

Print ISSN: 2288-4637 / Online ISSN 2288-4645  
doi:10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no2.0571

## Impact of Organizational Politics on Employees' Behavioral Outcomes: The Role of Social Astuteness\*

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Received: November 05, 2020 Revised: December 30, 2020 Accepted: January 08, 2021

### Abstract

Employers and employees are seriously suffering from perceived organizational politics exhibited in the workplace, and they are searching for remedial ways. The current study was carried out to measure the (i) effects of the employees' perceived organizational politics on their behavioral outcomes, and (b) the remedial role of employees' social astuteness in the relationship of their perceived organizational politics to behavioral outcomes (i.e., work engagement and turnover intention). Seven hundred and twenty-five employees working in Nepalese A graded banks were surveyed to collect the perceptual cross-sectional data. The data were quantitatively analyzed, adopting the deducting reasoning approach. Regression analysis revealed that (i) perceived organizational politics negatively impacted on work engagement and positively impacted on turnover intention, (ii) social astuteness moderated the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' behavioral outcome. Moreover, perceived organizational politics' detrimental impact was less severe for employees who possess high social astuteness as compared to those who have less social astuteness. The remedial effect of social astuteness was measured more useful for high organizational politics perceiver than for low perceiver. A number of theoretical and practical implications are suggested to improve the employees' behavioral outcomes from the detrimental impact of perceived corporate politics.

**Keywords:** Organizational Politics, Social Astuteness, Employee Outcomes, Turnover Intention, Work Engagement

**JEL Classification Code:** M10, M12, M54, O15

### 1. Background

Perceived organizational politics refers to the observers' judgments about the intent behind an actor's behavior (Albrecht & Landells, 2012; Silvester, 2008). It is an indispensable factor in the workplace (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Perceived organizational politics strongly impact employee outcomes like job satisfaction, turnover intention, job involvement, job anxiety (Ferris et al., 1989). Nevertheless, direction (i.e., positive, harmful, indifference)

and size of impacts (i.e., strong, medium, weak) are not uniform throughout the context (Chang et al., 2009). Scholars like Buchanan and Badham (2008), Crawford et al. (2010), Ferris et al. (1989) have revealed the unfavorable effects of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes. But, researchers like Silvester (2008), Valle and Perrew (2000) have stated perceived organizational politics itself is as neutral to affect employees and organization. This research focused on the interactive effect of perceived corporate politics on the environment and individual as the primary determinant to impact positively or negatively. Moreover, Buchanan (2008) and Hochwarter et al. (2010) have argued that perceived organizational politics positively impacts on employees and organization. These researchers underlined that a critical level of perceived corporate politics is needed to activate attention and mobilize the energies (Hochwarter et al., 2010), ultimately improving employee outcomes. Therefore, managers are in the predicament of controlling organizational politics and its effects on employees and the organization.

Perceived organizational politics is an inevitable factor for every organization because its actions revolved around politics (Hochwarter, 2012). However, in this domain, most

#### \*Acknowledgements:

This article is a part of the Ph.D. research work that was funded by University Grants Commission of Nepal (award number: PhD/73-74/Mgmt/04)

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of the studies were carried out in developed countries and not in the context of underdeveloped countries. The theory designed in developed countries will have little confidence to be generalized to developing countries (Tsui et al., 2007) or in other cultural settings. Even within the developed countries, empirical evidence showed differences in the impacts of perceived organizational politics. Vigoda (2001) has tested British employees' and Israeli employees' similar corporate politics levels and differences in organizational politics responses. Therefore, the supply of empirical evidence from underdeveloped countries like Nepal seems necessary in the perceived organizational politics literature.

Besides the contradicting impact of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes, meta-analyses of Bedi and Schat (2013), Chang et al. (2009), and Miller et al. (2008) reported that a large number of empirical evidence showed the detrimental impacts of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes. Furthermore, being an organization as a political coalition (March, 1962), perceived politics at the workplace is unavoidable (Hochwarter, 2012). Therefore, studies to search for mitigating factors for the detrimental impact of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes are essential. To minimize the damaging effects of perceived corporate politics on employee outcomes, Ferris et al. (1989) have proposed a model that states that employees' perception of understanding and control over the political situation might mitigate the detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes. Therefore, this study has proposed that employees' social astuteness contributes to having understanding and control for the political situation exhibited in the workplace and ultimately less suffered (or more benefited) from the perceived organizational politics.

