Organizational Politics, Occupational Stress, and Psychological Health among Traffic Wardens

Hajira Kanwal[1*], Aqila Unbrin[2], Saba Ehsaan[3], Mafia Shahzadi[4]

Abstract

Traffic wardens play an imperative role in society. They work day and night to manage untidiness on the roads and provide peaceful travel to citizens. To examine the relationship between organizational politics, occupational stress, and psychological health among traffic wardens. In this correlational study, the sample was collected from different cities of Lahore through purposive sampling. Only male 25-50 years participants with a minimum of one year of work experience in traffic wardens were included in this study and wardens with above 50 and less than 1 year were excluded from the study. Demographic form, General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28), General Work Stress Scale (GWSS), and Perception of Political Organization (POPS) measures were used in this study and data was analyzed by using SPSS, Version 26. The finding shows that organizational politics had a significant positive relationship with occupational stress which means that the individuals with more organizational politics had higher levels of occupational stress. The stepwise regression shows that occupational stress is a higher predictor of GHQ. This study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship with occupational stress which means that the individuals with more organizational politics had higher levels of occupational stress.

Keywords: Organizational Politics, Occupational Stress, Psychological Health, Traffic Wardens

1. Introduction

Mental health is important in all stages of life, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Psychological health is a mental state in which a person recognizes his or her potential, as a result of which he or she can overcome the regular stresses of life, work constructively, and contribute to the welfare of his or her society (Jones, 2013). Psychological health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community". Psychological health contains our emotional, mental health, and social well-being and it is affected by numerous factors such as genetics, living in a stressful environment, stressful events like the death of loved ones, or being in accidents, childhood Trauma, brain chemistry involved an imbalance of natural chemicals, and not getting enough sleep, and extreme stress (Arnett et al., 2014). Stress can significantly impact the performance of traffic wardens and many others in roles that involve constant public interaction, high visibility, and sometimes challenging interactions with the public (Levula et al., 2016). Occupational stress in these roles often comes from unpredictable encounters, long hours, exposure to potentially unsafe situations, and the demand for vigilance. Occupational stress is defined as the detrimental physical and psychological reactions that occur when an occupation's standards do not match the employees' capabilities, resources, or demands, resulting in poor health and even injury (Kieling et al., 2011)

Employers often feel helpless, and then they become frustrated and lose productivity. Some stressful occupation involves waiters, secretaries, middle managers, police officers, etc. All of these are remarkable to the service condition of occupational duties and it can significantly affect how they interact with others and engage in organizational politics (George, 2013). Occupational stress has a profound impact on organizational politics, often intensifying behaviors and dynamics that can destabilize a workplace. When employees experience high levels of stress, particularly in roles with demanding tasks or high-stakes responsibilities, they may begin to see resources such as promotions, recognition, and support as scarce. This perception can lead to increased competition among employees who may feel they need to "win" limited opportunities for advancement or security (Allen et al., 2014). Consequently, individuals under stress are more likely to engage in political behaviors, such as taking credit for others' work, positioning themselves strategically, withholding crucial information, or even undermining colleagues. These actions are typically motivated by a desire for self-preservation or personal gain, but they erode team cohesion and collaboration (Heinze et al., 2018).

In addition, occupational stress can damage trust among team members, which is foundational to healthy workplace relationships. When employees operate in an environment where others seem to be using political tactics to gain an advantage, it can foster suspicion, making it difficult to establish genuine teamwork (Galderisi, 2024). Moreover, occupational stress is not just a personal issue; it affects entire teams and organizations by decreasing morale, increasing absenteeism, and contributing to higher turnover rates. As such, addressing occupational stress is essential for fostering a productive and supportive work environment. Organizational politics manifests in various forms, including alliance-building, lobbying for resources, withholding information, and strategic alliances (Galderisi et al., 2015) These behaviors typically arise from the inherent need for power and influence in organizations, which may differ across roles and departments. Employees might attempt to gain

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[1*] Riphah International University, Lahore Pakistan. Hajirakanwal78600@gmail.com
[2] Principal Clinical Psychologist, Punjab Institute of Mental Health, Lahore, Pakistan
[3] Lecturer at Lahore Leads University, Pakistan.
[4] Assistant professor, Riphah International University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

control over decisions, influence leaders, or protect their interests in ways that create hierarchical and informal power structures. Additionally, political climates within organizations can foster a sense of distrust, creating a divide between employees and their supervisors or employees (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021)

Stressed employees may then avoid collaboration, preferring to work independently rather than risk sharing credit or information with colleagues. Stressed employees may choose to withhold information or avoid open communication to protect themselves, fearing blame or retribution. This lack of openness hinders effective decision-making and often results in communication breakdowns, making it difficult for teams to operate efficiently (Edwards et al., 2021). Hence, when employees experience ongoing stress due to organizational politics, their mental well-being suffers, impacting not only individual productivity but also the broader organizational culture. As stress accumulates, it can erode morale and create a toxic environment where collaboration and trust are compromised (Søvold et al., 2021). This is the reason that organizations should create healthier and more productive work environments, organizations should aim to reduce unnecessary political behavior, promote transparency and fairness, and support employees' psychological health. Interventions such as employee wellness programs, fair management practices, and conflict resolution training can help mitigate the negative impact of organizational politics on occupational stress and psychological health (Diener & Seligman, 2004).

