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## **Understanding the Role of Emotional Intelligence and Trust to the Relationship between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment**

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### **Abstract**

Political activity has always been cast as part of reality in an organization which may cause both detrimental and beneficial effect. By using the data from 103 employees from various organizations in Bandung & Jakarta - Indonesia this research tries to examine the relationship between employee's Perception of Organizational Politic and Organizational Commitment. This research also examines the moderating and mediating role of Emotional Intelligence and Trust between the relationship of Perception of Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment. The result found that the higher employee's perception of organizational politic the lower the employee's organizational commitment, and trust. Conversely, the higher the employee's trust the higher the organizational commitment. Trust was also found to become the mediating variable for the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. Likewise, emotional intelligence proved able to moderates the relationship between the two variables.

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Keywords: organizational politics; organizational commitment; emotional intelligence; trust; Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

All organizations possess some degree of politics which caused by the different interest and ideas, inside organization (Ferris et al 2012; Marques, 2010). However, even we may not classified organizational politics as solely negative or positive phenomena, previous researches found some detrimental consequences of organizational politics, Bangun YR, Mangkuprawira S, Djohar S (2011) confirmed that the existence of organizational politics negatively impact business performance, yet other previous researches also confirmed that it will increase employee's dissatisfaction and decreasing commitment ( Vigoda, 2000; Innes, 2004; Indartono, 2009; Indartono, Hsi, Chen , 2011; Kacmar et al, 1999). In the other hands, organizational commitment considered as important support the organization's performance. Many researches postulated positive effect of a high committed employee to the organization such as lower turnover intentions, until higher organization performance (Steers, 1977; Meyer, 2002; Innes, 2004). This is why, to compete in nowadays business competitions, business organization demands high degree of commitment inside.

Unfortunately, organizations could not avoid the presents of politics inside them. What are they may be able to do is to manage the political activity into a health political nature and see what things might be suppress the negative relationship between politic in organization and the commitment.

This research tries to examine the relationship between employee's perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. However, since research in business studies may not neglect personal differences and oversimplifying relationship in reality (Vigoda, 2010), this research try to consider the personal differences factors such as trust and emotional intelligence as the mediating and moderating variable between employee's perception of organizational politic and organizational commitment. Furthermore, this research also need to be considered from its' originality, most research in organizational politics study usually done in western and middle eastern, while less research are conducted in Asian countries especially Indonesia. Bangun, YR et al (2011) also aimed that the studies in organizational politics field need to be done more in Indonesia.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Organizational Politic

Some researchers correlates the definitions of organizational politics with employee's actions, and the use of their power to strive their self-interest upon others, (Bozeman 1996,Vigoda- Gadot 2003). While Flemming et al, ( 2008) & Gotsis et al ( 2011) defined organizational politic as an "*intentional acts of influence , actions, even tactics on influencing decision making*". Thus, organizational politics also can be said as an actions by individuals who have intention to ultimate their own self- interest without regard of others well-being or even the organizations (Mintzberg, 1985; Innes 2004).

However, the stream of research in organizational politics also has its' own different focuses. Gotsis (2011) classifies that there are three lines of research focus on organizational politic over the latest two decades and one of the focuses is research which focuses on the organization's members perceptions of the degree of politics inside the organization (common to say as POP). This stream of research appears because the suggestion of some views that individual's behavior may largely as a result of one's perceptions (Lewin, 1936; Ferris et al, 2002), and the view that individual may feel difficult to examine accurately other's self-serving behavior (in this case the political behavior), thus mostly research about organizational politics focus on the perception of member about the degree of politics inside organization.

Looking deeper, the perception of organizational politic also often seen as a form of threat which may influence the belief to strive personal and professional goals of individual inside organization (Chang et al, 2009; Lephine et al.,2005, Atinc et al,2010). In the other hands, it is also argued that the higher the political perceptions in organization, the lower the individual think about the level of justice in the organization (Ferris et al, 1992). These influences happened because when the organization possess a high perception of organizational politics, the members will feel that there are huge ambiguity happened, this ambiguity happened because these members don't know what criteria or what actions will be acknowledge with rewards, punishments or even how an action being recognized and unrecognized (Harris et al , 2007). This is why it is not surprising if many researches postulated

different outcomes and roles regarding the perceptions of politics inside organizations which are most of them emphasize on the negative outcomes.