As the response for the circumstance mentioned earlier, in the context of Nepalese organizations, this study aims to measure: firstly, the direct impact of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes (i.e., work engagement and turnover intention); secondly, the mitigating role of social astuteness for the detrimental impact of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the current study aims to measure social astuteness's mitigating strength under different perceived organizational politics levels.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Perceived Organizational Politics

Organizational politics is a challenging area to study because it involves observers' judgments about the intent behind an actor's behavior (Albrecht & Landells, 2012; Silvester, 2008). Gandz and Murrery (1980) have suggested that politics should be conceived of as a subjective evaluation rather than objective reality because organizational and

employees are seriously affected by the employees' perception of reality rather than the reality of incidents. Consistent with this argument, Lewin (1936) has argued that individuals respond based on their perceptions of fact, not necessarily reality per se. That is why it has been argued that perceived organizational politics are considered to have insight understanding even though it deviates from the actual events (Porter, 1976) at the workplace.

### 2.2. Social Astuteness

Ferris et al. (2005) have stated political skills as a composite of four dimensions, i.e., apparent sincerity, social astuteness, networking ability, and interpersonal influence. In the current study, social astuteness has been borrowed from the dimensions of political skills. Zellars et al. (2008) have described political skills as the factors that integrate employees' social astuteness adjusting their behavior to various circumstances to reflect as sincere, trustworthy, and interpersonal astute. Similarly, Perrewe et al. (2005, p. 311) describe it as "the ability to understand others at work effectively and use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and organizational objectives."

### 2.3. Perceived Organizational Politics and Work Engagement

Engaged employees are fully motivated and dedicated to their assigned tasks with concentration and determination (Rich et al., 2010). Organizational politics as a hindrance stressor refers to demands or circumstances that arise from work that either hamper or impede individuals' personal goal attainment and growth. Aligning with the same discerning, Vigoda (2000) states organizational politics can cause disengagement or psychological withdrawal of an individual where employees may be physically present at the workplace, but their minds are elsewhere. Therefore, an individual who perceives their work as political and source of hindrance stressor desire to make themselves to be less engaged in their work (Bouckenoghe, 2012). Empirically, Cropanzano et al. (1997) have tested the negative relationship between perceived organizational politics and job involvement.

Conversely, Crawford et al.'s (2010) meta-analytical exploration has indicated that challenge stressors positively influence employee engagement, and employees can appraise perceived organizational politics as challenge stressor (Eldor, 2016). Organizations perceived to be political are thought to stimulate power, status, and achievement-seeking behavior and these attributes are often associated with engagement (Mills et al., 2012). Supporting these theoretical arguments, empirical evidence verified the positive impacts of perceived organizational politics on job involvement (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) and work engagement (Landells & Albrecht, 2017).

Moreover, there was an even insignificant relationship between perceived organizational politics and job involvement (Cropanzano et al., 1997).

Those, as mentioned earlier, controverting theoretical arguments and inadequate empirical evidence advocate for further study without a directional hypothesis. Consequently, this study postulated that employees' perceived organizational politics impact their engagement level, but the association's direction can be determined by interaction with other constructs. Hence, this study formulated the hypothesis as:

***H1:** Employees' perceived organizational politics impacts on employees' work engagement. Positive or negative effects depend on whether they perceive organizational politics as a challenge stressor or hindrance stressor.*

## **2.4. Perceived Organizational Politics and Turnover Intention**

The employee may withdraw from the organization as a means of avoiding political activities. One form of withdrawal is a turnover intention, which is about serious and deliberate thinking to leave the current organization, where it can be either actual or psychological (Kacmar et al., 1999). Employees perceiving unequal behavior and workplace, like getting the promotion opportunities only by influential or political people, are encouraged to leave their job emotionally and physically (Cropanzano et al., 1997).

Empirically, Kacmar et al. (1999), Vigoda (2000), Valle and Perrewé (2000), and Cropanzano et al. (1997) have tested the positive impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention. But Cropanzano et al. (1997), and Harrell-Cook et al. (1999) have tested the insignificant impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention. Empirical evidence shows the correlations between perceived organizational politics and turnover intentions ranged from  $-.05$  (Larwood et al., 1998) to  $.60$  (Vigoda, 2001). Most researchers have revealed a positive association between the perceived organizational politics and turnover intention; however, significant empirical evidence is not positive (i.e., insignificant and even negative). Therefore, such a wide range of findings, especially, regarding directionality, advocate further study without a directional hypothesis. Consequently, this study postulates that employees' perception of their workplace as political may direct them to think about whether to leave the current organization or not. Hence, the hypothesis was formulated as follows:

***H2:** Employees' perceived organizational politics impacts on employees' turnover intention. The direction of the effects as positive or negative depends on whether they perceive organizational politics as a challenge stressor or hindrance stressor.*

## **2.5. Social Astuteness, Perceived Organizational Politics and Behavioral Outcomes**

Perceived organizational politics model initially proposed by Ferris et al. (1989), and tested by scholars in a different context with modification (e.g., Ferris et al., 1996; Harrell-Cook et al., 1999; Kacmar et al., 1999; Parker et al., 1995; Valle & Perrewé, 2000) state that the relationship between perceived organizational politics and subsequent outcomes is moderated by understanding and control. Where, understanding refers to the extent to which one comprehends how and why things happened the way that they do in an organization (Ferris et al., 1989). If an employee possesses better knowledge of decision-making circumstance, the intention of the decision, and decision-maker, there would have a better understanding of how and why things happen the way they do than others who do not understand the decision-making process in the organization (Kacmar et al., 1999). Likewise, control represents the extent to which people can exercise influence over their environment (Ferris et al., 1996). Suppose employees perceive that politics goes on in their work environment and have/or feel little control over the process. In that case, workplace politics can be interpreted as a threat and expected to lead to more negative outcomes. However, if employees have/ or feel that they have a high degree of control over the process and results, and then expected to lead to positive effects.

Reactions to perceived organizational politics can be differing (moderated) by the degree of personal resources as understanding and control of the individual. There are several ways to optimize the effect of perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes in the workplace. Corporate, job, and personal resources moderate the influence of organizational politics (both as 'challenge' demands and 'hindrance demands) on employee outcomes. Therefore, intervention should also optimize and manage organizational, job, and personal resources (Albrecht & Landells, 2012). Regarding the ways to improve outcomes due to perceived organizational politics, Hochwarter et al. (2004, p. 45) argued that "having some level of control over the work environment and understanding the underlying rationale for organizational phenomenon can partially ameliorate the harmful effects of politics perceptions." Therefore, this study considers social astuteness as personal or individual level resources that may improve the relationship between the perceived organizational politics and stated employee outcomes. Thus, the following hypothesis was postulated.

***H3:** Employees' social astuteness moderates the impact of perceived organizational politics on work engagement. The effect of perceived organizational politics on work engagement will be more substantial for those employees who possess high social astuteness than those who have less social astuteness.*

**H4:** *Employees' social astuteness moderates the impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention. The effect of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention will be more substantial for those employees who possess high social astuteness than those employees who have less social astuteness.*

### 3. Research Methods

#### 3.1. Measures

Except for the control variables, all the measures were calculated from a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree' for each statement. Respondents were asked to evaluate each statement based on their degree of agreement or disagreement. Besides, rephrasing the statement for the easy to respondents considering the study's context, all the construct items were adopted from already developed and validated measures in other contexts.

##### 3.1.1. Perceived Organizational Politics

Nine items were used to measure perceived organizational politics. Out of the nine items, six items were developed and used by Vigoda (2001), and the remaining three items were added to ensure the content validity in the context of the study. A sample items includes "in this organization, people are more concentrated to please senior and influential people who can help them." In the current study, the composite reliability of the construct was .93.

##### 3.1.2. Social Astuteness

Social astuteness was measured by three items scale developed by Ferris et al. (2005). Ferris et al.'s 18 items scale cover the four different political skills constructs, including social astuteness. A sample item includes "I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others." In the current study, the composite reliability of the construct was measured 0.84.

##### 3.1.3. Work Engagement

Work engagement has been measured using a seven-item scale motivated from the original five-item scale of Saks (2006). Two items are added to Sack's original scale to better capture the construct in our context. An added item is "when I work, I forget everything else around me." In the current study, the composite reliability of the construct was estimated .81.

##### 3.1.4. Turnover Intention

Turnover intention is theorized simply as the behavioral intent to leave an organization, and it has been measured

using five items developed by Khatri et al. (2001). In addition to Khatri et al.'s scale, this study added one item to ensure the construct's content validity. An added item is "I don't see a desirable future in this organization." In the current study, composite reliability was estimated at 0.90.

