

Perceived Organisational Politics and Employee Commitment: A Comparative Study of Gender and the Moderating Effect of Mindfulness in the Public Sector in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Purpose: While numerous studies highlight the negative effects of perceived organisational politics (POP), emerging research suggests that POP has inconsistent outcomes. Hence, this study examines the impact of POP on employee commitment, specifically exploring the moderating roles of mindfulness and gender within the context of the Sri Lankan public sector.

Design/Methodology: This study which follows a positivist approach under the quantitative research paradigm, was underpinned by the Conservation of Resources theory. Data was collected from 350 structured questionnaires based on a convenience sampling method. Unit of analysis was the employee in the public sector.

Findings: The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between POP and employee commitment and higher levels of POP associate lower levels of commitment. Mindfulness was negatively related to POP, suggesting that more mindful employees perceive less organizational politics. Moreover, mindfulness moderates the POP and commitment. Gender also played a moderating role, with men showing greater adaptability to POP than women.

Theoretical and Practical implications: Integration of CoR theory revealed new insights as to how employees navigate through politically charged scenarios. These findings suggest that organisations can benefit from mindfulness training programs and gender-sensitive strategies to manage POP and enhance employee commitment effectively.

Innovation/Value: This study advances understanding of how personal and contextual factors shape the effects of perceived organizational politics.

Keywords: Employee commitment, Conservation of Resources (CoR) theory, Gender, Perceived organizational politics (POP), Mindfulness.

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Introduction

Sri Lanka's public sector is a vital cornerstone of the country's governance and development, significantly contributing to socio-economic advancement and service delivery. This sector encompasses a broad array of services and industries, employing approximately 14.6% of the total workforce (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). As a key driver of public administration, infrastructure development, and welfare services, the public sector plays a pivotal role in the nation's progress. Its impact is particularly pronounced in areas such as education, healthcare, and rural development, where it serves as a primary enabler of economic and social stability (Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration, 2019). This widespread reach underscores its capacity to uplift vulnerable populations and reduce inequality. Additionally, public sector organizations spearhead critical initiatives in environmental conservation, rural development, and disaster management, addressing the diverse needs of Sri Lanka's population (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Despite its importance, the public sector faces mounting challenges, including inefficiencies, political interference, and a perceived lack of accountability, which have sparked public criticism (Public Focus, 2014). Employee commitment in the public sector has become an increasingly critical issue, particularly amid heightened perceptions of organizational politics (Fletcher, et al., 2020). Declining levels of employee engagement and commitment are evident across various industries, including the public sector (Borst et al., 2020). Studies reveal that only about 30-35% of employees are fully engaged at work, with a significant portion remaining disengaged or actively disengaged (De Smet et al., 2023). This decline has far-reaching implications, including lower commitment, increased turnover, and reduced productivity (Ngozi & Edwinah, 2022).

Adding to this concern, the Public Focus magazine (2014), published by the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), highlights a prevailing negative perception among the general public toward government organisations. Over the years, complaints from the public, media, and other stakeholders have frequently pointed to the underperformance of public sector service organisations in Sri Lanka. One major reason identified in the magazine is the lack of employee commitment to their assigned tasks, responsibilities, and organisations. In light of these issues, this study seeks to identify the factors influencing employee commitment in this context. In public sector organisational politics introduces unique challenges while seeking job security as a motivating factor. While bureaucratic complexities can leave employees

feeling disconnected from their organization's larger mission, organizational politics characterized by manipulative practices, favoritism, and ambiguous decision-making adds further strain, often deteriorating morale, job satisfaction, and employee commitment (Hur, 2022). However, the relationship between Perceived Organisational Politics (POP) and employee outcomes is not entirely unidirectional or universally negative (Hur, 2022).