This study use the scale developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) named as Perception of Organizational Politic Scale. This scale being used for its' comprehensiveness on assessing the perceived political nature in an organization, because it can measures the employee perceptions of the political nature in their organization including the political behavior, the behavior of co-worker and supervisors. (Fields, 2002)

## 2.2. Organizational Commitment

Decades earlier, Kanter (1968) defines commitment as the phenomena when a social actors being loyal and give their effort to the social system. Meyer & Allen (1990) & Robin et al (2008) contended that there are three form of organizational commitment , those are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The affective commitment linked with the emotional attachment between the members and the organization , in this case it can be infer that members who maintain their membership to organization were influenced by their wants (want to). This affective commitment shows the degree of emotional attachment between employee and organization.

Previous studies shows that the higher the person thinks political behavior in his or her organization occurred, the lower the commitment they possessed. (Vigoda,2000; Innes, 2004; Indartono,2009;Indartono,Hsi,Chen,2011).

This is happened because when members possessed a high degree of perception organizational politics, they may feel there are ambiguities and unfair treatment happened because of the political conditions. (Harris et al ,2007; Vigoda, 2000). This feeling of being treated unfair and huge ambiguity may result in the action from the member to reduce their involvement and attachment to the organization which in this term usually called as commitment. (Vigoda,2000).Likewise, Mathieu & Zajac (1990) also aimed that many studies shown that low employee's commitment often seen among employees who suffered from role ambiguity inside the organizations. **H1:** Perception of Organizational Politics will negatively affect Organizational Commitment

This study use the scale developed by Allen & Meyer (1990) named as Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. This scale choosed in this study since it can measures overall type of employee commitment such as the affective, continuance and normative

## 2.3. Trust

Trust may defined as a person expectation or beliefs about future actions that will be beneficial or favorable for his or her interest (Robinson, 1996). Trust which is often needed in some uncertainties situation believed as one of central factors for the well-being of one organization (Ladebo,2006; Ammeter, et al 2004). To gain trust, it was found that interactional justice may be the primary source to employee's trust to their leader (Aryee, et al 2002). However, previous researches confirmed that, political nature in organization may cause some degree of ambiguity of role, and miss judgment of what are being knowledge as reward or punishment in the organization. This situation which resulted ambiguity that indicate the decreasing of trust, because of the facts that employees would feel confuse or uncertain about what are things will be acknowledge as a good or bad from their leaders. This is why, empirically previous research found that the employee's perception of organizational politic will negatively affect trust (Poon, 2006; Vigoda, 2007; Indartono,Hsi-Chen, 2011).

**H2:** Perception of organizational politic will negatively affect Trust

Ladebo (2006) mentioned that, trust also believed to be associated to the higher degree of employee loyalty. This employee loyalty also pictured the employee's commitment into the organization. Some research also contended that the higher the trust, the higher the commitment that employee's possess to the organization (Hopkins et al, 2006; N'Goala, 2007; Indartono, 2009). **H3:** Trust will significantly and positively affect organizational commitment

Previous research found that employee's perception of organizational politic may negatively affect their organizational commitment. However, how does the relation occur? What factor will mediates the relation?

Previously said that trust may develop a long-term orientation which indicates a commitment to organization, trust also may reduce the behaviors indicates as opportunistic, it was also found that employee's perception of politic negatively effect trust and trust positively effect organization commitment, furthermore in the other hands it was also proved that trust mediates the relationship between perception of organization politic and organizational commitment (i.e : Indartono, 2009; Indartono, Hsi-Chen 2011). Thus, it can be indicated that trust may mediate the relationship between perception of organization politic and organizational commitment. **H4** : Trust will mediates the relationship between employee's perception of organization politics and organizational commitment.

Numbers of measurements to assess trust was constructed (i.e : Rotter, 1967; Cook & Wall, 1980), however in this study the measurement developed by Podsakoff (1990) was being used since we viewed trust as the member's faith to their leader. *Why?* In this study, we related the perception of organizational politic variable which may indicates a role ambiguity and trigger miss judgment of what being acknowledge as reward or punishment. This reward or punishment relationship usually given by a supervisor to the member, this is why we see the trust variable as faith to their leader.