1.1. Hypotheses

1.   There would be a significant relationship between perception of organizational politics, occupational stress, and psychological health among traffic wardens.

2.   Occupational stress would be a predictor of psychological health.

2.   Method

2.1. Research design

This current study used a correlational research design to examine the relationship between organizational politics, occupational stress, and psychological health among traffic wardens.

2.2. Participant

A sample of 150 male (25-50 years) participants with a minimum of one year of work experience in traffic wardens were included in this study, and wardens above 50 and less than 1 year were excluded from the study. Participants who were recently transferred and suspended. who didn't consent or complete all the research procedures were also excluded.

2.3. Instruments

Demographic Form: A demographic form used to take information, i.e., age, education, family system, socioeconomic status, marital status, total number of family members, employment status, etc.

2.4. General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28)

The GHQ-28 scale variant was represented by the Goldberg in 1978. The GHQ-28 is a self-reported survey that is used to assess psychological health. It is a series of 28 questions designed to determine whether a person's current mental state is derived from his or her characteristic state. It has a 28-item scoring technique using a Likert scale of 0 to 3, with a possible total score range of o to 84. In this scale, a binary score system of 0 was utilized for the first and second answers (better than usual, same as usual), and 1 for the third and fourth response alternatives (worse than usual, much worse than usual). This grading method is insensitive to people with chronic conditions (Huppert et al., 1989)

2.5. General Work Stress Scale (GWSS)

The **General Work Stress Scale (GWSS)** is a psychometric tool developed by Kazi and Haslam (2013) to assess the perceived levels of work-related stress among employees. Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Always," it measures the frequency of stressors such as workload, time pressure, and lack of resources or support in the workplace. Higher scores on the GWSS indicate greater perceived stress, which can negatively impact job performance and mental well-being.

2.6. Perception Of Political Organization (POPS)

Perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS) is defined as a person's subjective assessment of how self-serving some persons and organizations in their workplace are at the expense of others. Perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS) is defined as a person's subjective assessment of how self-serving some persons and organizations in their workplace are at the expense of others. A well-liked POP is evaluated using a 15-item questionnaire that takes three elements into account: overall political behavior, going along for the ride to advance in terms of compensation, and promotion. (Brubaker, 2012)

2.7. Procedure

In this study, authorization was granted once the topic was approved by the department's concerned faculty. To collect the data, authorization was obtained from the scale's authors to utilize it. The Department of Psychology at Lahore Leads University has authorized the assigned permission letter for data collection. The researcher met with the subjects and informed them about the study's objectives through informed consent. The demographic sheet, the General Work Stress Scale (GWSS), the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS), and the

General Mental Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) 28-item version were administered. The data was gathered from traffic wardens. After that, the data was analyzed by using SPSS, Version 26.

3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=150)

Characteristics	F%	M(SD)
Age		
Living area		1.38(.500)
Urban	91(60)	
Rural	58(38)	
Education		1.99(.618)
Matric to graduation	28(19)	
Graduation to masters	93(60)	
Above	28(18)	
Marital Status		1.99(.444)
Unmarried	16(10)	
Married	128(85)	
Job year Experience		3.56(.797)
One year	2(1)	
Two to five Year	23(15)	
Six to ten Year	13(8)	
Above	112(74)	

f=frequency, M=mean, SD= Standard deviation.

Table 2: Psychometric Properties of Scales (N=150)

Scales	No of Items	α
POPS	15	.641
GWSS	9	.520
GHQ	27	.565

Note: α= Chronbach's Alpha, POPS=Perception of organizational politics, GWSS=General work stress scale, GHQ=General health questionnaire.

Table 3: Correlations between Organizational Politics, Occupational Stress and Psychological Health

Variable	1	2
POPS	1	
GWSS	.354**	1
GHQ	-.030	.330**

*p<.05, **p<.01, *p<.001***

The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation discovered that organizational politics had a significant positive relationship with occupational stress which means that the individuals who had more organizational politics had higher levels of occupational stress. Moreover, it had a significant positive relationship with psychological health which means that individuals with occupational stress had more psychological health.

Organizational politics had a negative relationship with psychological health which means that the individuals who had more organizational politics had a lower level of psychological health.

Table 4: Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Psychological Health (N=150)

Source	ΔR^2	R Square Change	B	Significance
Step I				
		.11		.00
GWSS	.12		.30	
Step II				
GWSS			.39	.00
POPS	.13	.03	-.17	.04

*p<.05, **p<.01, *p<.001***; β=Standardized coefficient; ΔR^2=R square change; R^2sqaure; GWSS=General work stress scale; POPS=Perception of organizational politics.

