# Perceived organizational politics, emotional intelligence and work outcomes
## Empirical exploration of direct and indirect effects

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**Abstract**

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the relationship between perceived organizational politics and emotional intelligence, and their interplay in the context of work attitudes/behaviors.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A sample of 368 employees was used to test a mediation effect of perceived organizational politics on the relationship between emotional intelligence on the one hand, and job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior on the other.

**Findings** – Perceived organizational politics was found to mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and all three outcomes.

**Practical implications** – Emotional intelligence training may be a powerful tool that organizations and human resource managers can employ to reduce perceived organizational politics and enhance work attitudes and performance.

**Originality/value** – This research broadens the scope through which the intersection between emotion and organizational politics can be viewed, taking it beyond the role of both felt emotion and affective disposition. The findings show that emotional intelligence directly affects perceptions of politics, and indirectly affects employees' work attitudes and behaviors, through a mediation effect of perceived politics.

**Keywords** Quantitative, Emotional intelligence, Organizational politics, Work outcomes

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

During the past two decades, research on organizational politics has focused primarily on testing the perceptions of organizational politics (POP) model, originally presented by Ferris *et al.* (1989). According to the model, organizational, job/work environment, and personal influences act as antecedents of POP, which in turn give rise to a number of work outcomes (e.g. job involvement, job satisfaction, job anxiety, turnover, and absenteeism) (Ferris *et al.*, 1989). Studies have examined the negative implications of perceived organizational politics for various work attitudes, behaviors, and performance measures, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job burnout, stress, turnover intentions, and negligent behavior (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Miller *et al.*, 2008; Vigoda, 2000, 2001). However, until recently the emotional implications of organizational politics (OP) have been overlooked. This is surprising, given the assumption that political struggles

evoke intense emotions from those who participate in the political game, as well as those who witness it.

Recently, scholars have begun to recognize the role of emotion in organizational politics. Drawing from affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), which holds that emotional experiences at work influence employees' short and long-term attitudes and behaviors, Liu and her colleagues suggested that emotion and emotional behaviors mediate the relationship between perceptions of politics and several attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Liu *et al.*, 2006). Rosen *et al.* (2009) followed a similar line, arguing that emotional experiences at work play a role in translating the effects of POP into work outcomes. Empirical evidence supported this line of thinking (Albrecht, 2006; Rosen *et al.*, 2009). Taking a different approach, Ferris *et al.* (2002)) suggested that affective disposition can affect perceptions of organizational politics, with both positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA) (see: Watson *et al.*, 1988) being antecedents of POP. Other studies (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2003; Hochwarter and Treadway, 2003) have explored the interactive effects of PA/NA and POP on employees' job satisfaction.

Although these studies have shed light on the intersection between organizational politics and emotion, a number of questions and gaps remain. For example, not enough is known about the interplay between emotional intelligence (EI) and both the perception and consequences of organizational politics. Might it be that emotional intelligence influences how organizational politics is perceived, thereby indirectly affecting employees' attitudes and behaviors? A recent study of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) addressed this question and explored the relationship between EI, POP and several work outcomes. Findings from that study found no support for the suggested relationship between EI and POP. Furthermore, that study's findings did not provide support for the assumed mediation effect of POP on the relationship between EI and work outcomes.

It should be noted that the study of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) was conducted in the public sector. A review of the literature reveals significant differences in both the level and implications of POP between the public and the private sectors. For example, Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) found POP to be significantly higher in the public compared to the private sector in Israel. A high level of POP was also found in the British public sector (Vigoda, 2001). A recent meta-analysis (Miller *et al.*, 2008) also revealed differences between the two sectors in the consequences of POP, such that the relationship between POP and turnover intentions was stronger among employees from the public sector. Relying on these differences, one could raise concerns about the generalizabilty of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler's (2010) findings to employees from the private sector. Thus, the current research tests the associations between EI, POP and work outcomes again, this time in the private sector.