#### 2.4. Emotional Intelligence

Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined Emotional Intelligence in a form of four ability, those are ability to perceive emotions, ability to use emotion to contribute the thought, the ability to understand and ability to manage emotion..

Previous researches confirmed that emotional intelligence impacted to job satisfaction, job performance, job stress, absenteeism, and organizational commitment (Vigoda, 2010; Sy,Tram& O'hara, 2006; Nikolaou&Tsaousis,2002). Samad (2011) & Poon (2003) stated that organizational politics are inevitable and job stress is one of the psychological impacts of organizational politics. Likewise, Poon (2003) argued that people with higher emotional intelligence own more mature emotion which enables them to deal with stress more wisely with low emotional intelligence will have too much stress because they will have less self- awareness. Thus when they face difficult conditions in their workplace they won't be able to control and cope with their feelings, and may turn to negative job satisfaction and less organizational commitment (Sy,Tram, O'hara, 2006; Nikolaou, Tsaousis,2002; Abraham, 1999).

According to above analysis , we stated that there might be a hypothesis that emotional intelligence can act as moderating variable between employee's perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the researches which examines the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment usually use trust as it's moderator (Indartono, 2009), in the other hands researches which use emotional intelligence as the moderating variables usually use job performance as the outcomes variable which influenced by perception of organizational politics (Vigoda, 2010). Thus, it is still unclear and less research try to find the moderating effect on the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. This research aimed to fill the research gap, to know broader emphasis on the relation between POP and Organizational Commitment by adding Emotional intelligence as the moderating variable.**H5** : Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politic and organizational commitment

There were instruments developed by previous researches that are useful for practical and research purposes to measure emotional intelligence ( Bar On, Mayer Salovey and Goleman) with many purposes , strengths and limitation..This study use Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) which developed in 2002 to assess the employee's emotional intelligence. This scale being used since it has the consistent view with Mayer & Salovey (1997) view about emotional intelligence. This scale also classified as a quiet brief scale compared to another emotional intelligence scale, however this scale can assess the person's emotional intelligence comprehensively by measuring it in four dimensions such as Self emotion Appraisal (SEA), Use of emotion (UOE), Others- emotion appraisal (OEA), Regulation of emotion (ROE).

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Measures

This research contains of four different variables, named perception of organizational politic (x1), organizational commitment (y), trust (x2 & mediating), emotional intelligence (moderating). All the scales being used in this research are adapted from the previous researches. However since all the scale was developed in English, translation to Indonesian applied to all the items (total 58 items). All of the items also use 5 point likert scale from 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

##### *X 1(Perception of Organizational Politics)*

This study used Perception of Organizational Politics Scale or usually called as POPs developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). This scale consist of 12 (twelve) different items.. Perception of Organizational Politic Scale divided into three dimensions named as “general political behavior” (6 items) , “ambiguity in pay and promotions” (2 items) , and “get along to get ahead” behavior (4 items). The general political behavior measures a more open or observable form of action to leverage personal gain, it is also to measure a more blatant action (Indartono, 2008). In the other hands, the dimension of get along to get ahead refers to more covert behavior in order to leverage personal gain. (Indartono,2008). In the end, this scale also measures the political action in the pay and promotion practices. To measure this dimensions, the question of the occurrence of politic in the application of pay and promotion was asked.

##### *Dependent Variable (Organizational Commitment)*

To assess the organizational commitment, this study used Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Allen and Meyer 1990. There are 24 items being used and translated in this study. OCQ was developed to measures employee’s commitment to the organization. In this scales, Allen & Meyer divided it into three dimensions named as “affective” (8 items), “normative” (8 items) and “continuance” (8 items) commitment. Affective commitment is more related to the employee’s emotional attachment to the organization. In the other hands, Normative commitment more related to the member’s feeling that it is a must to stay with the organization (mostly based on moral and ethics. The last dimension is Continuance commitment which more focused to the economical commitment from member to the organization.