In the context of POP, this principle becomes particularly relevant. POP is inherently resource-depleting, as it creates a work environment that demands substantial emotional and cognitive effort from employees. Employees are forced to navigate complex and often adversarial political environments, where uncertainty, competition, and interpersonal conflicts drain vital psychological resources. This depletion can lead to negative outcomes, such as heightened stress, burnout, diminished motivation, and ultimately reduced commitment to the organization (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Vigoda, 2000; Abbas et al., 2014).

Given the resource-depleting nature of POP, the inclusion of mindfulness as a moderating variable is valuable. By fostering a non-judgmental awareness of internal and external experiences, mindfulness helps employees conserve critical psychological resources and buffers against the resource-depleting effects of POP. Research has shown that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, reduces stress, and builds resilience, making it a promising resource for mitigating the adverse effects of workplace stressors, including POP (Glomb, et al., 2011). While previous studies have explored various aspects of POP in Sri Lanka, such as its influence on job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Wijewantha et al. 2020), the potential of mindfulness to buffer these effects has not been investigated. Moreover, the role of gender differences in perceiving organisational politics deserves more attention. Research suggests that men and women may perceive and respond to organisational politics differently, potentially affecting their ability to regulate emotions and conserve psychological resources (Katz & Toner, 2013). Investigating these gender differences in perceptions of politics could offer valuable insights into how gender shapes the impact of POP on employee outcomes, including organisational commitment. Research has shown that organisational politics is an inevitable phenomenon, particularly in bureaucratic environments like Sri Lanka's public sector, where political interference and power dynamics significantly influence decision-making and employee behavior (Senarathna & Jayarathna, 2021). In Sri Lanka, issues such as political support, bureaucratic structures, collectivist culture, and favoritism within public institutions (Ramasamy, 2020) exacerbate these challenges,

creating a politically charged environment that employees must navigate, which in turn affects their motivation and commitment. Despite the well-documented effects of POP, there is limited research exploring its impact on employee commitment within Sri Lanka's public sector, especially considering the moderating roles of mindfulness and gender. Hence, this study aims to address this gap by investigating how POP influences employee commitment in this context, with a focus on the potential buffering effects of mindfulness and gender differences in employees' responses to organizational politics.

Research Questions

1. Does perceived organisational politics (POP) affect employee commitment in the Sri Lankan public sector?
2. Does mindfulness moderate the relationship between POP and employee commitment in the Sri Lankan public sector?
3. Does gender moderate the relationship between POP and employee commitment in the Sri Lankan public sector?

Literature review

Organisational politics

Research consistently documents the detrimental effects of POP, with studies showing that it undermines trust, satisfaction, and alignment with organisational goals (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Vigoda, 2000). Organisational politics can be defined as actions directed against the objectives of an organisation mainly towards personal agendas and self-interest (Landells & Albretch, 2019). Conversely, POP poses a significant threat to employee commitment. POP is defined as employees' subjective perception of self-serving behaviors within the organisation, often aimed at advancing individual or group interests at the expense of others (Wijewantha, Jusoh, Azam, & Sudasinghe, 2020). Kacmar and Baron (1999) described organizational politics as actions taken to further personal interests, frequently at the cost of organizational goals. These behaviors, characterized by favoritism, manipulation, and power struggles, create a negative work environment that influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2010).

Employees perceiving a political work environment often report diminished motivation and engagement, which can erode their organizational commitment, particularly in public sector settings where bureaucratic structures and political interference are prevalent (Fletcher et al., 2020). Conversely, some conflicting findings suggest that the effects of organizational politics may vary depending on individual and contextual factors. While many studies highlight its detrimental impacts, such as decreased trust, satisfaction, and engagement (Ferris, et al., 1989; Vigoda, 2000). Some research suggests that POP may also have positive outcomes under specific conditions. For instance, some studies prove individuals may leverage political environments to achieve personal and organizational goals, resulting in enhanced job performance and career advancement (Takeuchi, et al., 2022; Tziner, et al., 2024). A study conducted by Pathmaseelan and Mendis (2019) on occupational stress, stated that organizational politics can also enhance stress and reduce work performance. This dual perspective emphasizes the complexity of organizational politics and the importance of contextual and individual factors in causal effects.

