

## Corporate Politics Perception and Career Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Ingratiation Behavior

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### Abstract

This research sought to evaluate the influence of employees' perceived corporate politics on their career satisfaction within their current work settings. Additionally, the study investigated how employees' efforts to ingratiate themselves mediate the relationship between perceived corporate politics and career satisfaction. The study collected cross-sectional perceptual data from employees in the banking industry in Nepal, analyzing 725 responses using a positivist research approach. Data analysis employed a hierarchical regression model with SPSS, yielding several significant findings. Firstly, it was observed that employees' perceptions of corporate politics harmed their career satisfaction. Secondly, the study found that employees' ingratiation behavior mediated the association between perceived corporate politics and career satisfaction. Thirdly, the overall impact of perceived corporate politics on career satisfaction was -0.17 (indicated as  $B = -0.17$ ). Fourthly, the direct influence of perceived corporate politics on career satisfaction was -0.35 (represented by  $B = -0.35$ ). Lastly, the indirect impact of perceived corporate politics on career satisfaction through ingratiation was 0.18 ( $B = 0.18$ ). Based on these findings, the study suggests implications and directions for future research in this domain.

**Keywords:** Mediating role, direct effect, indirect effect, perceived corporate politics, organizational politics

GEL Classification: M10 M16 M19

## **Introduction**

Perceived Corporate Politics (PCP) refers to how individuals perceive the self-interested actions and behaviors of others within an organization. These actions often involve manipulating organizational policies and may include coercive tactics to achieve personal gains, sometimes at the expense of others (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). The acknowledgment of corporate politics as an inherent aspect of organizational life is widely shared among theorists and practitioners. This acknowledgment is rooted in the understanding that organizations, as social entities, see employees working individually and collectively to advance their interests (Hochwarter, 2012). Organizations can be seen as political coalitions where decision-making and goal-setting involve bargaining and negotiation (March, 1962). Consequently, the belief in the absence of politics within one's organization is fundamentally unrealistic. It is important to note that the Nepalese organizational context has received comparatively less attention from researchers and practicing managers (Bhattarai, 2021a).

PCP remains a prominent focus of research interest (Bhattarai, 2021a) among the academia. Researchers and practitioners increasingly recognize the significance of understanding the practical implications of organizational politics for effective leadership and the successful operation of managerial teams and executives (Kurchner-Hawkins & Miller, 2006). Divergent empirical evidence and varying theoretical perspectives surround the impact of PCP on employee outcomes, with debates on whether it is perceived as positive, negative, or neutral in the workplace (Bhattarai, 2022; Bhattarai, 2023). While Fedor et al. (2008) contend that PCP is often viewed as detrimental and divisive, some argue that a certain degree of workplace politics is essential for directing attention and resources toward individual and organizational objectives (Hochwarter et al., 2010). Nevertheless, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that, in most cases, PCP hurts employee outcomes (e.g., Buchanan & Badham, 2008; Ferris et al., 1989; Mintzberg, 1983; Rosen & Levy, 2013). As a result, organizations increasingly emphasize the need for scientific analysis and understanding of how PCP affects employee outcomes and how to effectively manage this influence to enhance overall employee well-being (Bhattarai, 2021b).

Extensive research has investigated the impact of PCP on various employee outcomes within organizations, including job performance, attendance, retention, turnover, satisfaction, stress, attitudes, and fairness perceptions. Among these, career satisfaction is a pivotal aspect, directly influencing an individual's overall quality of life and life satisfaction. However, research examining the role of occupational context in career satisfaction remains limited. It is essential to recognize that not only do individuals value career success, but organizations also have a vested interest in promoting it, as the success and contentment of employees can significantly contribute to the organization's overall success (Spurk et al., 2015).

