

# The Mediating Role of Work Engagement between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment

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## **Abstract**

The Indian Banking industry sparked a boom to the country during the past two decades. The growth of the Banking industry is one of the strongest drivers of the performance of the Indian economy. To make human life comfortable, banking industry has introduced various services and facilities and customers' expectations are on the rise. To meet the rising expectations of customers committed employees and engaged employees are essential and politics at workplace is unavoidable. Therefore the purpose of the study is to investigate the Perception of Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment with Work Engagement as a mediator. Data was collected from 1262 employees of the public and private sector banks in South India through a validated questionnaire. Data was analyzed using SPSS and Warp PLS. The result reveals that Perception of Organizational Politics is positively correlated with Organizational Commitment and Work Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment.

**Keywords:** Work Engagement, Organizational Politics, Organizational Commitment

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## **Introduction**

Every organization has different interests and ideas to a certain degree of policy within the organization (Ferris et al, 2012). As such Organizational Politics is a not an approved behavior in an organization whereas employees perceive politics at their workplace. To foster a healthy climate in an organization, it is essential that employees perceive a certain degree of politics. Further committed employees are required to improve the performance of an organization. Organization Commitment is considered as an important support for Organizational Performance and employees engaged in their work will go an extra

mile to achieve individual and organization success. Currently the banking industry operates in a competitive environment, where banks compete among themselves in offering services beyond the expectations of the customers to retain them. Hence to improve the organizational productivity and differentiate themselves with their competitors, they need employees who are engaged to their work and committed to their organization. Among these two variables in an organization, politics plays its role in its own way. Hence this research attempts to investigate the mediating role of Work Engagement (WE) on the relationship between Perception of Organizational Politics (OP) and Organizational Commitment (OC).

## **Literature review**

This section presents the review of existing research on Work Engagement, Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment, followed by theoretical framework.

In today's business environment, there is a rapid change in the employment relationships that seeks the importance of understanding Commitment in organizations (Hislop, 2003). Organizational Commitment is the nature of the relationship between the individual and an organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) defined Organizational Commitment as "the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization". The various definitions (Martin & Roodt, 2008; Ahmad & Oranye, 2010; Turunen, 2014) of OC share a common theme namely Organizational Commitment leads to link the individual with the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a three-component model of OC. They are Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment. Affective Commitment refers to the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization; Continuance Commitment refers to Commitment based on the cost that employees associate with leaving the organization and need to remain in the organization as a lack of alternatives associated with leaving the organization; and Normative Commitment refers to the employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. In this competitive environment, employee's Commitment is very much essential to achieve organization goals. Van Gelderen & Bik, (2016) said that the employees attached to the organization are more interested to help their colleagues. Committed employees will overcome obstacles easily, are more innovative which in turn leads to high production.

Politics refers to influencing people's reactions and behavior in work environment. It is a natural part of organizational life because it occurs on an ongoing basis, which is often invisible to all others except those who are directly involved. Organizational Politics refers to informal ways people try to influence others in the organization. A common feature reflected in number of definitions of Organizational Politics is Self-Serving Behavior (e.g., Burns, 1961; Mayes & Allen, 1977; Poon, 2004; Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Gotsis and Kortezi, 2011). Today's organization scenario is that employees need skills in handling various conflicts that occurs in work place. Some amount of Organizational Politics is needed that will foster a competitive healthy climate in an organization.

Work Engagement refers to the relationship between employees' and their work roles. Schaufeli et al, (2002) defined Work Engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption". Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and

mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one find increasingly difficult to detach oneself from work. Human capital is considered important in an organization due to shortage of people with the required skills along with the ability and willingness to perform. Work Engagement is essential for the success of an organization and gain competitive advantage. Engaged employees will be more energetic, positively connected to their work roles, use more of their talents and exhibit effectiveness in their job.

