Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale, Study In Dki Jakarta-Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: *Previous research has shown the application and validity of the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) as a measure of the potential effects perceptions of organizational politics can have on employees and managers (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). The aim of This research is to investigate the significance of the organization being perceived as a political arena and the perceptions of politics as highly subjective; therefore, any member of the organization can view the organization as politicized in a variety of ways. This study has explored the extent to which the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale applies to the classroom environment. The results show the revised version of POPS demonstrates a 3-factor structure when used in the classroom that is very similar to the 3-factor structure found in work organizations. The results also indicate that two components of perceptions of politics—rewards (assignment of grades in the classroom setting) and "go along to get along" behavior—are indeed linked to classroom climate antecedents and resulting student outcomes. The results thus provide an encouraging first step in applying POPS to the classroom to better understand the political nature of this learning environment.*

KEYWORDS: *Politics Scale, Organizational, DKI Jakarta*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Previous research has shown the application and validity of the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS) as a measure of the potential effects perceptions of organizational politics can have on employees and managers (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). The aim of This research is to investigate the significance of the organization being perceived as a political arena and the perceptions of politics as highly subjective; therefore, any member of the organization can view the organization as politicized in a variety of ways. These varying perceptions can have substantial consequences on individuals' attitudes and emotional states (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and stress). Additionally an individual's perception of the organization as a political arena can create the essence of internal politics regardless of whether politics exist objectively.

If this is the case in the workplace, why would the situation be any different in the classroom, the workplace of the college student? This study proposes that classrooms, like any organization, are potential political arenas. Further, if students perceive the classroom as political, they will experience significant consequences. Such perceptions may affect student stress levels regarding the class that they perceive as politicized and ultimately approach a spillover effect on their stress levels regarding other classes as well. Additionally students who see the classroom environment as politicized may adjust the amount of effort they put into the class as well as limit what they get out of the class experience.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature dealing with research on politics in the classroom reveals varying conceptualizations of classroom climate, environment, and community (Fraser, 1986). Classroom climate is largely perceptual (Hays, 1970) and determined by student and instructor needs (Myers & Rocca, 2001). Examining the effects of instructors' argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness in the classroom, Myers and Rocca linked such influence attempts to student perceptions of classroom climate, student apprehension, and student motivation. A key result was that as instructors were viewed as increasingly argumentative, students began to see the instructor as a more competent teacher and also became more interested in the subject matter and more active in classroom participation. As the instructor grew more argumentative, students not only felt that they could learn more from the class but ultimately enabled themselves to learn more because of their perceptions of the classroom environment.

In discussing the classroom as a community, Weidner (2001) takes a closer look at the realities of the "dangerous" games that both students and teachers play. Citing an essay by Adair and Howell (n.d.), Weidner

suggests the need to delve into the power relationships that emerge in the classroom. Specifically, the authors propose that while teachers expect students to come into the classroom with open minds and open hearts, willing to not only share but listen, many teachers fail to follow these principles themselves. As a result, students may tend to "avoid trouble" by avoiding expressing their true beliefs and perspectives. The authors suggest the need to probe such power issues and "create a common context for relationships and true community" (Adair & Howell, n.d., p. 176).

Examining professors' perceptions of the classroom environment, Diekhoff and Wigginton (1992) investigated faculty perceptions of self as well as perceptions of their classes throughout a semester. The instructors consistently rated the classroom similarly to the ways they rated themselves, suggesting a tendency to project self-salient attributes onto their classroom environments. While perhaps a logical concept early in the semester when there is vague familiarity with the classes themselves, a second survey during the same semester yielded similar results. Faculty may simply see their classrooms as extensions of themselves, or perhaps fail to see beyond themselves, to truly understand the complete classroom environment. Should instructors act on the basis of such perceptions, their behavior in the classroom conceivably may be inappropriate or ill-suited for the students and classroom environment. At some point, instructors may be creating classes as extensions of themselves and their agendas, evidencing power and politics in the classroom environment.

As this brief review of the classroom climate literature reveals, studies have looked at the classroom environment through a limited scope – instructor influence tactics, openness, and projection of self – but these conceptualizations suggest that politics may indeed emerge in the classroom.

Management scholars increasingly have studied organizational politics for at least 30 years (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Pettigrew, 1973; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). This political focus on organizational life parallels the increasing emphasis on the decentralization of organizations as well as the growth and rapid spread of team-based structures within organizations. Consequently, the university classroom has been encouraged to simulate similar changes (Cohen, 1993). The classroom of the college student has gradually become more experiential through the years, giving students more autonomy. This logical evolution of the college classroom is designed to prepare students for the "real world"; as the environment of the "real world" changes, the environment of the classroom should logically follow suit.