In the realm of organizational dynamics, it is a recognized reality that no organization can entirely escape workplace politics, and correspondingly, employees rarely remain immune to

these political currents for extended durations. In settings characterized by political complexity, employees are often compelled to devise strategies to navigate and adapt to this politically charged environment. This study posits that one such coping mechanism may involve employees engaging in ingratiation behavior, drawing parallels with the principles of the survival of the fittest theory (Darwin, 1964). Furthermore, it's crucial to note that ideas and approaches developed within one context cannot be automatically applied to another without rigorous verification (Bhattarai & Budhathoki, 2023a). Therefore, the imperative for conducting theory-testing studies across diverse contexts remains a constant requirement (Bhattarai & Budhathoki, 2023b)

In light of these considerations, the primary objectives of this study are to assess several aspects of PCP within the context of the Nepalese banking industry. Firstly, the study investigates the influence of employees' PCP on their career satisfaction. Secondly, it seeks to explore the mediating role of ingratiation behavior as a coping strategy in mitigating the adverse effects of PCP on career satisfaction. Lastly, the study analyzes PCP's direct, indirect, and overall effect sizes on career satisfaction.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Perceived Corporate Politics**

Organizations are often likened to political arenas where various groups unite and fall apart in their quest for power, engaging in daily battles to control limited resources (Ferris et al., 2000). Drory and Romm (1990) state that distinctions between political and non-political behaviors can be drawn depending on an actor's intentions or perception of specific targets. Despite the significance of political behavior in executive functioning, the precise meaning of corporate politics remains elusive (Vredenburg & Maurer, 1984), and there is considerable disagreement among writers regarding its definition (Dory & Romm, 1990). Madison et al. (1980) have noted that corporate politics' perspectives, models, and tactics often do not address the same phenomenon. Consequently, asserting or conceptualizing corporate politics in a definitive, universally accepted, and generalized manner carries inherent risks.

Corporate politics can be perceived in two distinct ways: as a manifestation of a social influence process that benefits the organization or as a self-serving phenomenon that runs counter to the organization's objectives (Olorunleke, 2015). However, existing literature characterizes corporate politics as a set of strategically devised behaviors aimed at advancing or safeguarding one's self-interest, which may potentially conflict with the collective goals and interests of others within the organization (Vigoda, 2000). Historically, corporate politics has been depicted as dysfunctional, suggesting that it disrupts individual productivity, administrative efficiency, and fairness. However, there is an increasing acknowledgment that corporate politics can also fulfill a functional role and, to some degree, it is both unavoidable and advantageous within a company (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010).

### **Ingratiation Behaviour**

In the face of limited resources, intensified workplace competition, and economic instability, employees are compelled to enhance their perceived value within the organization (Zivnuska et al., 2004). Zivnuska and colleagues suggest that individuals may resort to political behavior to position themselves as influential and indispensable figures in this context. Employees who perceive politics as prevalent within their organization may employ impression management tactics to persuade others to perceive them as influential or crucial contributors. The most widely recognized classification of political behavior comes from Tedeschi and Melburg (1984), who categorize it into assertive tactics, notably ingratiating actions, and self-promotion (i.e., highlighting one's qualities).

Harrell-Cook et al. (1999) contend that ingratiating tactics generate interpersonal attraction or fondness, while self-promotion tactics aim to draw attention to an individual's positive qualities, plans, or past achievements. Similarly, Nagy et al. (2012) conceptualize ingratiating behavior as the actor's use of flattery to heighten the target's emotional affinity and affective response toward them. Ingratiation behaviors revolve around 'attention-giving' actions, such as agreeing with the target's viewpoints, displaying alignment with the target's values, and offering praise or flattering remarks directed at the target.

### **Career Satisfaction**

Career success is a central focus in career research, serving as a pivotal outcome in an individual's professional journey (Abele et al., 2011). Career satisfaction, often used as a critical indicator of subjective career success (Abele et al., 2011), can be seen as a positive psychological or work-related outcome stemming from one's work experiences, as framed by Joo and Lim (2013). Within the broader concept of career success, career satisfaction is a subjective measure of an individual's contentment with their accomplishments (Judge et al., 1995).

Individuals seek career success through various career-related behaviors and factors that impact their well-being. These factors encompass proactivity, mentoring, networking, the organizational learning climate, self-management, mobility, positive affectivity, and overall life satisfaction (Verbruggen, 2012). In the current labor market, career satisfaction assumes a central role as a subjective measure of career success, significantly influencing the career trajectories of individuals in contemporary generations (Hall & Chandler, 2005). The career satisfaction scale, developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990), assesses an individual's progress in achieving diverse career-related goals, including income, advancement, personal development, overall career aspirations, and global accomplishments in their career pursuits.

