stop their resources loss further. In this backdrop, this can be hypothesized that:

H₁: *Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) has a positive and significant association with Organizational Politics (OP)*

Mediating Role of Esprit De Corps

Esprit De Corps increases the morale of the employees and encourages coordination and cooperation. The absence of this factor may lead to the creation of a conflicting environment in the organization. Obviously, without team spirit, each member of the team is going to go his or her way, instead of the common way, which may be called or declared the accepted or desired way from the point of view of the organization. In such circumstances, the efforts of individuals would dissipate instead of being converged at a common point that might be instrumental otherwise for the organization. This helps in creating a bond between the employees. In the words of Henry Fayol, it is based on two theories i.e. “Unity is the strength” and “Unity of staff”. Good leaders play an important role in facilitating Esprit De Corps among members of the organization, especially in times of crisis (Fayol, 1916). Therefore, this explains the point in clear terms that team spirit among the employees of any organization is not going to be created spontaneously because many centrifugal factors operate in the system simultaneously. Therefore, there arises the role of a leader who could lead and steer the whole team along with common objectives in mind and with a common strategy to be followed.

The leader points out the direction towards which the organization has to move and devises the course of action to be adopted (Boyt et al., 2005). Although several previous pieces of research highlight the differences that leadership style makes on team-level performance literature does not cover much as to what is the impact of leadership style on virtual Esprit De Corps (Reisel et al., 2005). Likewise, the same aspect is found deficient in the literature with regard to Esprit De Corps in physical on-ground situations in the organizations. He further pointed out that, Esprit De Corps is the key to success in the organization. This factor cannot be over-emphasized because it is already an established fact that without team spirit, there is not going to be any team cohesion and without team cohesion, the organization is not going to act like an entity as a whole. While Homburg et al. (2002) have declared it to be a valuable asset for team members as well as an organization. Obviously, where other resources act in an organization as an asset for it, be it material or immaterial. Likewise, Esprit De Corps is no less than an asset for an organization though being in the form of an immaterial asset. Boyt et al. (2001) further suggested that employee performance is markedly increased if there is team spirit among the employees. Cognitive Evaluation Theory also supports this notion that the intrinsic motivation of employees is affected if they do not get such suitable external stimulus from the leader that may elevate the level of self-satisfaction in the employee. This aspect is, undoubtedly, of paramount importance because the ultimate aim of any organization is performance. If team spirit or spirit de corps is high, employees of the organizations are going to be welded together and marching towards the progress of the organization as a whole. So, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H₂ (a): *Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) has a positive and significant association with Esprit De Corps (EDC).*

H₂ (b): *Esprit De Corps (EDC) has a positive and significant association with Organizational Politics (OP).*

H₃: *Esprit De Corps (EDC) mediates the positive association between Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) and organizational politics.*

Moderating role of GRIT

GRIT is not an easy trait to cultivate in anyone with ease rather it is often challenging to cultivate through interventions. However, some measures could be taken to decrease the effects of stress on employees. Top leadership and management have to work constantly on such interventions that could help in inculcating team spirit and GRIT in all employees. The research of Chandrawaty and Widodo (2020) shows that GRIT has a positive and significant effect, both direct and indirect effect, on task performance through mediating transformational leadership and job involvement.

This highlights the importance of leadership in creating and increasing the GRIT in the employees. Organizational politics and leadership style are closely related variables because the leadership of the organization plays an important role in shaping the overall culture and structure of the organization in terms of behaviors, attitudes, and overall working environment (Fashola et al., 2016). Here comes the role of GRIT of employees because, if there is a link between the style of leadership and the resultant organizational politics then GRIT must have some role in this interaction between two phenomena as both these inter-linked phenomena are bound to have an impact on behaviors and attitudes of employees. So, this way GRIT of employees may also be affected. The finding suggests that GRIT is a significant predictor of job performance and work-related stress (Haist, 2021). This finding further elaborates on the fact that job performance is linked somehow with the level of GRIT the employees have and it is linked with the stress level being created in the employees. This fact can also not be denied that stress itself is a factor or predictor of the level of disenchantment, frustrations, and demotivation in the employees that may ultimately lead to an uncertain environment. Such an uncertain environment, in turn, may lead to the creation of political trends as such. Many Scholars have suggested that GRIT is a potential determinant of desirable outcomes inside and outside workplaces such as good mental health, happiness, or optimal performance (Tett & Burnett, 2003).