Employee commitment

Employee commitment refers to an individual's emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with their organization, making it crucial for fostering productivity and reducing turnover (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). Over the years, various scholars have explored this construct from multiple perspectives. Becker (1960) introduced the concept of commitment as the "side bets" individuals make, emphasizing the personal investments that bind employees to their organisation. Porter et al. (1974) expanded this view by conceptualising commitment as a multidimensional construct comprising belief in organisational goals, willingness to exert effort, and a strong desire to remain within the organisation. Similarly, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) defined commitment as a psychological attachment influenced by shared values and rewards (Meyer et al., 1993). Further broadened the understanding by introducing occupational commitment, describing it as a binding force connecting individuals to their organisation and associated actions (Meyer et al., 2006).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a mental state in which individuals consciously focus on present experiences with awareness and attention while maintaining a non-judgmental attitude

toward their observations (Baer & Strauss, 2022; Valanciene, et al., 2020). It involves cultivating control over the body and mind by consciously observing every sensation, perception, movement, thought, and environmental cue. This intentional practice fosters holistic personal growth in a nurturing manner. Mindfulness can be conceptualized as both a trait that varies across individuals and a state that fluctuates over time (Gordon, et al., 2022).

Research on mindfulness has expanded significantly over the past few decades, uncovering numerous positive outcomes. For instance, mindfulness has been associated with enhanced social and emotional skills, improved well-being (Chan, et al., 2024), and better-perceived health (Sousa, et al., 2021). However, mindfulness levels can diminish in the face of negative life events (Emirtekin, et al., 2020). Importantly, mindfulness plays a critical role in managing stress responses. For example, Hülshager, et al. (2021) identified a negative relationship between mindfulness and emotional exhaustion, as well as a positive association between mindfulness and job satisfaction. Similarly, Roeser, et al. (2022) highlighted that mindfulness reduces occupational stress and burnout among school teachers. These findings underscore mindfulness as a personal resource that mitigates workplace stress and burnout.

Role of gender in POP

Traditional gender role orientations distinctly assign responsibilities to men and women within families. Men are typically viewed as the primary income earners and heads of households, while women are expected to be submissive, focusing on household duties and childcare (Denton, 2004). In Sri Lanka, these traditional norms have historically shaped workplace behaviors and attitudes, with women often perceived as caretakers and men as breadwinners (Kailasapathy, et al., 2014). However, shifting societal expectations and a gradual move toward egalitarianism have led many Sri Lankan women to take on dual roles, balancing responsibilities as primary caregivers at home and active contributors in the workforce. In contrast, societal expectations for men remain more static; regardless of whether their spouses are employed, men are often assumed to have limited involvement in household and childcare responsibilities (Wickramasinghe & Jayatilaka, 2006).

This dual-role burden places significant strain on women, particularly in politically charged workplace environments, where POP can amplify stress and reduce organisational commitment. POP is known to undermine employee commitment by

fostering stress, dissatisfaction, and perceptions of inequity (Labrague, et al., 2017). Politically charged environments create uncertainties about fairness and reward allocation, further weakening employees' attachment to their organisations (Vigoda, 2000; Hochwarter, et al., 2003). For Sri Lankan women, the challenges posed by POP are compounded by cultural and workplace barriers restricting traditional gender expectations. Women often lack access to informal political networks and are excluded from decision-making processes, heightening their sensitivity to the negative effects of POP (Drory & Romm, 1990; Islam, et al., 2012).