Today's classrooms are less likely to be stereotypical collegiate lecture halls and more likely to be characterized by team structures, students teaching students, hands-on activities, and even virtual experiences (c.f., Bilimoria & Wheeler, 1995). With such decentralization and increased autonomy afforded to students, it is no surprise that the classroom is more frequently viewed as an organization (Romme & Putzel, 2003). As a result of this paradigm shift toward experiential learning, the classroom may emerge as a political arena. Students now not only depend on professors to provide them with accurate information, but also rely on their peers to support them in group projects as well as in class. Students have begun to learn from one another and not just an instructor who possesses "traditional" power over the classroom and resulting grades.

Researchers have conducted various studies to determine what happens when people work in a political organization, but until more recently few of these studies have examined what makes individuals feel as though they are working in a political arena. For this reason, Kacmar and Ferris (1991) created the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS). The authors designed this scale to look at employees' perceptions of politics within an organization based on the idea that when an employee perceives the organization to be politicized, he or she will experience the effects both in and outside of work. Kacmar and Carlson (1997) subsequently modified the instrument from a 40-item to a 15-item scale. The POPS scale has generated significant research assessing both the antecedents and consequences of perceptions of politics in organizations (c.f., Harris & Kacmar, 2005; O'Connor & Morrison, 2001; Treadway, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2005; Vigoda, 2000).

If POPS has been shown to be a valid measure of political perceptions within organizations, then it seems appropriate to apply it to today's "organizational" classroom. Thus, the current study explores the extent to which the POPS model might capture student perceptions of politics in the classroom environment.

III. METHODOLOGY

Assessing the validity of POPS for use in the organizational context of the classroom requires consideration of at least two aspects of validity. The first consideration involves construct validity in terms of the factorial structure of POPS. To assess this aspect of POPS' validity, we used confirmatory factor analysis as described below. The second consideration concerned construct validity in terms of the extent to which POPS

could be situated within a nomological network related to organizational politics perceptions. To assess this aspect of POPS' validity, we examined the relationships between POPS scores and scores on other variables that are predicted to be related to organizational politics perceptions in work organizations (see Figure 1; Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ammeter, 2002). Thus, for example, we included such factors as instructor supportiveness and class governance as factors similar to supervisor supportiveness and centralization which have been proposed as antecedent to organizational politics perceptions. We also included outcome factors such as class stress and commitment to one's university which are similar to job stress and organizational commitment which have been found to be related to organizational politics perceptions in the management research literature.

Sample

The sample included 217 students who provided complete responses to the primary research materials. Demographics for those who provided complete information for all research materials (n = 204) indicated the sample comprised predominantly females (63%) enrolled in courses required for their major (81%) with male instructors (67%). The participants' mean grade point average was 3.2 (s.d. = .51).

Procedures

Participants were asked to volunteer to complete a questionnaire pertaining to the research topic. Questionnaires were administered in classes selected to represent a spectrum of teaching styles, ranging from traditional to highly experiential. Participants also were solicited via social networking venues (facebook.com and myspace.com) to further ensure variance in responses. These participants completed an on-line version of the survey. Approximately 80% of responses were obtained from a private university in the southeastern United States with the remaining 20% of responses.

Measures

Forty items that were hypothesized to measure 7 dimensions of classroom climate and 3 dimensions of perceptions of politics were administered as one survey. A five-point Likert format was used for all items*: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree.* Scale scores were created by calculating the arithmetic mean of each set of items.

Perceptions of Classroom Politics.

Students' perceptions of classroom politics were measured using a revised version of the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). The scale consisted of 15 items hypothesized to measure 3 dimensions of perceptions of politics: General, Go Along to Get Along, and Pay and Promotion/Rewards. Examples of a revised item for each of these factors, respectively, are: "People in the class attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down," "Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than fight the system in this class," and "When it comes to grade decisions, policies from the syllabus are irrelevant."

Antecedents to Perceptions of Politics.