Substantial work on the role of GRIT in education, the military has promoted GRIT as a valid and meaningful predictor of performance, detention, and success (Duckworth et al., 2007). Cawley et al. (2001) have claimed that non-cognitive personality traits can predict different outcomes such as overall satisfaction, happiness, and subjective well-being within the organization. Duckworth describes the discovery of GRIT as the answer to the question of “why some individuals accomplish more than others of equal intelligence” (Duckworth et al., 2007). The significance of a trait and its interaction should be aligned such that the individual activates the trait effectively to the situation's indications (Luria et al., 2019). Drawing upon trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), which argues that the relationship between personality traits and attitudes and behaviors should be stronger in weak situations, we propose that GRIT will have an adverse effect on the organizational politics especially when Esprit De Corps is high. Thus, the following two propositions are hypothesized:

H4 (a): Employee GRIT (EG) moderates the relationship between Esprit De Corps (EDC) and Organizational Politics (OP) in ways that this relationship becomes weak when Employee GRIT (EG) is high.

H4 (b): Employee GRIT (EG) moderates the indirect relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) and Organizational Politics (OP) through Esprit De Corps (EDC).

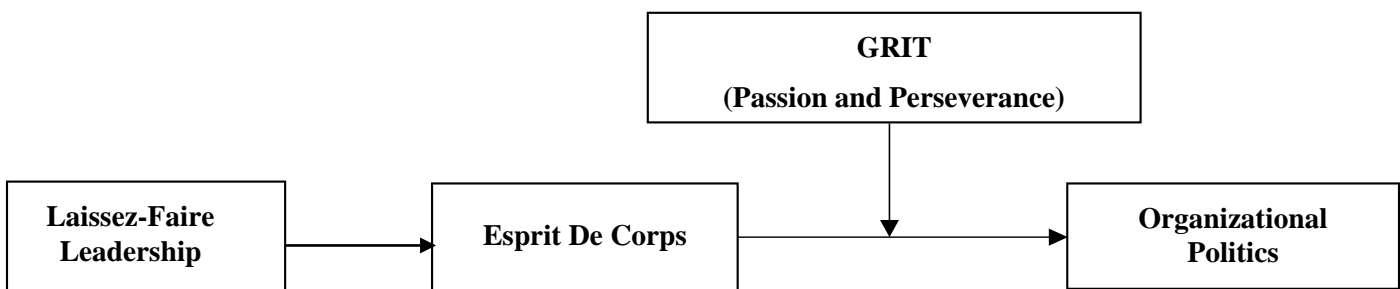


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected from employees of the National Highways & Motorway Police (NHMP). Keeping in view the factor that this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period when the facility of getting feedback was available conveniently through only online Google form in the operational online working group in sectors and officer rank employees of NHMP were members of such communication group. So, the Unit of analysis in this study is confined to the officer rank employees (Senior Patrol officers / Patrol officers) who make about 2000. To get valid and authentic findings, the functional area of the department selected for this study is Zonal/Sector Level headed by DIG/SSP respectively. Data was collected from 5 Zones and 16 Sectors of NHMP having a population of at least 2000 employees ranking from Senior Patrol Officers (SPO) to Patrol Officers. The population was about 2000 NHMP Officers out of which 326 responded and were so taken as a sample. A simple random technique was adopted and a questionnaire survey was employed to collect the data responses were taken via online survey because of the prevalent COVID-19 pandemic and for the convenience of the respondents. All formalities including permission from the Head of the Department were obtained to survey the purpose of the research. Moreover, all principles and ethics of research concerning the confidentiality of data and physical or psychological protection of the respondents were followed in letter and spirit. Data was collected through a questionnaire at a time within one month. Feedback was sought from a selected sample of the population because of limited time and resources. In such a technique where there are always chances of common method bias and social desirability bias. Chances of such biases were tried to be minimized by making the questionnaires quite simple, presenting predicting and criterion variables in separate sections and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Furthermore, the existence of CMV is checked by following recommendation of (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and performing Herman Single Factor test. Herman one-factor test results suggested that there was no general factor accounted for majority of the variable in unrotated factor structure, hence the finding less likely to suffer from CMV issues. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SPSS AMOS version 22 have been used to assess the correlations between variables, reliability and validity of the constructs and goodness of model fit, and bootstrapping technique by Hayes Process macro to test the formulated hypotheses.