### **Theoretical framework**

There are plenty of research studies which highlight the relationship between OP and OC. Ismail & Arshad, (2016) showed that OP and OC are negatively related and the associations between Perceived OP and Self-Monitoring are positively related to OC. Ferris et al, (1989, p.158); Drory, (1993); Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, (2005, p. 258); Gotsis & Kortezi, (2010, p. 499) along with them several researchers supported that perceived OP will have a negative effect on OC. Yilmaz et al., (2014) examined the managers' OC is negatively affects general political behavior and go along to get ahead in public organizations. Consistent with the view in the literature found that, an employee who experience high WE will considerably demonstrate high level of OC. Karatepe (2013) in his study took WE as a mediator between the relationship of OP and job outcomes such as OC, Extra Role Performance and Turnover Intentions. He concluded that WE fully mediates the effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on frontline employees' Affective Organizational Commitment. Karatepe, (2011) and Moliner et al., (2008) study also supports full mediating role of WE. Scrima et al., (2014) surveyed 405 Italian working adults and found that WE fully mediates the relationship between Job Involvement and Affective Commitment. Witt (1998) confirmed that supervisor-subordinate goal congruence fully moderates the relationship between OP and OC and also it partially moderates the relationship between OP and Job Performance. Study by Yalabik et al., (2013) revealed that WE fully mediates between Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance; Affective Commitment and Employee Performance; and Affective Commitment and Intention to Quit and WE partially mediate Job Satisfaction and Intention to Quit. Javed et al., (2015) in his study reported that WE plays a partial mediating role among OP, OC and Turnover Intention. Based on the above discussions it could be deduced that WE enhances the commitment of the employees and perceptions of politics is pervasive at the work place and is likely to have an influence on OC. In line with the above discussions the study proposes the following hypothesis.

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceptions of Organizational Politics has a positive influence on Organizational Commitment

H<sub>2</sub>: Work Engagement mediates the relationship between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment

### **Objectives of the study**

- To identify the perception of Work Engagement, Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment among the bank employees.
- To investigate the influence of Organizational Politics on Organizational Commitment.

- To examine the mediating role of Work Engagement between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment.

## **Methodology**

The study is descriptive in nature and adopted survey strategy. A questionnaire survey method was used to seek responses from Public and Private sector banks in the South Indian States namely Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The city that has the maximum number of banks was identified from RBI website and from that city using systematic random sampling banks was chosen and from each bank 50% of the employees were included for the study. The sample size for the study is 1262 respondents. The data were collected between the months of August- December 2017. The questionnaire had two parts; part 1 includes the demographic profile of the respondents and part 2 the study variables. The study variables were measured using a three-point Likert scale, ranging from 3 - Agree, 2 - No Opinion and 1- Disagree. A pilot study was conducted with responses collected from 81 respondents and results reveal that the instrument used for the study is reliable, since the constructs had an Cronbach Alpha Value above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 1 Measures used for the study**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>
Work Engagement (WE)	Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002)	17	0.919
Organizational Politics (OP)	Kacmar and Ferris (1991)	12	0.712
Organizational Commitment (OC)	Allen and Mayer (1990)	18	0.805

## **Analysis and discussion**

This section presents the analysis of the data that was carried out. The tools used for analysis are SPSS and Warp PLS.

To map the demographic profile of the respondents' descriptive statistics is presented with frequency and percentage. The demographic factors included in the study are age, gender, sector and designation. This gives an overview of the background and characteristics of the respondents. Table 2 represents the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table 2 Demographic Profile of the respondents**

<b>Demographic profile</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Age (Years)	Below 25	288	22.8
	26-35	715	56.7
	36-45	165	13.1
	Above 45	94	7.4
Gender	Male	645	51.1
	Female	617	48.9
Sector	Public	596	47.2

	Private	666	52.8
Experience (Years)	1-5	717	56.8
	6-10	278	22.0
	11-15	111	8.8
	16-20	54	4.3
	Above 20	102	8.1

**Source:** Primary data

From the table 2 it is inferred that majority (56.7%) of the respondents are in the age group between 26-35 years. Only 7.4% are above 45 years. The reason is employees in this age group are either in higher designation and are not interested to take up the survey or less in number at lower designation because they take voluntary retirement or resign due to health issues. Majority (51.1%) of the respondents are male and 48.9% of the respondents are female employees. Banking is a service oriented industry where considerable importance is attached to customer service and dealing with clients. So the banking sector has appreciated the need for female employees in the recent times. Further the banks have made the working environment more suitable for female candidates with good stability and security in the job. They are also provided with adequate compensation in par with male counterparts. All the above factors together have played a role in bringing more female employees almost equal in number with the male employees. Majority (52.8%) of the respondents are from private sector banks and 47.2 % from public sector banks. Majority (56.8%) of the respondents have work experience of 1-5 years, because they are enthusiastic to take up the survey and also more in number in each branch. Other respondents in the branches are either more experienced (Lower cadre employees) or not much interested to take up the survey as in the case of employees in higher designation.