### **Relationship Between PCP and Career Satisfaction**

Employees' use of political tactics can act as indicators to the organization, signaling its alignment with its objectives. As organizations often tolerate or even endorse sanctioned political strategies, their deployment can signify the continued relevance of the reciprocity norm and potentially enhance prospects for career advancement (Kapoutsis et al., 2012). Furthermore, Kapoutsis et al. argue that an employee's self-political behavior can help construct a favorable self-image while potentially undermining the reputation of others.

Despite the associated risks, including the potential exposure and isolation in a healthy workplace environment, employees are more inclined to employ these tactics in high-political environments as they see them as a means to attain career success.

Vigoda (2002) argued that workplace politics can yield favorable outcomes. These outcomes encompass career advancement, increased recognition and status, enhanced power and position, the achievement of personal goals, successful task completion, a sense of accomplishment, improved control, and overall success. Building upon qualitative analysis, Buchanan (2008) has deduced that political actions have the potential to trigger success by catalyzing change, elevating one's reputation, and enhancing individual career prospects. Research backs up the claims that corporate politics help people advance their careers and gain power, pursue success, status, power, achievement, or career advancement (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989); get career mentoring (Aryee et al., 1996); and advance their careers (Landells & Albrecht, 2016). Ultimately, each of these variables substantially impacts an individual's work happiness and is intimately related to their career, directly or indirectly. Career satisfaction is defined by Kapoutsis et al. (2012) as subjective career success. Based on these definitions, theoretical considerations and empirical data generally imply that political dynamics in the workplace benefits workers' career satisfaction. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 can be articulated as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Employees' perceived corporate perception positively impacts employees' career satisfaction. This means an increase in the employees' PCP causes an increase in their level of career satisfaction.

### **Mediating Role of Ingratiation Behavior in the Relationship of PCP to Career Satisfaction**

Ferris et al. (1989) have proposed that there are typically three potential reactions when employees perceive their organizational environment as politically charged: (1) employees might opt to leave the organization altogether, (2) they may choose to remain in the organization but refrain from actively participating in political dynamics, or (3) they may decide to stay and actively engage in corporate politics. The first response becomes a viable option when there are ample alternative job opportunities, but this isn't the case for everyone, and leaving a current job or organization often comes with significant direct and indirect costs, dissuading many employees from pursuing this path. The second response is also challenging to sustain over the long term because individuals naturally find it difficult to remain isolated from the prevailing organizational culture for an extended period. Ultimately, they tend to adapt to the prevailing workplace culture, often necessitating political involvement. As a result, the third response, active engagement in organizational politics, tends to be the predominant reaction in most natural work environments. Employees who perceive their organization as politically charged often view it as a source of stress, ambiguity, and frustration (Harrell-Cook et al., 1999), making it challenging to find employees utterly unaffected by the PCP.

Those who opt to remain and engage in organizational politics often seek to understand better and control their corporate environment, employing skills and political behaviors like ingratiation. Within the corporate setting, individuals utilize a range of behaviors, including

political strategies and influence tactics, to regain or preserve their sense of control (Dulebohn, 1997). Furthermore, both theoretical (Sutton & Kahn, 1986) and empirical (Tetrick & LaRocco, 1987) research affirm that maintaining personal control in the workplace can mitigate the negative impacts of stressors, including perceptions of political dynamics.

It is widely acknowledged that the impact of PCP on employee outcomes, whether dysfunctional or functional, can be influenced by employees' use of ingratiation behaviors. Given job withdrawal's economic, psychological, and social costs, human nature drives people to adapt and develop the necessary capacities, skills, tactics, and behaviors to thrive in their environment. A politically charged environment encourages managers to hone their political skills, enabling them to effectively navigate complex issues both within and between organizations (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Consequently, employees' perception of their workplace as politically charged leads to the adoption of ingratiation behaviors as a means to contend with this perception, and the cultivation of ingratiation behaviors serves to alleviate the effects of PCP on career satisfaction, mainly when the direct effect is negative (minimizing its impact).