#### 3.2. Questionnaire Administration

Seventeen first-class financial institutions were randomly selected from the list published by Nepal's central bank. Within the chosen sample bank, questionnaires were distributed to the employees as per the researcher's convenience. Twelve hundred questionnaires were physically distributed among the employees. A referent person from the concerned bank employee was appointed to facilitate the survey process in each bank. The referent person was well instructed for the distribution and collection of returned bank questionnaire. Respondents were assigned a week time period to fill up and return the questionnaire. Out of the distributed questionnaire, 71% (855) of respondents were returned back within the given period. Again, only 85% (725) of the returned back questionnaire were considered for the analysis.

#### 3.3. Measurement Model

To ensure the goodness of model fit index, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was executed employing the analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS) version 24. In the first step, the entire 25 construct measuring items were loaded to the corresponding four latent constructs (perceived organizational politics, social astuteness, work engagement, and turnover intention). Among the 25 measuring items, one item of perceived organizational politics, two items of the work engagement, and two turnover intention items was removed from the measurement model because they were loading less than .60 (Awang, 2015) in their corresponding latent construct. In the second step, from the modification indices, a pair of error terms within respective latent constructs (i.e., perceived organizational politics) showed the covariance error term more than .30 (Awang, 2015) were correlated to set as a free parameter estimate. Consequently, as per the cut off criteria of Hu and Bentler (1999), a good model fit index was achieved (CMIN/DF = 3.20, DF = 163, CFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05, and Pclose = 0.06).

#### 3.4. Validity

Convergent validity is achieved when all the items in a measurement model are statistically significant (Awang, 2015), and the Average Variance Extraction (AVE) of every latent construct is more than .50 (Awang, 2015; Hair et al., 2010). In the current study, all the retained items in

the measurement model were statistically significant from the confirmatory factor analysis. AVE for every latent construct were greater than 0.50 (perceived organizational politics = 0.62, social astuteness = 0.63, work engagement = 0.46, turnover intention = 0.70) except in the case of work engagement. However, the composite reliability of the construct work engagement was 0.81. Regarding AVE less than 0.50 for convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) have stated that if AVE is less than 0.50, composite reliability is higher than 0.60, the construct's convergent validity is still adequate.

Discriminant validity of the measures is ensured when the correlation between predictor variables are less than 0.85 (Awang, 2015), or Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) is less than AVE (Hair et al., 2010), or square root of AVE are higher than inter-construct correlation of corresponding factor. In current study, MSV (i.e., perceived organizational politics = 0.08, social astuteness = 0.08, work engagement = 0.07, turnover intention = 0.08) was measured less than AVE in every case and square root of AVE (perceived organizational politics = 0.79, social astuteness = 0.80, work engagement = 0.68, turnover intention = 0.84) were higher than inter-construct correlation of corresponding factor (Table 1).

### 3.5. Data Analysis

Incomplete respondents, unengaged respondents, and outlier data were removed. The CFA was employed to ensure the goodness of fit index and the data's reliability and validity. Subsequently, to compare the factor retention from the CFA with factor loaded in Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), an EFA was employed. Factor retention from CFA

and factor loading in EFA confirmed each construct's items. As a result, a goodness of fit index ensured that data were good fitted with a measurement model for further analysis. Therefore, factors were imputed from the latent construct to the observed variable for further inferential analysis. Causal relationships from inferential statistics were computed. Hierarchical Regression Model, as the guidelines provided by Baron and Kenny (1986), have been applied to measure the moderating (interactive) effect. Moreover, interactive effect were presented in graph (Aiken & West, 1991) to show the strength of moderation by social astuteness under different situation of perceived organizational politics and employees' behavioral outcomes.

## 4. Results

Table 1 depicts the Pearson correlation coefficients of the study variables. The direction of the correlation between these variables was as expected. The strongest correlation was between perceived organizational politics and social astuteness (i.e.,  $r = 0.32$ ); therefore, there was no multicollinearity issue. As depicted in Step 1 of Table 2, to predict work engagement, control variables (i.e., gender, age, tenure, unionization, membership of the union, and designation) explained 3.5 percentage ( $R^2 = 0.035$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) of variance in the model. Moreover, after controlling the effect of control variables, as depicted in Step 2 of Table 2, to predict the work engagement, coefficient of perceived organizational politics was statistically significant ( $B = -0.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with contributing 1.30 % ( $R^2 = 0.013$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) additional variation in the model. Hence, hypothesis 1 was accepted, supporting a negative impact of employees' perceived organizational politics on their work engagement.