Theoretical background

Conservation of resources theory (COR)

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a valuable lens through which to understand the dynamics of POP and its impact on employee outcomes, especially in high-stress environments like the public sector. One of the core tenets of COR theory is the primacy of resource loss, which posits that the psychological harm individuals experience from losing resources is greater than the benefit they derive from gaining the same amount of resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

The mechanisms underlying these outcomes can be understood through the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, et al., 2018). COR theory suggests that individuals strive to acquire, protect, and maintain valuable resources, such as self-esteem, time, effort, and social support. Workplace stressors like politicised decision-making threaten these resources, leading to depletion, impaired performance, and increased turnover intentions (Bowling et al, 2010; Treadway, 2005). Employees experiencing resource depletion often adopt resource-conserving behaviors, such as disengagement, further eroding their organisational commitment (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993; Harris, et al., 2011).

Hypotheses formulation and conceptual framework

POP and employee commitment

The significance of employee commitment is well-documented in organizational research. It is inversely related to turnover rates (Kazlauskaitė, et al. 2006) and positively linked to organisational success (Alniacik, et al., 2011). Scholars such as Dhar (2015) and Mowday et al. (1979) emphasize its pivotal role in fostering positive

workplace behaviors and establishing employee commitment as a critical determinant of organizational performance.

Empirical evidence consistently highlights the detrimental effects of organizational politics. Vredenburg and Maurer (1984) observed that workplace politics often lead to adverse outcomes such as increased anxiety, job dissatisfaction, and diminished performance. Miller, Rutherford, and Kolodinsky (2008) reported a 35% decline in commitment levels among employees with high perceptions of organizational politics. Landells and Albrecht (2019) demonstrated that organizational politics exacerbate stress and reduce engagement, indirectly lowering commitment by approximately 25-30%. Furthermore, Karatepe (2013) found that in high-stress environments, work engagement mediates the relationship between POP and affective commitment, leading to a 20-25% decline in commitment levels.

In politicized work environments, the lack of fairness in promotions and recognition, often driven by favoritism, damages employees' trust in organisational processes (Ferris et al., 1989). This undermines the psychological contract between the organization and its employees, as expectations of fairness and reciprocal support are unmet (Taylor, et al., 1996). Consequently, perceptions of organisational politics erode employee commitment, as employees become reluctant to invest in long-term organisational membership.

By integrating theoretical insights from COR theory and empirical evidence, this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which organisational politics affect employee commitment. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: POP negatively impact employee commitment

Moderating role of mindfulness

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) provides a theoretical framework for understanding mindfulness as a personal resource. Although empirical evidence directly examining the moderating role of mindfulness in the relationship between POP and employee commitment is lacking, related studies offer valuable insights. Individuals with heightened mindfulness are more likely to demonstrate increased motivation (Ruffault et al. 2016), autonomy, self-regulation, and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). These attributes align with COR theory, which emphasises the protective role of personal resources in shaping behavior and health outcomes (Taris & Schaufeli,

2015). For example, Janssen, et al. (2020) found that mindful employees exhibit higher engagement and better performance even under high work pressure. Furthermore, mindfulness has been negatively associated with emotional exhaustion, particularly among employees facing high job demands or those in supervisory roles (Reb, et al. 2015; Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2022).

While many studies highlight the detrimental impacts of POP, such as decreased trust, satisfaction, and engagement (Ferris et al., 1989; Vigoda, 2000), some research suggests that POP may also have positive outcomes under specific conditions. For instance, some studies demonstrate that individuals can leverage political environments to achieve personal and organizational goals, resulting in enhanced job performance and career advancement (Takeuchi et al., 2022; Tziner et al., 2024). These contrasting findings indicate a need for further exploration into the moderating effects of mindfulness in political environments, particularly in understanding its potential to buffer the negative consequences of POP while fostering positive outcomes.

Mindfulness serves as a protective factor against adverse outcomes in work and health contexts. Emerging evidence suggests its dual role as a mediator and moderator in the relationships between stressors and health outcomes (McKeen, et al., 2023). Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, this study posits that mindfulness moderates the negative relationship between POP and employee commitment. Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H₂: Mindfulness moderates the negative relationship between POP and employee commitment.