In the following sections we present a model that suggests a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and POP, as well as a mediation effect of POP on the relationship between emotional intelligence and three work outcomes – job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior. We then describe our procedures and results of an empirical test of the model in a private-sector financial institution.

The present study makes four main contributions. First, it broadens the scope through which the intersection between emotion and organizational politics can be

viewed, taking it beyond the role of both felt emotion (Albrecht, 2006; Rosen *et al.*, 2009) and affective disposition (Hochwarter and Treadway, 2003). Second, it contributes to our growing understanding of emotional intelligence and the manner in which it affects the work outcomes. Third, it explores the role of emotion in organizational politics in the Israeli workplace arena, as opposed to most research, which was conducted primarily in western countries and cultures (Albrecht, 2006; Hochwarter and Treadway, 2003; Rosen *et al.*, 2009). Finally, the study has potential practical implications. Specifically, there is evidence that training in emotional intelligence can help people learn to better understand and control their own and others' emotions (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2004; Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). If EI is shown to reduce perceptions of organizational politics and, thereby, the negative outcomes of POP on employees' work attitudes and behaviors, EI training may be a powerful tool that organizations and human resource managers can employ to enhance their employees' performance and, ultimately, the bottom line.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Organizational politics

Organizational politics refers to actions taken within the organization in order to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources in a way that will lead to preferred personal outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). A literature review reveals that most research in the field has taken a negative view of this phenomenon, focusing on semi-legal actions, manipulation, and coercive influence (see: Ferris and King, 1991; Mintzberg, 1983, 1985). Previous research has studied the antecedents and consequences of influence tactics employed in organizational power struggles (Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). More recent studies have focused on exploring the effects of political skill on career success, job effectiveness, and work performance (Blickle, Ferris, Munyon, Momm, Zettler, Schneider, Buckley, 2011; Blickle and Schnitzler, 2010; Blickle, von Below and Johannen, 2011; Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Jawahar *et al.*, 2008; Liu *et al.*, 2007; Todd *et al.*, 2009).

The manner in which employees perceive organizational politics, and the implications of such perceptions, have also been studied. In this regard, Ferris *et al.* (1989) model has been recognized as a useful tool for discussing how OP functions within organizations, and various studies have validated its key elements, documenting negative correlations between POP and desirable work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and positive correlations between POP and undesirable outcomes such as job burnout, stress, turnover intentions and negligent behavior (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Miller *et al.*, 2008; Vigoda, 2000, 2001).

Lately, organizational politics scholars have begun to acknowledge the potential contribution of emotion to both the perceptions and implications of OP. In a revised version of the POP model, Ferris *et al.* (2002) suggested positive and negative affectivity (PA/NA) as antecedents of POP. Hochwarter and Treadway (2003) took a somewhat different approach and proposed an interaction effect of PA/NA and POP on job satisfaction. Their study found empirical evidence for this line of thinking.

Other studies have integrated emotion in organizational politics from a different perspective. Relying on affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), Liu *et al.* (2006) argued that emotion and emotional behaviors serve as intermediate linkages in

the association between POP and various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. According to Liu *et al.* (2006), political acts by oneself and others can be viewed as work events that trigger emotional reactions, which serve as a core mechanism through which POP affect attitudes and behaviors such as burnout, cynicism, job satisfaction and affective commitment. Rosen *et al.* (2009) followed a similar line of thought, arguing that the daily hassles associated with organizational politics arouse negative emotional responses, which link perceived politics with job satisfaction and other work outcomes. They found that frustration partially mediates the relationship between POP and job satisfaction, and that frustration and job satisfaction together mediate the effects of perceived politics on task performance, organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intentions (Rosen *et al.*, 2009). Other evidence in support of this approach comes from Albrecht (2006), who found that negative affective reactions to POP partially mediate the relationship between POP and cynicism toward change.