As shown in Figure 1, research suggests that certain job and work environment factors serve as antecedent influences on perceptions of organizational politics. These include such factors as participation in decision making and the quality of relationships with one's supervisor and peers (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Witt, Andrews, & Kacmar, 2000). To enhance the assessment of the construct validity of POPS in a classroom setting, 4 scales of 3 items each were used to measure similar antecedent constructs related to classroom climate research. In particular, 3 scales derived from previous factor analytic work (Maddox, Boozer, & Heine, 1991) were used to measure three antecedent factors: instructor supportiveness (e.g., "Our instructor listens to students"), shared governance (e.g., "Students share decision-making power with the instructor") and classroom community (e.g., "I feel a sense of classroom community"). A fourth factor was adapted from Spreitzer's (1995) impact dimension of psychological empowerment (e.g., "I have a great deal of control over what happens in this class").

Outcomes of Perceptions of Politics.

Researchers have found that perceptions of organizational politics correlate with numerous work-related outcomes including stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and so on (c.f., Harris & Kacmar, 2005). Included were 3 scales of 3 items each to measure similar outcomes: stress (e.g., "This class causes me a lot of stress"), satisfaction (e.g., "I am satisfied with my instructor's performance in this class"), and organizational commitment (e.g., "This class makes my overall university experience more personally meaningful to me"). The satisfaction and stress scales were created for this study. The organizational commitment items were adapted from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

Demographics.

For exploratory purposes, sample participants were asked to indicate their sex and grade point average as well as the sex of their instructor and whether or not the class was a class required for their major. Finally, sample members completed a 4-item scale indicating their political orientation (e.g., "When it comes to politics, I generally support Republicans").

Analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS 7.0 (Arbuckle, 2006) was used to assess the fit of two measurement models. The first analysis ($n = 217$) assessed the fit of the 3-factor measurement model for the 15 revised POPS items. The second analysis ($n = 217$) assessed the fit of the 7-factor measurement model for the 21 antecedent and outcome items. Both analyses specified congeneric measurement models with each item constrained to load only on its hypothesized factor. All possible correlations among latent variables also were specified in each analysis. Although a single analysis would have been preferable, a compromise was reached by conducting two analyses to maintain a sufficient sample size for each analysis.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relationship of POPS factors to antecedent and outcome classroom climate factors as well as demographic factors. Two analyses were conducted, one each with the reward factor and the "go along" factor as dependent variables. (No analysis was conducted for the 2-item general factor because of its low reliability.) In each analysis one POPS factor was first regressed against the other POPS factor. The antecedent, outcome, and demographic factors were entered on the second step and the ΔR^2 assessed. Given a significant ΔR^2, individual βs then were examined to determine which specific factors related to politics perceptions.

IV. RESULTS

Measurement Models

Results from the CFA of the revised POPS scale indicated a good fit for the 3-factor model ($\chi^2 = 157.70$, d.f. = 87, p = .000, GFI = .91, RMR = .05, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .06). An examination of the item loadings, however, showed two items with non-significant loadings. All other loadings were statistically significant and substantial with standardized loadings ranging from .54 to .90. Given that the two non-significant items also were listed (at random) as the first two items on the questionnaire, it is possible that the non-significant results may have been due to a "priming" effect. Thus, the measurement model was again estimated without these two items. Results indicated a slightly better fit ($\chi^2 = 102.94$, $df = 62$, $p = .001$, GFI = .93, RMR = .04, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06). Items from this analysis thus were used to create scales for the regression analyses.

Results from the CFA of the measurement model for the antecedent and outcome scales also indicated a good fit. However, examination of the estimated correlations among the latent variables suggested the satisfaction and instructor support scales ($r = .91$) may not have measured distinct constructs. The satisfaction items thus were omitted and a 6-factor measurement model estimated. Results from this model also indicated an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 214.33$, $df = 120$, $p = .000$, GFI = .91, CFI = .95, RMR = .05, RMSEA = .06). Descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for each of the scales comprising the measurement models are shown in Table 1.

Regression Analyses

Results (Table 2) for both hierarchical regression analyses indicated a significant change in R^2 when antecedent, outcome, and demographic variables were entered on the second step for each analysis. And, as has been found with previous research concerning perceptions of politics (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997), different variables were related to the two politics perceptions variables.

After controlling for "go along" perceptions, five variables were significantly related to reward perceptions. Among the classroom climate variables, instructor supportiveness showed the strongest relationship ($\beta = -.50$, $p < .001$) followed by organizational commitment ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$) and class community ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$). Among the demographic variables, instructor sex ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$) and course status ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$) were both related to reward perceptions. In general, increasing perceptions that grading was political were associated with lower perceptions of instructor supportiveness and organizational commitment, higher perceptions of classroom community, female instructors, and required course status.