The stepwise regression shows that GWSS is a higher predictor of GHQ. In step 1, The values of .12 (delta R square) and p .00 indicate a strong predictor of GHQ. In step 2, .13 (delta R square) and p .04 indicate a weak predictor of GHQ.

4. Discussion

This study aims to determine the significant relationship between the perception of organizational politics, occupational stress, and psychological health among traffic wardens. This study hypothesized that "there will be a significant relationship between perception of organizational politics, occupational stress, and psychological health among traffic wardens. The study found that the Pearson product-moment correlation discovered that organizational politics had a significant positive relationship with occupational stress which means that the individuals with more organizational politics had higher levels of occupational stress. Similarly, another study also showed a significant positive relationship with psychological health which means that individuals with occupational stress had more psychological health (Hamaideh, 2011).

Organizational politics had a negative relationship with psychological health which means that the individuals who had more organizational politics had a lower level of psychological health. Similarly, the present study found that the population in the big cities is increasing on a large scale and this is adding stress to the lives of people (Hasan et al., 2018). In big cities, like Lahore, one of the major problems is heavy traffic and the enforcement of traffic laws. As a result, the stress level of traffic wardens is increasing day by day. A study investigated the connection between job stress and organizational politics and identified job satisfaction as a mediating role between both variables. Work-related stress is exacerbated by changes in work situations. Content, workload control, career growth, working hours, position in the association, interpersonal dealings, and the employing organization's traditions are all examples of passiveness related to stress (Ciarrochi et al., 2002). Primary avoidance, such as concentrated work design and management growth, secondary avoidance, such as workers' learning and training, and tertiary avoidance, such as mountain passionate organization system and refined occupational health conditions and psychosocial factors at work, can all help to reduce job stress (Calnan et al., 2001)

In the same way, another research also shows the relationship between organizational politics and task pressure and the mediating position of process pleasure. Modifications in operating circumstances cause job stress. There are various susceptibilities associated with pressure which include work content, assignment, working hours manipulation, professional growth, position in the employer, personal dealings, and traditions of the employing agency (Ford et al., 2011)

Similarly, study suggests that environments with high levels of organizational politics correlate with elevated occupational stress, as employees are faced with competing demands that strain their time, energy, and mental resources. The constant need to manage reputations, maintain alliances, and avoid conflicts in politically charged workplaces diverts employees' focus from their core responsibilities and places additional pressure on them. In such settings, stress becomes chronic as individuals are unable to maintain a clear sense of purpose and security in their roles. This elevated stress can compromise job satisfaction, reduce engagement, and lead to diminished overall productivity, as employees become preoccupied with maintaining their standing in a political workplace rather than excelling in their work (Ogolo, 2023)

On the other hand, this study also hypothesized that there will be occupational stress is likely to be a predictor of psychological health. The study found that the stepwise regression shows that GWSS is a higher predictor of GHQ. In step 1, The value of .12 (delta R square) and p .00 indicate a strong predictor of GHQ. In step 2, .13 (delta R square) and p .04 indicates a weak predictor of GHQ. In the same way, study suggest that employees

exposed to high levels of occupational stress experience a decline in psychological health, which can manifest as emotional exhaustion, detachment, and diminished motivation. Chronic stress has been shown to disrupt mental resilience, making individuals more susceptible to mental health conditions like anxiety and depression (Manchia et al., 2022)

For instance, employees who feel constantly threatened by office politics may develop heightened anxiety as they attempt to manage both their performance and their political standing. Over time, the mental resources needed to cope with occupational stress are depleted, resulting in burnout (Manchia et al., 2022). Burnout is particularly common in politically charged environments, where employees expend significant energy on impression management and self-protection. This state of exhaustion and detachment not only affects individual well-being but also impairs cognitive functions such as decision-making, creativity, and problem-solving, further reducing an employee's capacity to cope with ongoing stress (Schetter & Dolbier, 2011)

5. Conclusion

The present study concluded that, organizational politics significantly contributes to occupational stress, which in turn impacts employees' psychological health, often creating a cycle of stress and mental strain. Organizations that promote transparency, fairness, and mental health support can mitigate these effects, fostering a healthier and more productive workplace.

5.1. Limitations

- The sample size was small and limited to a single topic.
- The population of traffic wardens was rarer in Lahore.
- This study was survey-based and co-relational; therefore, it does not provide a comprehensive view of the circumstance under consideration.

5.2. Suggestions

The following are some helpful suggestions for improving the study:

- The sample size should be large enough to be generalized. Different departments of Police should also be studied and then compared with each other.
- The study only focused on traffic wardens from Lahore other traffic wardens from different cities should also be selected.
- Demographics from this study and others should be taken into account for additional examination as a possible cause of the developing difficulties.

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