

# Examining the Relationships between Organizational Politics, Trust, Harassment, and Job Satisfaction



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## Introduction

Employee job satisfaction is a predictor of several organizational outcomes including deviance behaviors, organizational commitment, performance, and absenteeism. It is important to understand how an organization can develop an environment that is conducive to increasing job satisfaction. Investigation of the antecedents of job satisfaction is necessary to understand this framework of relationships.

Past research has found inverse associations between harassment and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a favorable attitude about the job that is composed of both emotional and cognitive aspects. When individuals are harassed at work, they will experience lower job satisfaction as a result of feeling anger, disrespect, sadness, and frustration.

Trust is an important aspect of social relationships between employees, their supervisors, and their organization. Trust involves the individual's willingness to be vulnerable by hoping that the other party will perform an act that is important to the individual. When employees trust their organization and supervisors, they will be more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviors and attitudes.

Organizational politics are actions that occur within the organization that are perceived as being manipulative, self-serving, and socially-rather than merit-based. Organizational politics are often described as dysfunctional and deleterious to the employee-organization exchange relationship.

Using social exchange and psychological contract theories, we suggest that organizational politics predict distrust on the organizational and individual level, which leads to harassment as a form of retaliation in response to feeling mistreated by the organization. We suggest this predicts decreased job satisfaction.

## Theoretical Framework

### Social Exchange Theory

Social-exchange theory posits that social relationships (e.g., between employees and their supervisor) are structured around feelings of obligation and reciprocation. When one party provides a service or favor, the receiving party feels obligated to do the same.

### Psychological Contract Theory

A psychological contract consists of the types of behaviors that the employee believes the organization is obligated to engage in (e.g., fair procedures). If the organization does not act accordingly, the employee often feels mistreated.

## Hypotheses

- Perceptions of organizational politics are negatively related to (a) job satisfaction, positively related to (b) organizational distrust, negatively related to (c) supervisor trust, and positively related to (d) harassment.
- (a) Supervisor trust and (b) organizational distrust mediate the relationship between (c) organizational politics and (d) harassment.
- Harassment mediates the relationship between (a) supervisor trust and (b) job satisfaction, and between (c) organizational distrust and (d) job satisfaction.

## Methods

- We surveyed full-time workers at the World Health Organization. We analyzed 1,020 responses in our analyses.
- All scales used were previously validated in published research.

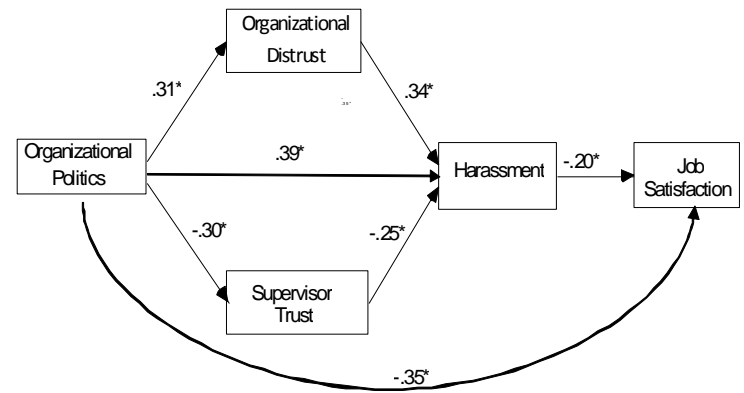
## Conclusions

- Organizational distrust, supervisor trust, and harassment appear to be indirect pathways between organizational politics and job satisfaction.
- Organizational politics is an antecedent of several unfavorable outcomes that negatively effect job satisfaction.

## Results

### Bivariate Statistics

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1) Job satisfaction	3.69	.88	x				
2) Org. Politics	3.37	.58	-.42**	x			
3) Supervisor Trust	3.48	1.30	.40**	-.46**	x		
4) Org. Distrust	3.45	.71	-.35**	.55**	-.42**	x	
5) Harassment	1.7	.40	-.45**	.45**	-.47**	.41**	x



## Practical Implications

- Decreasing the prevalence of politics within an organization may help alleviate some of the factors that contribute to decreased job satisfaction.
- Trust building exercises, fair procedures and firm harassment policies should be stressed and fostered within the workplace.

## Limitations

- All data are self-reported, which makes it possible that common method variance affected our findings.
- The goodness-of-fit indices of our model were inconsistent, suggesting the need to explore alternative pathways.

## Future Research

- Investigate alternative pathways between these variables.
- Explore potential moderators including political skill, ethnicity, or co-worker support.