**Table 1:** Correlation Between Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender								
2. Age	-0.11**							
3. Tenure	-0.04	0.25**						
4. Unionization	0.04	-0.19**	-0.09*					
5. Union's membership	0.09*	-0.12**	-0.04	0.16**				
6. Designation	0.17**	-0.46**	-0.22**	0.11**	-0.02			
7. Work Engagement	-0.04	0.06	-0.03	0.03	-0.08	-0.04		
8. Social Astuteness	-0.09*	0.09*	0.16**	-0.16**	-0.14**	-0.03	0.15**	
9. Perceived organizational politics	-0.01	0.29**	0.01	-0.23**	-0.02	-0.13**	-0.09*	0.32**
10. Turnover intention	0.11**	-0.07*	0.04	0.01	0.18**	0.08*	-0.31**	0.04

\*\* , \* Correlation is significant at the .01 and .05 levels, respectively (2-tailed).

**Table 2:** Regression Analysis: Direct and Interactive Effect

Step	Variables	Dependent Variables	
		Work engagement (B)	Turnover intention (B)
Step 1	Control variable		
	Sex	-0.02	0.17**
	Age	0.04	-0.01
	Tenure	-0.03	-0.08
	Unionization	0.35**	-0.75**
	Membership	-0.09*	0.24**
	Designation	-0.01	0.04
	$\Delta R^2$	0.035**	0.116**
Step 2	Main effect		
	Perceived organizational politics	-0.08**	0.27**
	$\Delta R^2$	0.013**	0.098**
Step 3	Main effect		
	Social astuteness	0.28**	-0.15**
	$\Delta R^2$	0.076**	0.013**
Step 4	Interactive Effect		
	Perceived organizational politics X Social astuteness	0.22**	-0.29**
	$\Delta R^2$	0.082**	0.089**

\*\* , \* , indicates the level of significant at 0.01, and 0.05 levels, respectively

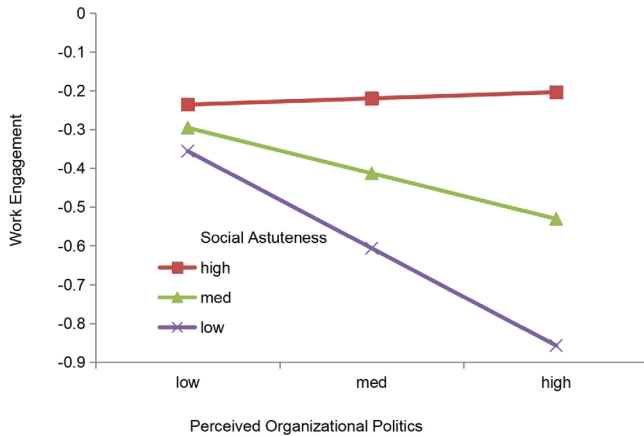
Similarly, as depicted in Step 1 of Table 2, to predict turnover intention, control variables explained 11.60 percentage ( $R^2 = 0.116$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) of variance in the model. Likewise, after controlling the effect of control variable, as depicted in Step 2 of Table 2, to predict the turnover intention, coefficient of perceived organizational politics was statistically significant ( $B = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with contributing 9.80 % ( $R^2 = 0.098$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) additional variation in the model. Hence, hypothesis 2 was accepted, supporting a positive impact on employees' perceived organizational politics on their turnover intention.

As depicted in Step 4 in Table 2, coefficient of interactive effective effect of perceived organizational politics and social astuteness to predict work engagement was statistically significant ( $B = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with contributing 8.20% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.082$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) of variance in the model. Hence, hypothesis 3 was accepted, verifying the employees' social astuteness as moderator in the relationship between their perceived organizational politics and work engagement.

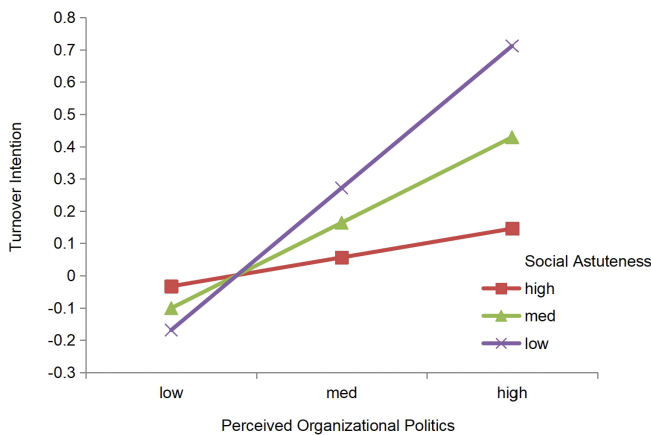
Change in  $R^2$  was used to measure the moderating effect of social astuteness in the direct relationships of perceived organizational politics to employees' behavioral outcomes, but it shows only average effect size (Witt et al., 2000). To see the different effect size under different situation of interaction of the moderating and independent variable, three levels (high = mean value plus 1SD, medium = mean value, and low = mean value minus 1SD) of interactive effect sizes were plotted in the graph as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). Hence, to measure the three levels of criterion effect, interactive regression models were introduced in graph. According to Aiken and West (1991), statistically, significant interactions occur when the three lines representing the high, medium, and low value of moderating variables (here, social astuteness) are not parallel.