After controlling for reward perceptions, four classroom climate variables were found to be significant predictors of "go along" perceptions. Instructor supportiveness again showed the strongest relationship ($\beta = -$

.35, $p < .001$) followed by impact ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$), shared governance ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$), and stress ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$). In general, higher perceptions that one needed to "go along to get along" were associated with lower ratings of instructor supportiveness, impact, shared governance, and higher ratings of stress. One demographic variable—instructor sex—showed a near-significant relationship ($\beta = .10$, $p = .066$) with "go along" perceptions, indicating female instructors engendered such perceptions more so than did male instructors.

V.   DISCUSSION

This study has explored the extent to which the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale applies to the classroom environment. The results show the revised version of POPS demonstrates a 3-factor structure when used in the classroom that is very similar to the 3-factor structure found in work organizations. The results also indicate that two components of perceptions of politics—rewards (assignment of grades in the classroom setting) and "go along to get along" behavior—are indeed linked to classroom climate antecedents and resulting student outcomes. The results thus provide an encouraging first step in applying POPS to the classroom to better understand the political nature of this learning environment.

What do the results suggest more specifically about the political nature of the classroom? Students' perceptions that grades are "political" are negatively related to their perceptions that instructors are supportive. That is, when students perceive their instructors to care about them, listen to their concerns, and show respect, they do not perceive grade assignments to be political – they see grades as following the guidelines outlined in the course syllabus. Furthermore, perceptions of politically assigned grades are associated with less commitment to the university and more commitment to the classroom community. These results indicate that when perceiving politics in the classroom, students may indeed withdraw their emotional attachment to the organization as a whole but feel an even stronger bond with their classmates. The student mindset appears to become "us against them", as students may see the university supporting such political behavior on the part of instructors. In response, students may tend to bond to one another as a collective force to take on the political powers.

Significant results were also found for students' perceptions that they should not "rock the boat" or that they should "go along to get along" in the classroom. Consistent with Weidner (2001), students see as political those classroom environments in which they are discouraged from speaking their minds and encouraged to say what is needed to please the instructor. This study reveals that such perceptions are related to low instructor supportiveness, the feeling among students that they have little impact on the class, and the perception that they share very little decision-making power with their instructors. Further, such perceptions of "go along" politics are associated with high levels of stress among students.

This area of inquiry is important given educators' efforts to transform the classroom into a learning laboratory that mirrors the dynamics of real organizations. As members of organizations face growing uncertainty and ambiguity at work, so, too, do students in the classrooms that attempt to prepare them for that world of work. As experiential educators continue to inject real-world dynamics in the classroom environment, they continue to inject the politics into that environment as well. As unfortunate as this politicization is for those students who feel as though the politics of the classroom are working against them, students who have been previously exposed to the political arena that is the "real world" may be better able to cope with those realities in the working world. However, the existence of politics in the classroom does provide an opportunity to teach less experienced students about the topic of organizational politics.

VI.   IMPLICATIONS

These findings suggest that students are exposed in the classroom to political dynamics similar to work environments of the "real world" they may encounter upon graduating from college. Perhaps we underestimate the credibility that the college classroom truly is the workplace of our students, or at least fail to recognize exactly how much these two realms share in terms of organizational dynamics. Too often we are informed of the "Type A" lives our students live, yet we add to this experience a political arena in their classroom. Hopefully the research results here—in combination with research on organizational politics—will stimulate research into how to better manage these political dynamics.

These findings also suggest that instructors today give students reason to second guess their opinions and refrain from saying what's on their mind for fear it will have an effect on grades. The results raise the question: Should instructors encourage students to learn by creating a more "true to life" environment in their classrooms, preparing them for their future in the "real world", or does this real-life atmosphere limit students' learning experiences and self-growth by making them fearful of the potential repercussions of sharing their

thoughts and ideas in a political arena in which their opinions may not be so popular? Are our students learning about the topics covered in their classes, or are they learning how to play the particular politics of that classroom? How might this political game-playing affect student stress-levels, their sense of significance and satisfaction, and the extent to which they emphasize learning of the material that should be covered in their classes? Does instruction prepare our students for the political arena at the expense of students growing and being unafraid to be who they are?

This study has shown that perceptions create a reality. An employee who sees his or her organization as a political arena will experience those politics as reality. This same perspective applies to the student and their classroom experience. The results of this perception frequently are attitudes related to stress, one's sense of significance, and one's sense of commitment to the university. The research presented here hopefully presents a framework for usefully addressing these issues that has not been employed previously in the experiential learning realm.

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Figure 1
Revised Model of Organizational Politics Perceptions