Measures

Measures for different variables used in this study comprise of 5-point Likert scale. All the scales used here are authentic because those are adopted from already tested measures and Cronbach's Alpha value is above 0.70.

Organizational Politics

To measure Organizational Politics Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997) was used. Out of 15 items on the said scale, 09 relevant questions were selected. Because how they are determined is so political. For measuring facets of Organizational Politics, a seven-point (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*) Likert scale was used. (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997) reported reliability of scores at $\alpha = .87$ when using the 15-item POPS. This has been validated in the study (Manning, 2018) with a reliability score using $\alpha = 0.95$.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

For measuring Laissez-Faire Leadership MLQ scale of (Bass & Avolio, 1996) has been adopted here. Originally, MLQ scale comprised 45 items regarding traits of leaders whereas in this study 09 relevant questions were selected here for the purpose. The scale adopted here has been used and validated by (Pahi & Hamid, 2016) where the reliability of the said scale was 0.844. A rater form was used to take feedback regarding leadership from employees and for measuring facets of Laissez-Faire Leadership, a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*) was used.

Esprit De Corps

For Esprit De Corps measurement, a scale developed by (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) was adopted here. This scale has been found in other studies like that of (Lytle & Timmerman, 2006) with a measure of coefficient more than (0.81). Items of scale are to be measured on a 7-point Likert scale to get a correct opinion.

GRIT

GRIT (passion and perseverance) was measured through (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) seven-item scale to assess employee GRIT. This scale has been validated in previous studies like that by (Priyohadi et al., 2019) where the reliability given is 0.82.

Results

Demographic Analysis

Statistics showed that out of 326 respondents, 92.9% were males, and 7.15% were females constituting 7.1%. Most of the respondents belonged to the age bracket of 20-30 (41.1%), while fewer responses were from the respondents of the bracket 50-60 (3.4%). From the academic qualification point of view, options from Matric to Master were given. Bachelor has come out on top of the percentage of respondents (41.4%) followed by a Master’s Degree (40.8%). Respondents were categorized separately as uniformed and civilian employees. Uniformed employees constituted 87.7% of the total respondents while civilians constituted 12.3%. Four options (0-3 Months, 3-6 Months, 6-12 Months, 1 year beyond) were given so far as the tenure of posting is concerned. The highest percentage came out to be under the category of more than 1 year (77.9%).

Measurement model

The measurement model assessment comprises two main aspects: the reliability and validity of the constructs. The reliability of the measurement model is tested by assessing the reliability of each item in a construct and the internal consistency of the study constructs by using composite reliability and Cronbach alpha. The assignment of convergent and discriminate validity determines the validation of the measurement model. As per the criteria given by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the convergent validity of measured constructs should satisfy the three criteria that is i) all indicator loadings should exceed 0.65, ii) Composite reliabilities (CR) should be greater than .80, iii) The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed the limit of .50. As displayed in the table below, therefore, all three conditions for convergent validity hold in the measurement model. To find the value of discriminant validity, the suggested cutoff of .90 in the correlation matrix was used as implied distinctness in construct content. As displayed in the table off-diagonal elements are estimated correlation between all constructs and their values were significantly less than .90. In addition, (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) suggested that the square root of the AVE of a latent variable should be greater than the correlation between the rest of the latent variable. As shown in **Table 1**, the diagonal elements in the correlation matrix showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations between the variables that form the construct. Thus, the measurement model holds solid discriminant validity.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Constructs	Range of loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	Correlation between constructs			
					LL	OP	EDC	EG
LL	0.87-094	0.940	0.641	0.485	0.800			
OP	0.62-0.74	0.937	0.624	0.485	.655**	0.790		
EDC	0.66-0.84	0.894	0.548	0.076	-.207**	-.276**	0.741	
EG	0.77-0.84	0.957	0.732	0.158	-.244**	-.397**	-.077**	0.857