In the workplace, competition and ambiguity provide individuals with opportunities to employ political skills to attain personal or organizational goals (Silvester, 2008), and these aspects are recognized as fundamental attributes of a politically charged perception. To seize opportunities within such an environment, individuals enhance their political behaviors, often taking the form of ingratiation. Once again, employees' increased ingratiation behaviors positively influence their career satisfaction level. Given these arguments, this study posits the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Impacts of PCP on career satisfaction mediate by ingratiation behavior of the employees. This means employees' PCP causes them to increase their ingratiation behavior to cope with the political situation, and increased ingratiation behaviors again cause improved career satisfaction.*

## **Methods**

### **Research Philosophy and Approach**

Buchanan (2008) has noted that much of the prior research on a politically charged perception has been grounded in a positivist perspective, aiming to construct a model of political behavior that can be applied universally and predict outcomes reliably. The current study also adheres to a positivist research philosophy in line with this historical trend. A fundamental tenet of positivist philosophy is the belief that researchers can adopt a 'scientific' standpoint when observing social behavior and conducting objective analyses (Travers, 2001). Hughes and Sharrock (1997) have asserted that it is feasible to measure social behavior in a manner that is independent of its context, treating social phenomena as objectively observable 'things.' The primary goal of positivist researchers is to generate context-independent findings that have the potential for broad generalization.

The deductive reasoning approach was chosen in alignment with the study's objectives and the underlying research philosophy, which is positivist. Deductive reasoning is well-suited to the

principles and demands of positivist research philosophy, and it is a commonly employed approach in such studies (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). When testing theories, quantitative research often utilizes a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016), involving the formulation of several hypotheses or propositions for empirical testing and verification (Babbie, 2005).

### **Measures**

In this research, all multi-item scales were adapted from prior research, and necessary modifications and refinements were made to ensure the best possible measurement of the constructs in the context of Nepal. Eleven measures previously developed by other researchers were employed to assess various constructs relevant to this study. However, the number of items within each measure was adjusted to capture the construct within the Nepalese context accurately. These established measures have a track record of validity and reliability in measuring the constructs under investigation, having been used by numerous researchers in previous studies. Respondents' answers to all items were assessed using a Likert-type scale except for demographic variables. The measures for these constructs are outlined as follows:

#### ***Demographic Variables***

In this study, various demographic variables such as designation, member of the union, unionization, age, tenure, and gender have been included as control variables. These demographic variables have been coded for statistical analysis as follows: Gender (Male = 1, Female = 2), age (below 30 years = 1, 30 to 50 years = 2, 50 years and above = 3), tenure (temporary = 1, permanent = 2), unionization (Yes = 1, No = 2), membership in the union (Yes = 1, No = 2), and employee designation (Assistant = 1, Officer = 2, Manager = 3, Others = 4). The "Others" category for employee designation encompasses all other employee roles aside from assistants, officers, and managers, such as trainees and interns.

#### ***Perceived Corporate Politics***

This study assessed PCP using a six-item version of the perceived corporate politics scale. This scale was initially introduced by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and later refined by Vigoda (2001). Vigoda's refinement process involved selecting only items with the most vital loading values in factor analysis and passing a subsequent reliability analysis. Additionally, to enhance the content validity of the construct, this study incorporated three additional items from Hochwarter et al. (2003). These supplementary items are as follows: (1) "In this organization, people do what is best for them, not what is best for the organization"; (2) "Here, people are more concentrated on pleasing senior and influential people who can help them"; and (3) "Here, individuals are stabbing each other in the back to look good in front of others." Subjects to the research were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5. The coefficient alpha, computed for the construct, resulted in a value of 0.94, signifying a high degree of internal consistency reliability for the PCP measure employed in the research.

#### ***Ingratiation Behavior***

In this study, the assessment of ingratiation involved a set of seven items. Five of these items were borrowed from a scale developed initially by Bolino and Turnley (1999). Two additional items were introduced to ensure content validity within the Nepalese context. These additional

items are as follows: (1) "I agree and confirm my colleagues' opinions and values so that they accept me," and (2) "I remind and repeat what my colleague likes." Participants in this research expressed their degrees of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale, which went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The study computed the coefficient alpha for both the self-promotion and ingratiation measures, yielding a strong level of internal consistency reliability, with a coefficient alpha of 0.91 for both constructs. This indicates that the measures used to measure the study's self-promotion and ingratiation consistently assessed the intended constructs.