### 2.2 Emotional intelligence

While scholars have offered a number of definitions for emotional intelligence, perhaps the best was proposed by Mayer and Salovey, the two scholars who coined the term (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Mayer and Salovey define emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p. 10). In their model, known as the ability model, emotional intelligence combines intellectual intelligence and emotion (Mayer *et al.*, 2008), as it involves an intellectual understanding of emotion and how emotion can guide both thought and actions.

Alternative models of emotional intelligence, including Goleman's (1998), Bar-On's (1997), and Petrides and Furnham's (2006), were also proposed and tested. These alternative models are referred to as mixed models (Mayer *et al.*, 1999), given that they consider emotional abilities in the context of personality factors and traits, such as motivation, assertiveness, independence, adaptability, achievement, and sociability. The mixed models have led some critics to question the validity of emotional intelligence as a construct, with particular concerns about its components, measurement, and overlaps with personality traits (Davies *et al.*, 1998). Responses to such critiques by proponents of Mayer and Salovey's ability model have established its validity (see: Mayer *et al.*, 1999, 2004; Daus and Ashkanasy, 2005).

Research during the past decade has shown that high emotional intelligence improves outcomes on various career and work measures, including transformational leadership, conflict resolution, success in job interviews, job performance, perceived organizational justice, and job satisfaction (Day and Carroll, 2004; Joseph and Newman, 2010; Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Meisler, 2012a; O'Boyle *et al.*, 2011; Sy *et al.*, 2006; Wong and Law, 2002). Aside from its direct effects on such work outcomes, emotional intelligence is also thought to play a moderating role, enhancing the effects of other determinants of career success (Douglas *et al.* 2004; Poon, 2004). Other researchers have explored the possibility that the associations between emotional intelligence and work outcomes are mediated by intervening variables (Mikolajczak *et al.*, 2007; Petrides and Furnham, 2006). Nonetheless, although an assumption that emotional intelligence contributes to

explaining success in organizational politics was presented in the seminal work of Goleman (1995) almost two decades ago, not enough is known about how emotional intelligence and organizational politics are related.

Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) addressed this issue. Findings from their study showed that emotional intelligence is significantly related to political skill but not to POP. Other findings from the same study showed that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational commitment, as well as the relationship between political skill and absenteeism among public personnel. A significant relationship between EI and political skill was also found by Meisler (2012b).

### 2.3 Integrating organizational politics with emotional intelligence

It is difficult to imagine that OP does not evoke intense emotions among those who participate in, or even witness, the political game. It is much more reasonable to assume that OP evokes emotions such as anger and frustration. Given the contribution of EI to understanding and regulating positive and negative emotions (Mayer, 2001; Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Salovey and Mayer, 1990), it is surprising that the effects of EI on the perceptions and implications of OP have not yet been extensively studied. The present study will address this issue and explore the relationships between perceptions of organizational politics, emotional intelligence, and three attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. As noted above, empirical evidence from the public sector, presented by Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010), showed an insignificant relationship between EI and POP. Furthermore, findings from that study found no support for the assumed mediation effect of POP on the relationship between EI and work outcomes. Given the differences in the level (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005) and implications (Miller *et al.*, 2008) of POP in the public versus the private sector, the current study will be conducted in a private sector organization.

Figure 1 presents the research model. The model suggests that employees' emotional intelligence affects the manner in which organizational politics is evaluated and perceived, and indirectly affects the work outcomes through its effect on POP. Hence, the model suggests a mediation effect of POP on the relationships between emotional intelligence and the three outcomes (see: Frazier *et al.*, 2004).