N= 326; LL = Laissez-Faire leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

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

Exploratory factor analysis for laissez-faire leadership yielded an Eigen Value of 1.373 with an explained variance of 85.707%. Exploratory analysis for Organizational Politics showed the largest Eigen Value of 1.570 with an explained variance of 73.018%. Exploratory analysis for Esprit De Corps presented the largest Eigen Value of 1.130 with an explained variance of 76.988%. Similarly, exploratory analysis for Employee GRIT estimated the largest Eigen Value of 1.450 with an explained variance of 91.159%. Since the stated Eigenvalues of these factors were more than one and the factor loading of each statement was near to one, the factorial validity of statements

related to the proposed study is satisfactory by accepting the related hypotheses.

Confirmatory factor analysis allows the test of fit between observed data and the aforementioned theoretical model that defines the hypothesis of the causal link between underlying variables (Gerbing & Hamilton, 1996). This proposed study shows CFA to evaluate the individuality of the measurement model through factor structure. CFA is done by maximum likelihood estimates using AMOS software version 23 to perform a four-factor CFA laissez-faire leadership, Organizational Politics, Esprit De Corps, and Employee GRIT to confirm the measurement model is an acceptable model fit to data. The measurement model produced acceptable results for key indices i.e. χ^2/df is 2.058, CFI=0.93; TLI = 0.90; RMSEA=0.05, SRMR=.08, PNF=0.81 and PCFI=0.86 (Hair & Babin, 2006). Therefore, the overall requirement for model fitness was achieved to move further for hypothesis testing.