Gender as a moderator between POP and employee commitment

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a framework for understanding these dynamics. According to COR theory, individuals perceive POP as a threat to personal resources, such as emotional well-being and career advancement opportunities. Women, particularly those in the Sri Lankan public sector, are more likely to experience this threat acutely due to societal pressures to excel in both professional and domestic roles. Studies have shown that women in politically charged workplaces are more prone to stress and emotional exhaustion, which accelerates their disengagement from organisational commitments (Buchanan, 2008; Chang, et al., 2009). The dual burden of workplace demands and household responsibilities often leaves women with limited resources to cope effectively with the complexities of workplace politics.

Additionally, traditional Sri Lankan societal norms that prioritise male authority in both domestic and professional spheres exacerbate these challenges for women. Gunawardana et al. (2014) emphasise how rigid hierarchical structures and entrenched gender roles in the Sri Lankan public sector intensify these difficulties, leading to lower levels of employee commitment among women. Men, in contrast, may face fewer direct impacts from POP due to their relatively greater access to political networks and fewer societal pressures to balance dual roles.

However, evolving societal norms are gradually influencing men's roles. Increasingly, men are taking on caregiving responsibilities, which may expose them to stressors similar to those faced by women. Studies such as Takeuchi et al. (2022) suggest that men in collaborative roles can also experience reduced organizational commitment in highly political environments. These findings highlight that while women are generally more adversely affected by POP, the evolving nature of gender roles calls for a deeper understanding of how men and women respond to organisational politics. Building on this context, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Gender moderates the negative relationship between POP and employee commitment.

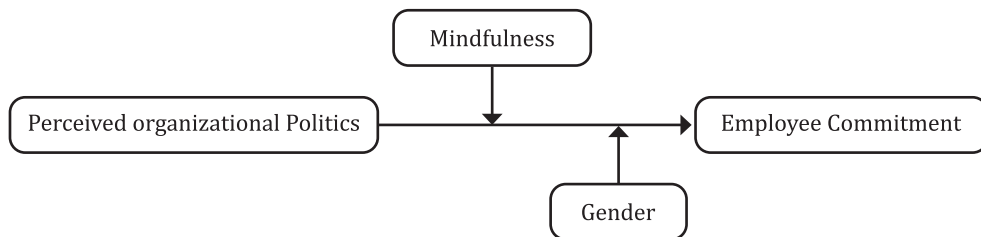


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Methodology

This study follows a hypothetico deductive method under the quantitative research paradigm. Hochwarter et al. (2003); Hülshager, et al. (2013) also followed a similar approach in previous research. The public sector includes all levels of government and state-controlled enterprises, providing essential services such as education, healthcare, law enforcement, defense, and infrastructure development (Department of Census

and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2024). It plays a pivotal role in driving national development and delivering critical services to citizens. In Sri Lanka, the public sector accounts for 15% of the total workforce and 35% of formal employment, while consuming 26% of state spending and 5% of the GDP. Notably, public sector employment has expanded by approximately 60% since 2005. However, the Worldwide Governance Index (WGI) classifies the country's government performance as "poor," with a government effectiveness score of -0.65 (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2024).

The convenience sampling method was employed to collect, which is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This method was deemed appropriate due to the expansive and diverse nature of Sri Lanka's public sector, which made probability sampling methods impractical (Jager, et al., 2017). This approach allowed researchers to gather meaningful insights into the dynamics of employee commitment within the sector. Self-administered surveys were used to collect data from participants. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from department heads of public sector institutions, ensuring smooth data collection. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter explaining the study's objectives and assuring participants of both confidentiality and anonymity. The questionnaire was designed to exclude personally sensitive questions to protect respondents' privacy (Eysenbach & Wyatt, 2002) while maintaining anonymity (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). Out of the 350 individuals approached, 211 participants completed the survey questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 60%.