Next Descriptive statistics is performed to identify the respondent's level of opinion regarding the study variables.

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics**

Constructs	Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work Engagement	Vigor	2.3294	.46909
	Dedication	2.5279	.55255
	Absorption	2.4620	.51952
<b>Work Engagement</b>		<b>2.4397</b>	<b>.45218</b>
<b>Organizational Politics</b>		<b>1.9762</b>	<b>.35798</b>
Organizational Commitment	Affective Commitment	2.1253	.39423
	Continuance Commitment	2.1557	.48896
	Normative Commitment	2.2603	.48795
<b>Organizational Commitment</b>		<b>2.1804</b>	<b>.35853</b>

**Source:** Primary data

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation values. It is inferred from the table 3 that among the 3 factors the highest mean value is for the factor WE (M=2.4397, SD=0.45218), followed by OC (M=2.1804, SD=0.35853) and the lowest mean value is for OP (M=1.9762, SD=0.35798). Comparing the responses given by the bank employees, it could be inferred that employees are engaged with their work. The mean value of WE is high where mean value is moderate for OP. Standard Deviation of WE Dedication and WE Absorption are high but the perception of each factor varies. It could hence be inferred that employees are energetic and have effective connection with their work activities and able to deal well with the demands of their job. Among the sub factors of WE, Dedication and Absorption is comparatively having a higher mean value than Vigor. This further implies that, banking employees feel more enthusiastic about their work and consider the work more meaningful. As a result they are deeply engaged in their work.

The OC among the banking employees are moderate compared to the other factors, because, the employees are either dissatisfied with the OP or they do not like the work environment or maybe they are involved in politics than towards achieving the organizational goals. Such employees lack emotional attachment with the organization. A few employees feel that they should stay in their organization where they are able to easily identify the organizations goal and fit into it and act accordingly and so they are bound with the organization emotionally and intellectually. Mean value of Normative Commitment have a higher value than Affective Commitment and Continuance Commitment.

In banking sector, the employees those who involved in politics exhibit their self-serving behavior without considering the betterment of organization. At times the behavior of individuals may not be considered as political in a particular situation since the behavior might be beneficial to the organization. There are also employees who understand the work environment and are able to control the feelings, and hence are less affected by organizational politics. Since banking industry is structured, there exist only less politics but it can increase under the conditions of scarce resources. Further a few employees might consider the organizational interest more than their self-interests.

Next regression analysis is carried out to find the influence of OP and WE on OC. The items of OP and WE were taken as independent variables and OC as dependent variable and stepwise regression is carried out.

**Table 4 Regression analysis – Coefficients**

Items	Unstd. Coeff.		Std. Beta Coeff.	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.542	.065		23.660	.000
WEV3 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	.068	.013	.134	5.079	.000
OP1 - There is a group of people in this department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them	.053	.014	.105	3.722	.000
OP11 - In our organization, pay and promotion policies are not politically applied	-.081	.012	-.163	-6.968	.000

OP8 - Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization	-.066	.012	-.135	-5.427	.000
WEA17 - It is difficult to detach myself from my job	.050	.012	.101	4.061	.000
OP3 - I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization	.034	.014	.070	2.468	.014
WED9 - My job inspires me	.058	.015	.109	3.840	.000
OP12 - When it comes to pay raise and promotion decisions, policies are irrelevant	.046	.012	.092	3.861	.000
OP10 - There is no place for yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even when it means disagreeing with superiors	-.059	.013	-.111	-4.606	.000
OP2 - There has always been an influential group in this department that no one ever crosses	.054	.014	.109	3.912	.000
OP5 - Favouritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here	.042	.012	.091	3.482	.001
WEA14 - I feel happy when I am working intensely	.034	.015	.062	2.280	.023
F=71.937; p<0.000; Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.403					