It is rarely suggested in the literature that intervening variables mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and its outcomes; rather, scholars of emotional intelligence have theorized that EI has a direct effect on work outcomes (Day and Carroll, 2004; Law *et al.*, 2004). Our model suggests a mediation effect of perceived
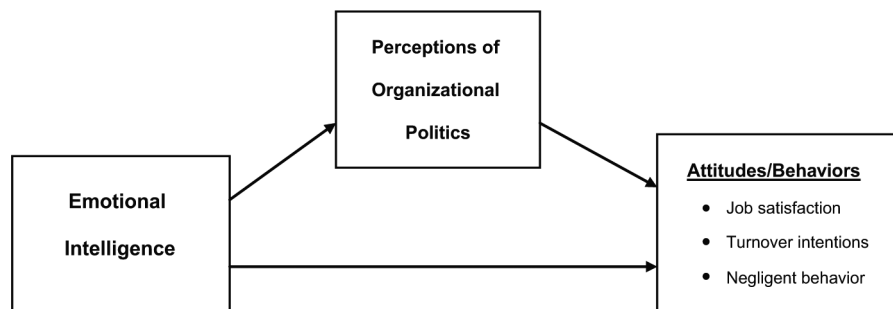


**Figure 1.**
A mediation effect of POP on the relationships between EI and employees' attitudes/behaviors

politics on the associations between EI and job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior. Under this model, high EI decreases perceptions of organizational politics, thereby enhancing employees' job satisfaction and reducing turnover intentions and negligent behavior.

There are two main justifications for expecting a negative correlation between EI and POP. The first concerns the relationship between EI and two antecedents of POP. According to the model of organizational politics perceptions (Ferris *et al.*, 1989, 2002), Machiavellianism and interpersonal relationships with others, e.g. supervisors and co-workers, predict POP. The model suggests that higher levels of Machiavellianism lead to higher perceptions of organizational politics, while good interpersonal relationships with supervisors and co-workers lead to lower perceptions of politics. Empirical evidence has supported these suggestions (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar *et al.*, 1999; Parker *et al.*, 1995; Valle and Perrewé, 2000).

Findings from the emotional intelligence literature have shown that EI is related to both Machiavellianism and the quality of interactions with others. Relying on evidence showing that individuals high in Machiavellianism are emotionally detached in their interactions with others (Christie and Geis, 1970), as well as on evidence demonstrating a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and empathy (Barnett and Thompson, 1985; Wastell and Booth, 2003; Watson *et al.*, 1994), Austin *et al.* (2007) suggested and found a negative correlation between EI and Machiavellianism. Past research has also found EI to be positively related to the quality and size of one's social network (Austin *et al.*, 2005; Ciarrochi *et al.*, 2001). Given that EI is negatively related to Machiavellianism, and that Machiavellianism is positively related to POP, it is reasonable to assume that higher EI levels lead to lower Machiavellianism, which in turn leads to lower perceptions of organizational politics. Hence, a negative association between EI and POP is expected. Similarly, it is assumed that higher EI levels increase the quality of interactions with others, which in turn leads to lower perceptions of organizational politics.

The second justification for expecting an inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived politics can be found in the work of Mayer, Salovey, and their colleagues. According to these scholars, individuals with high EI recognize the influence of emotion on thought (Mayer, 2001; Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). We believe the reverse is also true and argue that high EI individuals are likely to recognize that thought can influence emotion as well. Given that emotional intelligence enhances the understanding of how and why emotions arise, it is reasonable to believe that individuals with high EI will be aware of the manner in which thinking about past emotional events arouses emotional responses. Such emotional knowledge may help those individuals intentionally avoid ruminating about distressing events in order to avoid their negative emotional implications. Individuals with low EI, on the other hand, may not be aware of the destructive emotional implications of ruminating about disturbing events. Thus, they are likely to repeatedly think about unpleasant and stressful events and circumstances – including political behavior in the workplace, with its potential implications for the individual's work-related goals and aspirations (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Gilmore *et al.*, 1996). Because they spend so much time thinking about the influence-chasing and political machinations that take place in the workplace, employees with low EI may perceive such episodes as being more frequent, acute, and severe than actually are. In

contrast, because employees with high EI spend less time thinking about organizational politics, they will perceive it as less central to organizational life. Hence, we can expect an inverse association between emotional intelligence and perceived organizational politics, as follows:

*H1.* Emotional intelligence will be negatively related to perceived politics.