Measures

This study employed a 19-item assessment model designed by Meyer and Allen (1997) to measure organisational commitment. Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." A six-item instrument, created by Hochwarter et al. (2003), was utilized to assess perceptions of organisational politics. This tool gauges the extent to which employees recognize political activities or behaviors occurring within their workplace. Mindfulness was based on a five-item mindfulness scale from Höfling, et al. (2011); Roche et al., (2014). Gender was measured by way of a binary question.

Participants were asked to indicate their gender with a single question. For the analysis, gender was coded as a binary variable, where women were assigned a value of 0 and

men a value of 1. To account for possible confounding factors, the study incorporated four control variables that have been shown in prior research to be significantly linked with either the independent or dependent variables (Greenhaus, et al., 1989; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013). Age was divided into five categories: 18–20 years (coded as 1), 21–30 years (coded as 2), 31–40 years (coded as 3), 41–50 years (coded as 4), and above 50 years (coded as 5). Job tenure was evaluated through a single question asking respondents how many years they had been employed at their current organisation, with options ranging from 1 (less than a year) to 5 (over 15 years). Educational attainment was recorded based on participants' highest level of education, classified as 1 (no formal education), 2 (completed apprenticeship), and 3 (university degree).

Data analysis

The sample was predominantly male, with 60% of respondents identifying as male and 40% identifying as female. The largest age group was 21–30 years, accounting for 40% of participants, followed by 25% in the 31–40 age range. Participants aged 18–20 represented 10%, while those in the 41–50 age range and those aged over 50 made up 10% and 15%, respectively. In terms of work experience, 45% of respondents reported having 1–5 years of experience, and 20% had 6–10 years. Fifteen percent of participants had less than one year of tenure, while 10% had 10–15 years, and another 10% had more than 15 years of experience. Regarding educational attainment, the majority (75%) held university degrees, while 20% had completed apprenticeships. A small portion (5%) had no formal education. Additionally, 55% of participants felt they were underpaid compared to their peers with similar educational backgrounds, while 45% did not share this view. Table 1 below indicates the reliability and validity analysis for the variables.

Table 1: Measurement model – reliability and validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived Organizational Politics (POP)	0.717	19	0.78	0.52
Mindfulness	0.90	5	0.91	0.73
Employee Commitment	0.755	6	0.80	0.56

Source: Data analysis

Based on Table 1, The reliability and validity of the study constructs were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), following the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2010). All three constructs, Perceived Organisational Politics, Mindfulness, and Employee Commitment, exhibited acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.78 to 0.91, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good construct reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, AVE values were all above 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity for the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). The structural model – path analysis based on AMOS is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Structural path coefficients

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R. (t-value)	p-value	Significance
POP → Employee Commitment	-0.45	0.08	-5.63	< 0.001	Significant
Mindfulness → Employee Commitment	0.38	0.09	-4.22	< 0.001	Significant
POP × Mindfulness → Commitment	0.20	0.07	-3.57	0.001	Significant moderation

Sources: Data analysis

According to Table 2, the structural path analysis revealed significant relationships among the study variables. Perceived organisational politics (POP) showed a significant negative effect on Employee Commitment ($\beta = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that when employees perceive higher levels of organisational politics, their commitment to the organization tends to decrease. In contrast, Mindfulness had a significant positive effect on Employee Commitment ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that more mindful employees who are better at staying present, regulating emotions, and reducing reactivity are more likely to remain committed to their organization.

Importantly, the interaction between POP and Mindfulness on Employee Commitment was also significant ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.001$), confirming a significant moderation effect. The positive coefficient of the interaction term suggests that mindfulness buffers the negative impact of POP on commitment. In other words, while POP typically reduces commitment, this adverse effect is less severe among employees with higher levels of mindfulness. This implies that mindfulness serves as a protective psychological

resource, enabling individuals to better manage the stress or disillusionment caused by organizational politics and maintain their level of commitment even in politically charged work environments. Table 3 denotes the model-fit of the analysis.