### ***Career Satisfaction***

The study evaluated career satisfaction using a five-item scale initially devised by Greenhaus et al. (1990). An example item from this scale is: "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career." Participants were instructed to express their agreement or disagreement with these items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal consistency reliability of this scale in the study was assessed to be 0.81, signifying that the items successfully and consistently measured the concept of career satisfaction.

### **Sampling and Population**

The study focused on employees employed in the banking industry in Nepal. A two-stage approach was used to create the sample, combining purposive and convenience sampling methods. In the first stage, all commercial banks were intentionally categorized into two groups, unionized and non-unionized, to ensure representation from both institutions. Seventeen commercial banks were selected for the survey, spanning both categories. In the subsequent stage, the survey included 1199 employees chosen from these seventeen banks through the convenience sampling method. The respondents were drawn from employees working at various locations within these designated banks within and outside Kathmandu.

### **Survey and Data**

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of twenty-seven items, including six demographic questions. All items, except for the demographic information, were designed to collect perceptual responses from participants using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Each sampled bank's Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were approached and requested to assist in the survey. At the researcher's request, the CEO designated a contact person in each bank to oversee the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. With the assistance of these designated contacts, 1199 questionnaires were individually distributed to respondents. Respondents were given one week to complete the questionnaires. Of the 1199 questionnaires distributed, 927 (77.31%) were completed and returned. Among these, 873 (72.81%) questionnaires were deemed suitable for the study's purposes. Furthermore, for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), only 725 responses (83.05% of the usable responses) were considered to meet the criteria for an acceptable measurement model.

### **Common Method Variance**

In order to lower the possibility of bias resulting from using a conventional research technique, this study complies with the recommendations made by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Seven questions, or around 33.33 percent of the total, were reverse-scored to account for response



pattern biases. Some of the items included negative wording. Harman's one-factor test was also used in the research to determine the degree of common method bias. Each model variable will undergo a principal component factor analysis for this test. Harman's one-factor test is a commonly used method for determining and measuring Common Method Variance (CMV). Podsakoff et al. (2003) state that standard method bias is a serious issue if the analysis reveals that only one factor exists or that one factor accounts for a substantial percentage of the covariance. According to the findings of Harman's one-factor test, eleven variables were kept in this research, with the first component accounting for only 29.19% of the variation. Less than 50% of the variation can be explained by the first component, indicating that there may be bias but not enough to render the study incorrect. It could, however, somewhat overstate regression results, as Cho and Lee (2012) pointed out.

## Results

Model 1 in Table 1 assessed the relationship between demographic variables and career satisfaction. This model reveals that, among the various demographic factors, the following statistically significant associations with career satisfaction were observed: the coefficient for gender ( $B = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the coefficient for age ( $B = -0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the coefficient for unionization ( $B = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), the coefficient for union membership ( $B = -0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the coefficient for designation ( $B = -0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These demographic variables account for approximately 5.40 percent of the variation in career satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.054$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 1

*Regression Result: Impact of Demographic Variable, CPP, and Ingratiation on Career Satisfaction*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Career Satisfaction		
	Model 1 (B)	Model 2 (B)	Model 3 (B)
Step 1: Controlling variables			
Gender	-0.16*	-0.16*	-0.05
Age	-0.17*	-0.09	-0.13
Tenure	-0.02	-0.07	-0.11
Unionization	0.30**	.21*	0.22*
Membership	-0.32***	-0.30***	-0.23***
Designation	-0.11*	-0.11*	-0.14**
Step 2: Direct effect			
Perceived corporate politics		-0.19***	-0.35***
Step 3: Direct effect			
Ingratiation			0.48***
$\Delta P^2$	0.054***	0.027***	0.111***
$R^2$	0.054	0.081	0.191
F	6.77***	21.09***	97.99***

\*\*\*, \*\*, \*, significance at .001, .01, and .05 levels, respectively

Model 2 in Table 1 was utilized to investigate the direct link between PCP and career satisfaction while considering the influence of demographic variables. In this particular model, it becomes apparent that the PCP coefficient held statistical significance ( $B = -0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result suggests that employees' PCP has an adverse effect on their career satisfaction. As a result, these findings support and warrant the acceptance of Hypothesis 1.