##### *Mediating Variable (Trust)*

To assess the variable trust, this research use the scale developed by Podsakoff in 1990. This scale of trust consisted of 6 item questions which divided into two dimensions. The first dimension is the member’s faith to the leader’s intentions.. This dimension tries to see how much he or she as the member trusts his or her leader not to deceive them. The last dimension is the member’s loyalty to the leader.

##### *Moderating Variable (Emotional Intelligence)*

To assess the participant’s emotional intelligence, the scale developed by Wong and Law (WLEIS – Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale) was used in this research. This emotional intelligence scale consisted of 16 items of questions with four dimensions such as ability to feel self- emotion, others- emotion, and also the use of emotion and how they regulate their emotion. All the dimensions have 4 items questions each.

The first dimension named Self - Emotion Appraisal (SEA) assess a person ability to understand their own emotions. The second dimension named Others-Emotion Appraisal (OEA) asses a person ability to understand other’s emotion. The third dimension named Use of Emotion (UOE) is the person’s ability to use their emotion to enhance their performance. The last dimension named Regulation of Emotion (ROE) which assess the person ability to manage their emotion.

#### 3.2. Samples

Participants of this research are 103 employees from different organizations in Bandung & Jakarta within different industries. To be able to understand the nature of the organization, the standard of 1 year minimum working tenure in the company has been set as one of the criteria to become participants in this research.

### 3.3. Data Analysis and Procedure

To test H1-H4, series of linear regression used to confirm the hypothesized relationship. In the other hands, MRA (moderated regression analysis) also used to test the moderating role of emotional intelligence between perception of organizational politic and organizational commitment (H5).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Respondents Profile

Total numbers of respondents are 103 persons. The gender compositions of respondent in this research are 45% male and 55% female. The education level are mostly bachelor degree (77%), and 23% are holds master degree. Mostly respondents in this research has 2 - 4 years participation in the company (44%), and then followed by those who has around 1-2 years participation in the company (32%), and last those who has more than 4 years participation (24%).

### 4.2. Validity and Reliability

From all the tests, it was found that all items in the measurements are considered as valid & reliable (all scales' corrected item-total correlation more than  $r$  table = 0.1937).

Perception of Organizational Politic Scale (POPs) by Kacmar & Ferris (1991) was found reliable to use with reliability scale (cronbach alpha) 0.986. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Allen & Meyer 1990 also assumed reliable to use with reliability scale (cronbach alpha) 0.992. The Trust scale developed by Podsakoff in 1990 also found reliable to use with reliability scale (cronbach alpha) 0.980. Likewise, Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong and Law, 2002 also was found as reliable with scale (cronbach alpha) 0.987.

### 4.3. Hypotheses Testing

#### Hypothesis 1 – Hypothesis 3

From all the results, it may be inferred that H1 was supported which means the higher the employee's perception of organizational politic the lower the organizational commitment (sig =0.000 means significant < 0.05, with beta score = -.338). H2 is also supported, which shows the higher the employee's perception of organizational politic the lower the employee's trust to the organization and the leader (sig =0.002 means significant < 0.05, with beta score = -.300). The third hypothesis (H3) was shown as supported which also means that the higher the employee's trust to the organization, the higher their organizational commitment (sig =0.000 means significant < 0.05, with beta score = -.712).

#### Hypothesis 4

To see the mediating effect of trust as the predicted mediator variable a regression analysis which included perception of organizational politic and trust was tested to the organizational commitment. From the result it was found that, when the trust variable included in the regression the relation between perception of organizational politic and organizational commitment become insignificant (sig > 0.05 scored at 0.063). This is proved that the trust variable is able to mediate the relationship between perception of organizational politic and organizational commitment. Thus, it can be inferred that H4 is supported.

#### Hypotheses 5

To test the 5th hypotheses this study uses the Moderated Regression Analysis. Before continuing the regression, the making of new variable named "Moderator" was made from the multiplication between the independent variable (POP) and the predicted moderating variable (EI).

From the result, based on the adjusted R square it can be inferred that the employee's perception of organizational politic, emotional intelligence and the moderator variable can predict 69,6% variations of organizational commitment. Furthermore, in the 4th Table we may see that the F test result is 78.839 with the

significance level of 0.000 (<0.005 means significant) which means that organizational commitment can be predicted by perception of organizational politics, emotional intelligence, and the moderator (perception of organizational politics \* emotional intelligence).