Graphic presentation of interactive effects of perceived organizational politics and social astuteness to predict the work engagement is shown in Figure 1. Graphs representing the high, medium, and low social astuteness levels are not parallel and sloped negatively (low and medium representing graph) and straight (high representing graph). Social astuteness representing graph were becoming less steep with an increase in the level of social astuteness (low to high), which means social astuteness has buffered moderation in the relationship of perceived organizational politics to work engagement.

Graph representing a low social astuteness value was comparatively steeper than both medium value and a high value representing graphs. It indicated a relatively strong negative prediction of perceived organizational politics on the work engagement of those employees who had a low level of social astuteness. Likewise, for the employees perceiving low organizational politics, it does not significantly matter whether social astuteness was either low or medium or high; the mitigating result was nearly the same. But with the increasing level of perceived organizational politics from low to high, differences of mitigating power of the low, medium, and high social astuteness were increasing. Moreover, as depicted in Figure 1, at a fixed point of perceived organizational politics (e.g., high level), the impact of perceived organizational politics on work engagement was increased as increased in the level of social astuteness.



**Figure 1:** Graphic Presentation of Moderating Role of Social Astuteness in the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Politics and Work Engagement



**Figure 2:** Graphic Presentation of Moderating Role of Social Astuteness in the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Politics and Turnover Intention

As depicted in Step 4 in Table 2, coefficient of interactive effective effect of perceived organizational politics and social astuteness to predict turnover intention was statistically significant ( $B = -0.29, p < 0.01$ ) with contributing 8.90% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.089, p < 0.01$ ) of variance in the model. Hence, hypothesis 4 was accepted, confirming the employees’ social astuteness as a moderator in the relationship between their perceived organizational politics and turnover intention.

Graphic presentation of interactive effects of perceived organizational politics and social astuteness to predict the turnover intention is shown in Figure 2. Graphs representing the high, medium, and low social astuteness levels were not parallel and sloped positively. Social astuteness representing graphs was becoming less steep with increased social astuteness (low to high). This means social astuteness has buffered moderation in the relationships between perceived organizational politics and turnover intention.

Graph representing a low social astuteness value was comparatively steeper than both medium and low value representing graphs. It indicated a relatively strong optimistic prediction of perceived organizational politics on the turnover intention for those employees who had a low level of social astuteness. Likewise, for the employees who perceived just more than a low level of organizational politics, for them, it does not matter whether social astuteness was either low or medium or high. The mitigating result was the same. But with the increasing level of perceived organizational politics from low to high, differences of mitigating power of the low, medium, and high social astuteness were increasing. Moreover, as depicted in Figure 2, at a fixed point of perceived organizational politics (e.g., high level), the impact of perceived corporate politics on turnover intention was decreased as an increase in the level of social astuteness.

## 5. Discussion and Implication

### 5.1. Discussion

This study has unveiled a negative impact of perceived organizational politics on work engagement. The finding of this study is consistent with a large number of prior studies, e.g., Bouckenoghe (2012), Cropanzano et al. (1997), and Vigoda (2000). However, few studies argue the positive impact of perceived organizational politics on work engagement like Ferris and Kacmar (1992), Landells and Albrecht (2017). Possible causes of such contradicting findings and the theoretical argument could be employees’ self-appraisal as a challenge or hindrance stressors from their organizational politics. Byrne et al. (2017) argue that the positive or negative impact of perceived corporate politics depends on either employees appraise their organizational politics as a challenge (positive) or a hindrance (negative) stressors. An employee who appraises the negative politics perception as a hindrance stressor their coping strategies could be decreasing their engagement, narrowing the focus of their attention, and disengaging (Byrne et al., 2017). Furthermore, there are other variables that may influence work engagement, e.g., talent management (Sopiah et al., 2020). Therefore, further studies can be more fruitful, if it is carried out controlling the effect of these variables.