Table 2 displays the assessment of the direct influence of PCP on Ingratiation after accounting for the impact of demographic variables.

Table 2

*Regression Result: Estimating the effect of PCP on Ingratiation*

Independent Variables	Ingratiation (B)
Demographic Control Variables	
Gender	-0.24***
Age	0.08
Tenure	0.08
Unionization	-0.03
Membership	-0.14**
Designation	0.06
Main Effect	
Perceived corporate politics	0.35***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.25
F	34.78***

\*\*\*, \*\*, \*, significance at .001, .01, and .05 levels, respectively

As illustrated in Table 2, when predicting ingratiations, the coefficient for PCP was found to be statistically significant ( $B = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that employees' PCP positively impacts their ingratiations behaviors. Approximately 25% of the variation in ingratiations can be explained by demographic variables and PCP ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results suggest that employees who perceive a higher level of corporate politics are more likely to exhibit ingratiations behaviors.

Table 2 shows that PCP was statistically significantly associated with ingratiations ( $B = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In Model 2 of Table 1, as previously described, PCP was significantly associated with career satisfaction ( $B = -0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) before controlling for the effect of ingratiations. Subsequently, in Model 3 of Table 1, ingratiations was also significantly associated with career satisfaction ( $B = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while controlling for the effect of PCP.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the negative coefficient of PCP in predicting career satisfaction increased from -0.19 ( $B = -0.19$ , coefficient of PCP before controlling for the effect of ingratiations, Model 2 in Table 1) to -0.35 ( $B = -0.35$ , coefficient of PCP after controlling for the impact of ingratiations, Model 3 in Table 1). The significance of this increase in the coefficient of PCP after controlling for the influence of ingratiations was confirmed through a Sobel test (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2001). The Sobel test showed that the rise in the coefficient of PCP was statistically significant ( $z = 8.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), even when the effect of ingratiations was considered.

Subsequently, all four criteria Baron and Kenny (1986) recommended for assessing the mediating role of ingratiation in the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction were statistically satisfied. Therefore, based on these findings, Hypothesis 2, which posited the mediating role of ingratiation in the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction, has been supported and accepted.

Table 3

*Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect Size of Coefficients*

Effects Size	Career Satisfaction (B)
Total effect of PCP on career satisfaction	-0.17
The direct effect of PCP on career satisfaction	-0.35
Indirect effect of PCP on career satisfaction	0.18

As revealed in Table 3, when examining the overall impact of PCP on career satisfaction, the direct effect of PCP on career satisfaction, while controlling for ingratiation, was determined to be -0.35. Additionally, the indirect effect of PCP on career satisfaction through ingratiation was estimated to be 0.18. These results indicate that ingratiation behavior serves as a mediator in the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction. In simpler terms, PCP directly affects career satisfaction and indirectly influences it through its impact on ingratiation. This implies that PCP, directly and indirectly, affects career satisfaction by promoting ingratiation behavior.

## Discussion

The outcomes of this study unveiled an unexpected negative correlation between PCP and career satisfaction, contradicting the initially hypothesized relationship. In simpler terms, an increase in employees' PCP was linked to decreased career satisfaction. This finding contradicts the results of numerous earlier studies conducted by researchers such as Aryee et al. (1996), Buchanan (2008), Fedor et al. (2008), Hochwarter (2012), Kumar and Ghadially (1989), Landells and Albrecht (2016), Madison et al. (1980), and Vigoda (2002). These prior studies had proposed and examined a positive association between organizational politics and career advancement and success.

It is worth noting that, to the best of the reviewed literature in this study, no prior research had explicitly examined the precise impact of PCP on career satisfaction. Therefore, finding a negative association between PCP and career satisfaction in this study adds a unique perspective to the existing body of literature on organizational politics and its effects on employees' career-related outcomes. It suggests that the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction may be more complex than previously thought and warrants further investigation and consideration in future research.