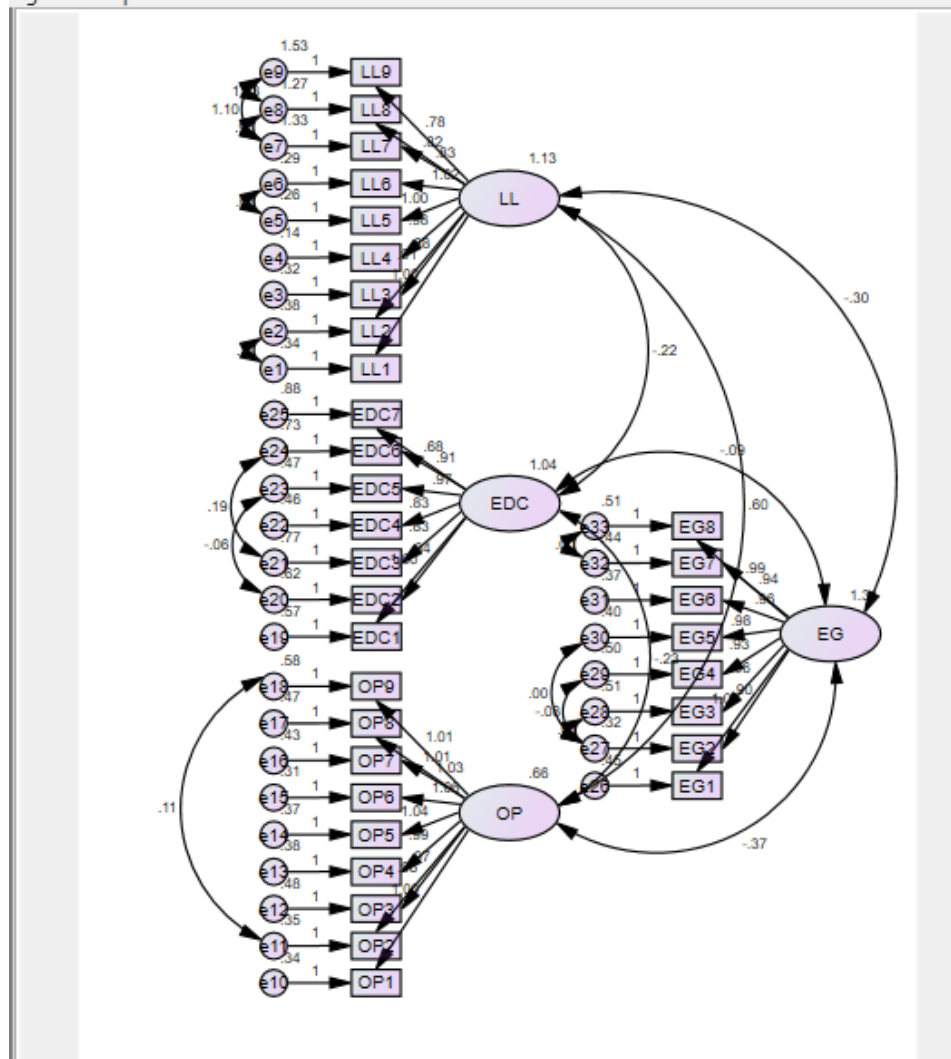


Figure 2 AMOS path diagram

The Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to determine the association between the variables. **Table 2** shows that the correlation value between Laissez-Faire leadership and organizational politics is ($\beta = .655$ and $p < 0.05$) which is a positive and significant value. The correlation ship between Laissez-Faire leadership and Esprit De Corps is ($\beta = -.184^{**}$ and $p < 0.05$) which is a negative and significant. The value of the correlation between Laissez-Faire leadership and employee GRIT is ($\beta = -.215^{**}$ and $p < 0.05$) which is negative and significant. The value of the correlation between Organizational Politics and Esprit De Corps is ($\beta = -.272^{**}$ and $p < 0.05$) which shows that it is negative and the value is significant. The value of the correlation between employee GRIT and organizational politics is ($\beta = -.243$ and $p < 0.05$) which is negative and has a weak value. The correlation value between Esprit De Corps and Employee GRIT is ($\beta = -.377^{**}$ and $p < 0.05$) which is negative and moderate.

Table 2: The correlation between different variables of the research study

	LL	OP	EDC	EG
LL	1			
OP	.655**	1		
EDC	-.184**	-.272**	1	
EG	-.215**	-.377**	-.047**	1

N= 326; LL = Laissez-Faire leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

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

Hypotheses Testing

Regression analysis was conducted by using SPSS version 22 to evaluate all main effects. Results showed as given in (Table) that the Laissez-Faire Leadership has had a significant relationship with Organizational Politics ($p < 0.05$), and the impact is 42.9% ($R^2 = .429$). This supports Hypothesis H_1 : “Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) has a positive and significant association with Organizational Politics (OP)”. The relationship between laissez-faire Fair Leadership with Esprit De Corps is shown and found to be significant ($p < 0.05$), the relationship is negative and the impact is slightly 3.4 % ($R^2 = .034$), hence H_2 (a) is accepted. The table shows the relationship between Esprit De Corps and Organizational Politics which is found to be significant ($p < 0.05$) and negative leads to H_2 (b). The impact is 7.4% ($R^2 = .074$). Table shows the relationship between Employee GRIT and Organizational Politics and was found to be significant ($p < 0.05$), the relationship is negative and the impact is 5.9% ($R^2 = .059$).