**Source:** Primary data

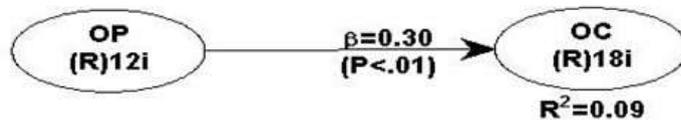
It is inferred from the table 4, F-Test was statistically significant (F=71.937, p<0.000), which indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. The adjusted R square value of 0.403 indicates that 40.3% of the variability in OC is predicted by twelve items of WE and OP. Among the 12 items, four items are from WE (WE has 17 items) and eight items are from OP (OP has 12 items). Regression analysis reveals that employees in the banking industry experience politics at the workplace. Further compared to WE more items from OP have a significant influence on OC and hence it could be inferred that perceptions of OP enhances their commitment. Among the items of OP and WE, Items ‘In our organization, pay and promotion policies are not politically applied’ ( $\beta=-0.163$ ); ‘Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization’ ( $\beta=-0.135$ ) and ‘When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work’ have the highest significant influence on OC ( $\beta=0.134$ ).

From the regression analysis it could be deduced that politics in banks mainly result for monetary benefits like annual incentives, transfers/postings and promotions. It tends to highly influence the degree of commitment of people, not always but to a certain extent, the internal policy regulation with staff benefits are not generalized and is purely dependent on the executives who are acting as a drive in policy regulations and further is should also be borne in mind that it is the personal view of employees. Employees who have been benefitted by politics are enthusiastic which in turn increase their commitment towards the organization.

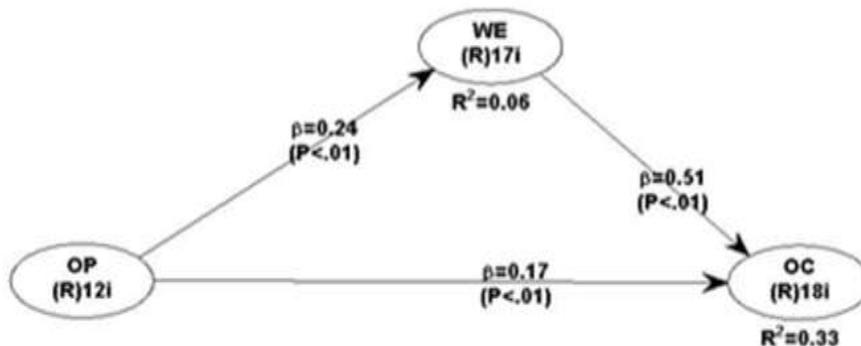
Employees love their work, are inspired by their job, happy to work passionately and hence it is difficult to deviate them from their work. The engagement to their work leads the employees to be committed to their organization. There are likely to be a few employees at the work place who get their work done by others and employees willingly come forward to do since they look it as an opportunity to learn. Hard working employees in an organization are benefited through rewards such as pay and promotion, which enhances their commitment to their organization. Good ideas, decisions, motivating words of employee when accepted by others leads in enhancing their commitment to their organization. Employees benefited either monetarily or have gained personal satisfaction also leads to high commitment.

To examine the mediating role of WE, SEM is executed in two stages. First the influence of OP on OC is examined followed by WE as a mediator between OP and OC. Warp PLS produces path coefficients with their respective p-values, and R squared coefficients. In stage 1, The R<sup>2</sup> co-efficient value for the Dependent Variable OC with OP as independent variable is 8.9%. In stage 2, WE is introduced as a mediator. The R<sup>2</sup> co-efficient for dependent variable WE is (5.6%) and OC (33.1%), introduction of WE as a mediation has led to an increase in R<sup>2</sup> value of OC from 8.9% to 33.1%.