Likewise, this study has unveiled a positive impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention. It means an increase in employees’ perceived corporate politics causes to increase in their turnover intention. This finding consists with the number of prior empirical evidence, e.g., Kacmar et al. (1999), Vigoda (2000), Valle and Perrew (2000). However, Cropanzano et al. (1997), and Harrell-Cook et al. (1999) have tested the insignificant impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention. Moreover, Larwood et al. (1998) have found a negative effect of perceived corporate politics on employee outcomes.

Inconsistent relationship between perceived organizational politics and turnover intention may be due to the concerned job market's unemployment rate. Wherever the labor market is tight, it is natural that employees try to stay in the current job because, in this situation, stress from politics will be less harmful than stress due to unemployment. The opposite is true when the labor market is loose. Likewise, a possible cause of having a negative prediction of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention could be employees' political will. Political will refers to an actor's readiness for extending vigor in quest of political objectives (Treadway et al., 2005), where political goals could be either personal or organizational or both. Therefore, employees who possess high political will tend to enjoy staying and working in a political workplace because they can exercise political behavior for their best interest in the political environment. Moreover, others variables like performance, leadership style, and job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2020), perceived organizational support (Hoa, et al., 2020), compensation and work environment (Ingsih et al., 2020) have significantly impact on organizational commitment. Organizational commitment negatively impacts on turn over intention. Therefore, further studies are recommended to carry out incorporating these factors as control variables.

As expected, this study has found the moderating effect of social astuteness in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' behavior outcomes (i.e., work engagement and turnover intention). This means, direct impact size of perceived organizational politics on employee behavioral outcomes changed due to the presence of employees' social astuteness. In other words, the direct effect of perceived organizational politics on employee behavioral outcomes will be affected when perceived corporate politics interacts with employees' social astuteness. In the current study, moderation of social astuteness in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' behavioral outcomes was buffering.

Concerning the moderating role of social astuteness in the relationship between organizational politics perceptions to employee behavioral outcomes, this study's findings are partially consistent (or inconsistency) with few prior studies. Social astuteness is one component of political skills (Ferris et al., 2005), so the analysis was carried out accordingly. For example, Abbas et al. (2014) have concluded that politically-skilled individuals with greater self-efficacy endure dedication even when the perceived organizational politics is more excellent within the organization. Similarly, Crawford et al. (2019) have confirmed significant interaction of perceived organizational politics and political skill with self-rated deviance and insignificant with supervisor-rated deviance behavior. In the same light, Kapoutsis et al. (2012) have tested the interactive effect of political skill and perceptions of organizational politics on job performance.

They have measured and explained that increased political skill was associated with increases in job performance under the conditions of low perceived organizational politics. Under the conditions of high perceived corporate politics, gains in political skills were demonstrated having no relationship with job performance.

In terms of moderation, the fundamental concept of current study was employee's perceived control and understanding over their work environments that translate stressor (e.g., politics) into opportunities or threats and thus moderate the relationship between stressors and outcomes (Ferris et al., 1996). Here, understanding refers to knowledge about the causes of significant events in the workplace or the extent to which one comprehends why and how events are going on (Ferris et al., 1989). Likewise, perceived control represents the "...extent to which one believes they can exercise influence over people and condition, or more generally, over one's relevant environment" (Ferris et al., 1989, p. 162). Therefore, control represents the extent to which people can exercise influence over their environment (Ferris et al., 1996). These two concepts are distinct but overlapped because if one develops the understanding of the how and why of organization politics occurring in their workplace, they could probably exercise some control over both political processes and outcomes (Ferris et al., 1989). They have stated that if employees perceive their work environment more political and perceive little (or no) understanding of or control over the process, politics could be interpreted as a threat and would be expected to lead to more negative outcomes. However, if employees understand the causes and consequences of political behavior and feel that they have a high degree of control over the process and effects, more favorable outcomes should result.

The concept of understanding and control as a moderator in the relationship of perceived organizational politics to employee outcomes have been empirically tested in different contexts, including this study. In the context of this study, the employee has translated their stress from perceived organizational politics as opportunities that contributed to mitigating the detrimental effect on specified employees' behavioral outcomes. It means due to employees' social astuteness, employee understand their workplace circumstances properly (causes and consequences of political happenings) and can control the situation for their interest (process and outcomes) or can neutralize others' self-serving behavior, ultimately these contributed to mitigate detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employees behavioral outcomes (i.e., work engagement and turnover intention). Hence, the degree of perception of control and understanding due to employees' social astuteness could be the possible reasons for mitigating the detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes.