Table 3: Direct Effects

Predictor	R	R ²	P	B	T
LL (Dependent Variable : OP)	.655	.429	.000	.655	15.688
LL (Dependent Variable : EDC)	.184	.034	0.01	-.184	-3.363
EDC (Dependent Variable : OP)	.272	.074	.000	-.272	-5.097
EG (Dependent Variable : OP)	-.377	.059	.000	-.377	-4.5

N= 326; LL = Laissez-faire leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

We used the Hayes Bootstrap method to test the mediation and moderation effects (Hayes & Rockwood, 2017). Model 4 was used to check the indirect effects of LL on OP through EDC and Model 1 for EG moderates the relationship between LL and OP. Mediation and moderation are accepted if zero does not lie between lower and upper CIs. The indirect effects of Laissez-Faire Leadership affect Organizational Politics through Esprit De Corps as p-value is .00 ($< .05$) and there is no 0 in between values of BootLLCI (.00) and BootULCI (.06). Thus, Hypothesis (H_3), “Esprit De Corps (EDC) mediates the positive association between Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) and organizational politics” is proved that Esprit De Corps is a mediator in between Laissez Fair Leadership and Organizational Politics

Table 4: Indirect effects

	R ²	B	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Outcome Variable: EDC	.03						
LL		-.16	.05	-3.36	.00	-.26	-.07
Outcome Variable: EDC	.45						
LL		.51	.03	14.95	.00	.44	.57

EDC	-.14	.04	-3.76	.00	-.22	-.07
Direct effects of LL on OP	.51	.03	14.95	.00	.44	.57
Indirect effect of LL on Op	.02	.02			.00	.06

N= 326; LL = Laissez-Faire leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

To check the moderating effect of moderating variable Employee GRIT on the relationship between Esprit De Corps and the Organizational Politics Model-1 was used for the moderation analysis where it showed that interaction is significant because the p-value of Employee GRIT and Esprit De Corps is .00 (<0.05) and there is no 0 between LLCI (-.18) and ULCI (-.07). Hence H₄ (a) has accepted.

Table 5: Moderation Analysis

	R ²	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Outcome Variable : OP	.31						
Constant		580	.29	-.79	.00	5.24	6.36
EG		.17	.08	2.03	.04	.01	.34
EDC		.42	.12	-6.16	.00	.19	.65
Int (EDC * EG)		-.21	.03	3.53	.00	-.18	-.07

N= 326; LL = Laissez-fair leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

To check Moderated Mediation, model 14 of the HAYES Process Macro was adopted. **Table 6** shows that Organizational Politics is the outcome variable and other three variables (LL, EDC, EG) are predictors then the interaction is significant in the case of all three variables (LL, EDC, EG) p-value is <.05 in all cases. The index of mediated moderation is significant as there is no zero between LLCI (.01) and ULCI (.07) which confirms that there is moderated mediation. So far interaction (EDC * EG) shows that interaction is significant as the p-value is .02 (<0.05) and there is no zero between LLCI -.27 and ULCI -.17. Thus, results show that moderated mediation is proven. Hence Hypothesis H3 (b): “GRIT (EG) moderates the indirect relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership (LL) and Organizational Politics (OP) through Esprit De Corps (EDC)” is proved.

Table 6: Moderated Mediation Analysis

	R ²	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Outcome Variable : OP	.61						
Constant		-.2564	.29	8.94	.00	2.06	3.22
Esprit De Corps		.56	.09	6.20	.00	.38	.73
Laissez-Faire Leadership		.46	.03	15.73	.00	.41	.52
Employee GRIT		.29	.06	4.62	.00	.17	.42
Int_1 (EDC * EG)		-.22	.03	-8.61	.00	-.27	-.17

Index of Moderated Mediation

EDC_M	Index	Boot Se	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
	.04	.02	.01	.07

N= 326; LL = Laissez-Faire leadership, OP= Organizational Politics; EDC= Esprit De Corps; EG =Employee GRIT

Discussion

The main objective of the present study was to analyze the relationship between Organizational Politics and Laissez Fair Leadership. This was to be seen how and to what extent Laissez-Faire Leadership proves to be one of the sources of Organizational Politics. For this reason, public sector Organization was selected for the survey because the phenomenon of Organizational Politics is comparatively more common in the public sector than the private sector (Scott & Falcone, 1998). Moreover, as the leadership style generally found in the public sector organizations of Pakistan is autocratic (Gohar et al., 2021) so, Laissez-Faire Leadership is likely to have a profound and significantly visible effect to the extent of Organizational Politics