The study initially hypothesized a positive impact of PCP on career satisfaction, aligning with the logical and theoretical argument that PCP might positively affect career advancement. This

hypothesis was grounded in the idea that employee career advancement and career satisfaction are closely related variables and might share common predictor factors, as Kapoutsis et al. (2012) suggested.

However, the study's findings contradicted this hypothesis by revealing a negative impact of PCP on career satisfaction. Several factors could potentially explain this unexpected result. One plausible explanation is related to the operationalization of the predictor construct, PCP. Prior studies often lack a clear distinction between different constructs within organizational politics, and the terms PCP, political behavior, and corporate politics have been used interchangeably in some research. In contrast, this study operationalized PCP as a distinct construct, following the work of scholars such as Harrell-Cook et al. (1999), Hill et al. (2016), and Valle & Perrewé (2000), and measured it accordingly.

The divergence in findings may partly stem from these differing operationalizations and definitions of PCP in the literature. As a result, it's essential to conduct further research to explore and understand the impact of PCP on career satisfaction using various conceptualizations of PCP. This approach will help provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between PCP and career-related outcomes before generalizing the findings.

Indeed, the study's results have unveiled a noteworthy partially mediating role played by ingratiation behaviors in the connection between PCP and career satisfaction. This suggests that when employees perceive a politically charged environment in their workplace, this perception increases their engagement in ingratiation behaviors. Consequently, these heightened ingratiation behaviors mitigate the adverse impact of perceived corporate politics on career satisfaction. The study's results suggest that PCP directly influences career satisfaction and indirectly affects it through its effect on ingratiation behavior. This mediation process highlights the complex nature of how organizational factors, such as PCP and employees' behaviors, interact and collectively contribute to career-related outcomes. It underscores the importance of considering both direct and indirect pathways when examining the effects of workplace perceptions and behaviors on career satisfaction.

The scarcity of studies testing the mediating role of ingratiation behavior in the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction does limit the extent to which the study's findings can be compared with results from other contexts. However, it's important to note that the study's conclusions partially align with previous research. For example, Ferris et al. (2002) found a mediating effect of self-promotion in the relationship between employees' PCP and job satisfaction. While complete mediation wasn't tested, other studies, including Fandt and Ferris (1990), Ferris et al. (2002), Liden and Pyle (1988), and Valle (1970), have explored how increased perceived corporate politics can lead to increased political behavior among employees.

On the contrary, Hill et al. (2016) discovered that heightened political behavior can increase the PCP. This indicates a multifaceted and mutually influential relationship between political behavior and the PCP. Both can influence each other, and the direction of causality may depend on various factors. The interconnected cause-and-effect relationship between political behavior

and the PCP can be attributed to the specific focus of the study. An individual's political behaviors may be influenced by their PCP as a coping strategy in response to the organizational context.

On the other hand, observing political behaviors by others in the workplace can contribute to the development of PCP for the perceiver. Future studies might benefit from separating the actor's political behavior from the political behavior of others in the workplace. This approach can provide valuable insights into how different types of behavior interact and influence each other in various ways within corporate politics.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

The study's findings present an exceptional and somewhat surprising result, as they suggest that an increase in employees' PCP leads to decreased career satisfaction, contrary to prior empirical evidence in the field. This intriguing discovery underscores the need for further research to investigate the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction and understand the contextual factors that may influence this dynamic. Furthermore, the study has shed light on the mediating role of ingratiation behaviors as a coping strategy in the relationship between PCP and career satisfaction. This adds a valuable dimension to our understanding of how individuals respond to and navigate politically charged work environments.

One particularly noteworthy aspect of the study's findings is the effect size of PCP on career satisfaction, both with and without the mediating variable (ingratiation behaviors). The study's observation that the total effect size of PCP on employee outcomes is less than the sum of its direct and indirect effects through political skills and behaviors is an intriguing finding. This suggests that there may be complex interactions at play, and multiple factors may influence the overall impact of PCP on career satisfaction. Given these findings' novelty and potential implications, further research in different contexts is encouraged to replicate and validate the study's results. A more extensive body of evidence from various organizational settings can help strengthen our understanding of how PCP influences career satisfaction and the role of coping mechanisms like ingratiation behaviors. Such research can contribute to developing strategies for effectively managing and mitigating the harmful effects of PCP in the workplace.

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