Table 3: Model-fit indices (AMOS output)

Fit Index	Model Value	Recommended Value
Chi-Square/df (CMIN/df)	1.87	< 3.0
GFI	0.921	≥ 0.90
CFI	0.944	≥ 0.90 (≥ 0.95 = excellent)
TLI	0.927	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.064	< 0.08 (ideal < 0.06)

Source: Data analysis

The structural equation model was assessed using AMOS with maximum likelihood estimation. The model demonstrated a good fit to the data, as indicated by the following fit indices: $\chi^2(71) = 132.44$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2/df = 1.87$; GFI = 0.921; CFI = 0.944; TLI = 0.927; RMSEA = 0.064; and SRMR = 0.057. These values suggest that the hypothesized model fits the data well and meets commonly accepted standards for structural equation modeling (Kline, 2023).

Table 4: Multi-group analysis – gender differences

Path	Group	Standardized β	p-value
POP → Employee Commitment	Male	-0.41	< 0.05
POP → Employee Commitment	Female	-0.55	< 0.01

Source: Data analysis

As displayed in Table 4 above, the multi-group analysis examined whether gender moderates the relationship between perceived organisational politics (POP) and employee commitment. The results revealed that POP had a significant negative effect on employee commitment for both male ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < 0.05$) and female ($\beta = -0.55$, $p < 0.01$) employees. However, the effect was notably stronger among female employees. To statistically test this difference, a chi-square difference test was conducted, yielding a significant result ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.21$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.05$), confirming the presence of a significant

moderating effect of gender. This suggests that female employees are more adversely affected by organisational politics in terms of their commitment levels compared to their male counterparts.

Discussion

This study, grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, investigated the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics (POP) and employee commitment, with mindfulness and gender as moderators. Consistent with COR theory, our findings confirmed a significant negative relationship between POP and employee commitment. High levels of organizational politics were shown to create a stressful work environment that depletes employees' psychological and emotional resources, thereby diminishing their organisational commitment. These results align with prior research conducted by Kacmar, et al., (2013) that highlights the adverse effects of POP on commitment.

The study also examined mindfulness as a protective factor against the negative consequences of POP. As hypothesised, mindfulness significantly moderated the relationship between POP and employee commitment. Employees with higher mindfulness levels exhibited weaker negative effects of POP on their commitment. This finding is consistent with studies by Neilson, et al. (2016) and Regehr, et al. (2013), which demonstrate that mindfulness can act as a resource, reducing the detrimental effects of job stressors such as organisational politics. Thus, employees who practice mindfulness may be better equipped to manage the negative consequences of POP, leading to higher levels of commitment.

Furthermore, the moderating role of gender was examined, with results revealing significant gender-based differences in how POP influences employee commitment. Female employees reported significantly lower levels of commitment compared to their male counterparts under high levels of perceived organisational politics. This finding highlights the dual-role challenges faced by women, particularly in the Sri Lankan cultural context, where traditional gender expectations and workplace barriers amplify the negative impacts of POP. These results are consistent with studies (Buchanan, 2008; Wickramasinghe & Jayatilaka, 2006) that highlight the heightened vulnerability of women to workplace stressors due to societal and organisational constraints.

Theoretical implications

This study theoretically advances the literature in many dimensions by deepening the understanding of how mindfulness and gender influence the relationship between perceived organisational politics (POP) and employee commitment, particularly within the context of the Sri Lankan public sector. Firstly, by integrating the COR theory, the research offers insights into how individuals use internal resources, such as mindfulness, to navigate politically charged environments. Underpinning this study with COR theory, the research extends the theoretical understanding of how internal personal resources and social dynamics shape organisational behavior. Secondly, the outcome of this study affirms the study of Kacmar et al., (2013) where a negative relationship does exist between POP and employee commitment. Thirdly, considering gender as a moderating factor uncovers key social exchange dynamics, revealing how men and women engage with organizational politics and commitment differently.