During this research study, to determine the relationships between said variables, four Hypotheses were framed and tested separately. Findings regarding each Hypothesis are as follows: The findings of the research showed that there is a positive relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics. This was confirmed by the regression analysis, which verified that there is an impact of about 42.9% of Laissez-Faire Leadership on Organizational Politics. The positive relationship clearly shows that an increase in laissez-faire Fair Leadership is going to increase the Politics in the Organization. Percentage shows that there are marked effects of this style of Leadership in the creation of Organizational Politics. This indicates that if Laissez-Faire Leadership is somehow found in any LEAs, it is going to create visibly marked Politics in the Organization. The same findings were found in another research study (Al Busaidi, 2020). Leadership is best characterized as a social exchange process. Therefore, leaders are effective to the extent they can motivate followers to meet the standards of performance. It is the responsibility of a leader to create a fair and healthy atmosphere in an organization that could fulfill the needs and expectations of the employees. This is what has been advocated in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Likewise, here Cognitive Evaluation Theory also fits in which says that intrinsic motivation can be affected by external stimulus if that is in conformity with a feeling of self-satisfaction from within.

The findings indicated that there is mediation between Laissez- Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics through Esprit De Corps by direct (.51) and indirect (.02) effects. This proved H3. Mediation is partial because there is an impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable directly as well as indirectly. Mediation is complimentary because the sum is a positive sign. The correlation between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Esprit De Corps is significant with impact (-.16), has weak value, and is negatively related. It means an increase in Laissez-Faire Leadership decreases Esprit De Corps among employees. This proved H2 (a). The same relevance can be found in the findings of another research conducted earlier already done research work (Affandi et al., 2019). Likewise, findings showed the relationship between Esprit De Corps and Organizational Politics to be significant with impact (-.14). As the relationship is negative, it means if Esprit De Corps is decreased, Organizational Politics increases and vice versa. This proved H2 (b). This proposition can be supported by the findings of research conducted earlier where a positive relationship between Esprit DE Corps and job satisfaction was proved. As job satisfaction can be taken as an opposite factor of Organizational Politics, so, the negative relationship between Esprit De Corps and Organizational Politics is relevant here because lack of job satisfaction is one of the important causes leading to Organizational Politics (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2002).

Lastly, the findings of the index of moderation and interaction between Esprit De Corps and employee GRIT proved that there is a moderating effect of Employee GRIT on the relationship between Esprit De Corps and Organizational Politics i.e. relationship becomes weak when GRIT is high among the employees. This proved H4 (a). Likewise, the indirect relationship between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Organizational Politics mediated through Esprit de Corps is also proved through moderated mediation analysis, which shows that the relationship between Laissez-faire leadership and organizational politics is weakened when employee grit is high. This proved H4 (b). The moderating effect of Employee GRIT and political perceptions-citizenship behavior relationship was also established in a research study conducted earlier (Jordan et al., 2018). This finding is in accordance with the GRIT Theory, given by A-Duckworth, which advocates that gritty individuals develop complete goal hierarchies and remain motivated in achieving the goals of the Organization.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this research study have surely added to already existing literature regarding Laissez-Faire Leadership, Organizational Politics, Esprit De Corps, Employee GRIT, and the Interplay thereof. As Organizational Politics is an established phenomenon in the Organization and always has very serious implications for the Organization as a whole (GK) This study has helped in understanding the role of leadership style in creating the phenomenon of politics in any organization . As focus here was on Laissez-Faire Leadership, the aspect, which earlier was missing, highlighted in another research study (Riaz, 2013), it has helped in understanding the true dynamics underlying this phenomenon. Moreover, this study has added the dimension of the mediating role of Esprit De Corps in this phenomenon. Determining the mediating role of Esprit De Corps in the creation of the phenomenon of Organizational Politics due to any leadership style is of importance. Moreover, this aspect becomes more important concerning Organizations like Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). This study, therefore, would be helpful for such Organizations to ascertain the role-played by Esprit De Corps in this regard.