**Figure 1: Structural Model 1 - Influence of OP on OC**



**Figure 2: Structural Model 2 - WE as mediator between OP and OC**



**Table 5 Fit indices**

Structural Model	APC	ARS	AARS	AVIF	AFVIF	Tenenhaus GoF (GOF)	SPR
Standard values	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<=5	<=5	small =>0.01; medium=>0.25;	>=0.7

						large=>0.36	
OP→OC	0.299	0.089	0.089	NA	1.078	0.156	1.000
OP→WE→OC (Mediation)	0.305	0.194	0.194	1.071	1.332	0.252	1.000

\*Significant at 0.001

From the table 5, it could be inferred that the fit indices for both the models are within the standard values thus indicating that the model fits the data.

**Table 6 Path Coefficients**

Structural Model	Path	Beta Coefficient	P value	Standard errors for path coefficients	Effect sizes for path coefficient
1	OP→OC	0.299	<0.001	0.028	0.089
2 (Mediation)	OP→WE	0.238	<0.001	0.028	0.057
	OP→OC	0.167	<0.001	0.028	0.050
	WE→OC	0.510	<0.001	0.027	0.282

The path coefficients are measured from -1 to +1. The path coefficient value that is moving towards +1 exhibits a stronger positive correlation and the value nearer to -1 exhibit stronger negative association. The path coefficient between OP and OC is found to be 0.299, which indicates a positive relationship ( $\beta=0.299$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 6), which is significant. Hence it could be stated that OP has a positive significant influence on OC, thus proving Hypothesis 1.

In order to establish the mediation effect of WE between OP and OC, the study adopted the Baron and Kenny mediational model (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Kenny, 1998) which has 4 steps.

- 1) Using regression equation to show that OP affects OC Commitment and determining the path coefficient between OP and OC.
- 2) Using regression equation to show that OP affects WE and then estimating the path coefficient between OP and WE.
- 3) Using regression equation to show that WE affects OC and estimating the path coefficient between WE and OC while controlling for OP.
- 4) Establishing complete mediation if the effect of OP on OC is zero while controlling for WE.

The steps should be stated in terms of zero and nonzero coefficients, not in terms of statistical significance because small coefficients can be statistically significant with large sample sizes, and very large coefficients can be non-significant with small sample sizes. If all four of these steps are met, then it could be concluded that WE completely mediates the relationship between OP and OC, and if the first 3 steps are met but step 4 is not, then partial mediation is indicated. The path coefficients and the associated significance value, standard errors path coefficients and Effect sizes for path coefficients are presented in table 6. It could be inferred that the path coefficient between; OP and WE is 0.238; OP and OC is 0.167 and WE and OC is 0.510 indicating positive significant relationship in all the three paths.

The Beta value for the direct path between OP and OC is  $\beta=0.299$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) (table 6), while the Beta value for the direct path between OP and OC has reduced to  $\beta=0.167$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) when WE is introduced as a mediator. Since the direct effect of OP to OC decreases when WE is introduced as a mediator, it could be inferred that WE partially mediates the relationship between OP and OC. The mediation is partial because controlling WE does not make the mediation effect of OP on OC to be zero ( $\beta=0.167$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). Therefore it could be concluded that “Work Engagement partially mediates the positive relationship between Organizational Politics and Organizational Commitment”.

## **Conclusion**

The present study focused on investigating the mediating effect of WE on the relationship between OP and OC in Banking Industry among the South Indian States. From the descriptive statistics, it could be inferred that banking employees are highly engrossed and committed to their work. They are bound with the organization emotionally and intellectually. A few employees are considering self-interest more and indulge in politics under the condition of scarce resources, which is unavoidable, but care needs to be taken that it is not detrimental to the organization. From regression analysis, it could be found that out of 12 items of OP, 8 items were included in the model and out of 17 items of WE, 4 items have been included in the model. Item ‘In our organization pay and promotion policies are politically applied’ of Organizational Politics has the highest influence. Therefore, regression analysis reveals that banking employees are engage in politics when it is concerned with increments, performance based pays and for promotions, but yet employees are committed to their organization and are also engaged to their work. Results of SEM reveal that OP has a significant influence on OC and WE partially mediates the relationship between OP and OC. Hence in an organization, politics should be at a threshold level and it is likely to enhance the commitment levels of employees.

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