To more closely examine the nature and form of the interaction, interactions were plotted in a graph using the procedure outlined by Aiken and West (1991). Diagrams (Figure 1 and Figure 2) revealed the precise form of the buffering moderation of social astuteness in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' behavioral outcomes. Regarding the buffering moderation, the study's first novel finding was the degree and direction of association of perceived organizational politics and employee behavioral outcomes under different levels of social astuteness. More specifically, within the moderation, degree, and direction of social astuteness in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' behavioral outcomes. Two different nature of relationships were revealed. Firstly, a relatively strong negative prediction of perceived organizational politics on employee work engagement was for employees who had a low social astuteness level and vice versa. Secondly, a relatively strong positive prediction of perceived organizational politics on the employee's turnover intention is for employees with a low social astuteness level and vice versa. These mean employees good in their social astuteness are less suffered from their perceived political working environment than their co-worker who is not good in social astuteness and vice versa,

Moreover, the study's second novel finding was the mitigating strength of social astuteness under various levels of perceived organizational politics regarding buffering moderation. Within the mitigating strength of social astuteness under different level of perceived organizational politics, this study revealed that employees who perceive a low level of organizational politics, for them, the impact of perceived organizational politics on employee's behavioral outcomes were almost similar whether their social astuteness was low or medium or high, but with the increasing level of perceived organizational politics from low to high, differences of mitigating power of low, medium and high level of social astuteness' were increasing. This means that at lower levels of perceived organizational politics, increased social astuteness (low to high) as mediators does not contribute as antidotes for the detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes. But with an increase in the level of perceived corporate politics from low to high, an increase in social astuteness (low to high) contributes to a decrease in marginal effect on employees' behavioral outcomes. Likewise, regarding the buffering moderation, the third novel findings of the study were at a given (i.e., highest level) point of perceived organizational politics, (1) impact of perceived corporate politics on work engagement was increased as increased in the level of social astuteness. These mean employees who perceive their workplace highly political, for them, an increase in their social astuteness cause to increase their work engagement, and (2) impact of perceived organizational politics on turnover intention was

decreased as increased in level of social astuteness. This means employees who perceive their working environment highly political will increase social astuteness to reduce their turnover intention. These findings will be more generalizable after replicating such a study under different contexts.

## 5.2. Implication

### 5.2.1. Practical Implications

Firstly, employee work engagement was negatively, and turnover intention was positively affected by perceived organizational politics. This means an organization can improve employee behavioral outcomes by reducing employees' perceived corporate politics. Therefore, to minimize perceived organizational politics, an organization can intervene in its sources. For example, such intervention on sources could be: making effective formal communication system, employee's involvement in decision making, clarity of role and responsibility among employees, inter-group cooperation, support and trust from senior management, fairness in reward and punishment, etc. (Parker et al., 1995), minimizing political behavior of a co-worker, supervisor, subordinates, executives, etc. (Hill et al., 2016). Secondly, social astuteness mitigated the detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes. Therefore, an organization can invest (e.g., for training) to create and enhance employees' social astuteness to be less harmful from the perceived organizational politics. Thirdly, mitigating social astuteness's strength for the detrimental effect of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes was relatively strong for those employees who had a high level of perceived corporate politics. It means marginal benefit from increasing social astuteness was greater for high politics perceiver than low perceiver. Therefore, an organization can concentrate on improving their employees' social astuteness for high organizational politics perceiver than low perceiver.

### 5.2.2. Theoretical Implications

Firstly, this study has confirmed that employees' social astuteness performs as the antidote for the detrimental impact of perceived organizational politics on employees' behavioral outcomes. Moreover, relatively strong negative (or positive) predictions of perceived corporate politics on employees' behavioral outcomes were for those employees who had a low level of social astuteness. Likewise, the mitigating strength of social astuteness was relatively strong for those employees who perceive a high level of organizational politics than low perceiver. These innovative findings could be useful empirical evidence for further study in searching effective cures for the detrimental effect of perceived

organizational politics. Secondly, this study has verified the damaging impact of employees' perceived organizational politics on their work engagement and turnover intention in the Nepalese organization. In the context of inconclusive findings regarding the significance and direction of the association between perceived organizational politics on employee outcomes (Bedi & Schat, 2013; Chang et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2008), the findings of the study supplements the empirical evidence in the body of knowledge from a different context. Therefore, these findings will be useful for the researcher to refine and enrich the theory.

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