Likewise, this research has also highlighted that Employee GRIT does have a moderating role upon the phenomenon of Organizational Politics being caused because of the Laissez-Faire Leadership on the top. A study of the moderating role played by psychological factors like Employee GRIT in the creation or prevention of the politicized environment is an addition to the research already done and covers the gap as highlighted in another research study (Riaz et al., 2021). Again, this aspect of theory would help organizations like Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to understand true dynamics phenomenon and to respond accordingly.

This study has confirmed the already fact that Organizational Politics exists in the public sector. This has further reinforced the fact that even in Law Enforcement Agencies if Laissez-Faire Leadership appears, it becomes the source of Organizational Politics therein.

Practical Implications

As the linkage between Leadership Style and the resultant phenomenon of Organizational Politics is quite important, so, the findings of this research study become quite relevant from a practical point of view. Organizational Politics, which is a fact and cannot be ignored, always needs to be tackled in time so that Organizations may not suffer. This study has indicated that if the Leadership Style is Laissez-Faire type, it is bound to become the source of Organizational Politics. Therefore, management and practitioners shall have to keep this under consideration wherever such a phenomenon has to be tackled. Moreover, in Pakistan Organizational Politics is comparatively more common in the public sector than in the private sector (Al-Malki & Juan, 2018). In the presence of Organizational Politics, service delivery in the public sector organization cannot be expected to be good or improved. So, the government shall have to ensure that leadership in public sector organizations is not of laissez-faire type but rather needs to be participative type.

This study also established that there is a mediating role of Esprit De Corps as well in this phenomenon of the creation of a politicized environment. So, the management of organizations needs to pay attention to those factors which one way are affect the team spirit among the employees and Esprit de Corps in the Organization as a whole. As and when Laissez- Faire Leadership appears in any Organization, particularly any public sector organization as is the case here during our study, full attention needs to be given to such measures that could increase team spirit and Esprit De Corps because under such Laissez-Faire Leadership, there is always such atmosphere or environment where Esprit De Corps has all the chances to grow weaker. However, the management of any Organization particularly has to be very vigilant in such situations where Esprit De Corps is negatively affected because of somehow Laissez-Faire Leadership on the top. This is so because it may lead to grouping if not properly streamlined and steered in the right direction. In this regard, different practical measures could be adopted at the Organizational level that may become the source of increasing Esprit De Corps among the Employees.

Limitations and Future Directions

Each research study has to face some limitations or has some intrinsic limitations. First of all, this study is cross-sectional type as the responses were collected at a single point in time. Therefore, there are chances of increased skewness due to common method bias. In the future, research can be done on a longitudinal basis by collecting data

at different points in time using the time lag approach. Secondly, the questionnaires used here were self-reported type that were based on the self-evaluation of the researcher, thus, chances of social desirability bias cannot be ruled out. Future researchers can use a mixed design covering both self-reported and observation-based questionnaires through interviews. Such open-ended questions can provide more in-depth information about the variables being studied. Thirdly, this study covers a single mediator and moderator, so, future researchers may opt for other relevant variables like lack of motivation and lack of employee welfare mechanisms as mediators. Likewise, employee stress-countering measures can be taken as moderators in the place of GRIT in future studies. So far as the scope of the research study was concerned, it was to cover generally all the Organizations but it particularly focused on public sector Organizations. Among public sector Organizations, one of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) was selected for surveying so that the interlinked relationship between said variables could be ascertained and established properly with some concrete findings. The scope of study of the variables selected in this research study can be extended to other public sector Organizations for a better view of this phenomenon in other cases as well. Public sector organizations which usually deal with research and development and advertisement, where innovation is the buzzword, can be specially focused with regard to studying the role of leadership style i.e. Laissez-Faire Leadership which is thought to be suitable for such organizations. Therefore, the prevalence of Organizational Politics in such organizations could be studied in detail for clarity of theory and practical implications thereof. Likewise, the relationship between these variables could be studied in private sector Organizations separately as well as in comparison with the public sector. Research done in other organizations in this perspective is going to help in understanding the dynamics of Organizational Politics in those Organizations and in devising a strategy for adopting the proper way forward.

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