While previous studies have primarily focused on the direct effects of organisational politics on employee outcomes (Fletcher et al., 2020), this study broadens the discussion by showing how mindfulness, as a cognitive and emotional buffer, can mitigate the negative impacts of politics on commitment. The study emphasizes the moderating role of mindfulness and gender in the relationship between POP and employee commitment, offering several practical implications for organisations, particularly in Sri Lanka's public sector. It highlights the importance of implementing mindfulness training programs to help employees manage the negative effects of POP and maintain their commitment to the organisation. Mindfulness fosters positive leadership traits, strengthens employee relationships with management and peers, enhances teamwork, increases employee engagement, improves performance, supports well-being, and contributes to organizational sustainability (Panditharathne & Chen, 2021). This research underscores the significant potential of mindfulness practices in the workplace, benefiting individuals, organisations, and societal sustainability.

Practical implications

Incorporating the public sector mindfulness assessments into recruitment and promotion processes, especially for high-stress roles, to identify individuals who are better equipped to navigate political environments. Furthermore, leadership development programs should integrate mindfulness training to help leaders create supportive, politically neutral environments that foster commitment. Organisations

should also adopt gender-sensitive strategies, acknowledging that men and women may perceive and respond to workplace politics differently, and tailor interventions accordingly. Finally, mindfulness interventions should be culturally and contextually relevant to the Sri Lankan setting, considering local norms and values. By adopting these strategies, organisations can enhance employee engagement, performance, and long-term sustainability.

Limitations and directions for future research

The study's findings provide valuable insights; however, they should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations. Firstly, the data was gathered solely from public sector employees in Sri Lanka, which might lead to common method bias. As the study relies entirely on self-reported data, there is a risk of response biases impacting the reliability of participants' answers (Krosnick, 1999; Weijters, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, due to the nature of the constructs examined, it would be exceedingly difficult to assess them using methods other than self-reporting.

Secondly, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the constructs. However, by incorporating a time lag between the predictor variables and outcomes, we aimed to reduce the potential impact of common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Khan, 2021). In addition, adopting a longitudinal design, where the proposed relationships are assessed over multiple time points, could offer a more detailed perspective for verifying the directionality of these relationships (Kaur & Kang, 2021).

Thirdly, the study's concentration on Sri Lanka's public sector may constrain the applicability of the findings to other cultural or industrial environments (Polit & Beck, 2010). To evaluate the external validity of these results, future research should explore similar studies in diverse settings or industries.

Fourthly, this study exclusively examined the moderating role of mindfulness in the relationship between Perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. Future research should employ experimental or longitudinal designs to explore how various contributing factors evolve and interact over time. Furthermore, exploring moderating variables like emotional intelligence, resilience, psychological capital, or organizational justice, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the processes that shape these relationships. Examining how these factors interact and influence outcomes would deepen insights into the complex dynamics at play.

Finally, our sample was confined to public sector, which may limit the generalizability of our findings to other organizational contexts. We recommend that future research broaden the sample to include various sectors from different regions to enhance the study's applicability and relevance.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the complex interplay between POP, employee commitment, mindfulness, and gender within the Sri Lankan public sector. The findings confirm that POP negatively impact employee commitment. However, mindfulness serves as a crucial moderating variable that can buffer these effects. Additionally, the study highlights that gender plays a significant role in how employees perceive and respond to organisational politics, with men being more adaptable to politically charged environments compared to women.

Organizations, particularly in the public sector, must acknowledge the critical role of mindfulness and gender in mitigating the negative consequences of organisational politics. By promoting mindfulness practices and implementing gender-sensitive approaches, organisations can foster a more committed workforce, even in environments rife with politics.

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