To prove the moderating role, set of T test being used. From the result we may infer that the “moderator” variable possess B score 0.279 with significant level 0.000 (<0.05 means significant). This result proved the “moderator” variable can be claimed as the moderating variable. However, from Table.6 we may also see that the Emotional Intelligence variable possess an insignificant level scored more than 0.05 this means that Emotional Intelligence can only be concluded as the pure moderator variable, it cannot be claimed as both moderator and independent variable.

The other result from this research also found that employee with high emotional intelligence will possess a higher organizational commitment when their perception of organizational politics become higher. Otherwise, employee with low emotional intelligence will possess a lower organizational commitment when their perception of organizational politics become higher. In this case, it shows that Emotional Intelligence can change the relationship direction between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment from negative into positive.

## 5. Conclusion

Many research proved that the political nature in organization may lead into detrimental effect to both the organization and the employees. However, since its' inevitability in organization what we need to do is to know whether there are any aspect which may suppress or even changed the effect.

This study not only gives a support to the previous studies about the negative effect of organizational politics into organizational commitment (i.e : Vigoda, 2000; Innes, 2004; Indartono, 2009; Indartono, Hsi, Chen , 2011; Kacmar et al, 1999), but also gives a comprehensive understanding by adding the mediating role of trust and the moderating role of emotional intelligence. From its' findings, it was proved that the employee's trust will positively affect their commitment to the organization and trust also played as the mediator between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. Furthermore, this research also found that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment by changing its' relationship direction from negative into positive. One of the finding of this study support previous researches that employee's perception of organizational politics negatively influences trust and organizational commitment. This is confirmed Vigoda's (2000) & Harris et al (2007) insights that the lower organizational commitment occurred because the feeling of unfair treatment and ambiguities caused by the employees perceived a high political nature in the organization. This feeling of unfair treatment and role ambiguities also represent the decreasing level of trust by the employee, this is why from this study it is confirmed that trust also mediates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment.

However, this study's unique contribution is by showing the changing of relationship direction between the perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment. It is confirmed that employees with higher emotional intelligence will have a higher organizational commitment even when they perceived a high political nature inside the organization. In other words individual with better emotional intelligence will face the existence of organizational politics better than those with lower level understanding emotional intelligence. It will give way the idea of increasing employee emotional intelligence will impact the perception of organizational politics and at the same time would not decrease organizational commitment. This event may supported by previous researches insights that people with higher emotional intelligence will have a wiser control with their emotion and feeling, thus even when they facing a stressful situation they will be able to control it more wisely, and conversely to those who have a low emotional intelligence (Poon, 2003; Sy, Tram & O'hara, 2006; Nikolaou & Tsousis, 2002; Abraham, 1999).

This study also gives contribution both managerial and theoretical. Theoretically, this study gives an additional insights regarding to the organizational politics study in Indonesia. Managerially, this study gives a hint on what variable may suppress or change the negative effect of perception of organizational politics with commitment. By knowing that employees with higher emotional intelligence will have a higher organizational commitment even



when the perception of organizational politics is high, managers may set some strategies on the recruitment process. In this case, managers may be able to consider more about the person's emotional intelligence in the recruitment process, since the cost to form person's emotional intelligence will be high it will be better to recruit those who already have a good emotional intelligence. In the other hands, it was found that trust can mediate the relationship between perception of organizational politics and commitment. From this finding, managers can see that it is important to gain employee's trust in order to enhance their commitment. Instead of focusing on how to eliminate the politics inside the organization, managers can be more focus on creating a more transparent working environment, and also act as a role model who can be trusted by the employee.

However, this study also possess its' limitations. First, a larger number of data needed to have a more generalized result. Second, the use of self-reporting questionnaire may also add the bias in the study, thus the more in-depth observation needed to measure the quantitative research in future. However Vigoda (2010) said that we need also consider more about the personal differences factor, thus in the future the inclusion of personal differences factors such as self-efficacy, and personal political skill being needed.

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