Previous research has explored the direct effects of emotional intelligence on work outcomes (Law *et al.*, 2004; Sy *et al.*, 2006). Although a few studies explored the possibility that intervening variables mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and work outcomes (Mikolajczak *et al.*, 2007; Petrides and Furnham, 2006), not enough is known about these potential mediators. Relying on evidence showing a mediation effect of job complexity on the relationship between cognitive intelligence and job satisfaction (Ganzach, 1998), as well as on findings showing that organizational learning capability mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Chiva and Alegre, 2008), it is reasonable to assume that other variables mediate the emotional intelligence-job/work outcomes relationship. We believe that perceived politics might be such a mediator. Keeping in mind the assumed negative effect of EI on POP (*H1*), as well as the central role of perceived politics in shaping employees' work attitudes and behaviors (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Miller *et al.*, 2008; Vigoda, 2000, 2001), it appears that emotional intelligence may affect work outcomes not directly, but rather, indirectly, through its effect on POP. Put differently, the association between emotional intelligence and employees' work outcomes might be mediated by perceived politics (see: Frazier *et al.*, 2004).

Studies have found a positive correlation between EI and job satisfaction (Sy *et al.*, 2006; Wong and Law, 2002), a negative correlation between EI and negligent behavior (Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010), and inconsistent findings concerning the relationship between EI and turnover intentions (Wong and Law, 2002). We believe that the effect of EI on job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior is at least partly a consequence of its effect on POP (see *H1*). Higher emotional intelligence is expected to lead to lower perceptions of organizational politics, which in turn will enhance employees' job satisfaction and reduce both turnover intentions and negligent behavior. Formally, we hypothesize:

*H2.* Perceived politics will mediate the relationships between EI and each of the outcomes: job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior.

## 3. Method
### 3.1 Sample and procedure
We distributed 432 questionnaires among employees from a financial organization in Israel. Of these, 368 usable questionnaires were returned (a return rate of 85.2 percent). The participants came from a variety of departments (call centers, marketing, finance, human resources, etc.), held different positions (clerks, accountants, technical occupations, etc.), and represented at least four hierarchal levels in the organizations (non-managerial employees and low-, mid-, and upper-level managers). A breakdown of the sample reveals that 41 percent of the respondents were males, and the average age was 29 (SD = 7.5). On average, respondents had 14 years of education 14 (SD = 2), and their average tenure in the organization was 28 months (SD = 2.3).

*3.2 Measures*
*Emotional intelligence*. We used the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Law *et al.*, 2004; Wong and Law, 2002), to measure emotional intelligence. We chose to use this self-report scale for five main reasons. First, the WLEIS is consistent with Mayer and Salovey's definition of EI (Mayer and Salovey, 1997) and is based on the ability model presented by these scholars. Second, recent studies have tested and retested this scale in different cultures (Law *et al.*, 2008; Law *et al.*, 2004; Shi and Wang, 2007) and different ethnic and gender groups (Whitman *et al.*, 2011), and established it as a solid measure with sound validity and reliability. Third, unlike other self-report EI scales that have been criticized for not being conceptually different from measures of personality, the WLEIS has been found to be distinct from the Big Five personality model (Law *et al.*, 2004). Fourth, this parsimonious 16-item scale was specifically developed for use in organizations (Law *et al.*, 2004; Wong and Law, 2002). Last, in a recent study (Law *et al.*, 2008) the WLEIS was found to be a better predictor of objective job performance compared to the performance-based emotional intelligence test, MSCEIT.

The scale consists of four dimensions:

(1) self emotion appraisal;

(2) others' emotion appraisal;

(3) regulation of emotion; and

(4) use of emotion.

Sample items for this measure are:

- "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time".
- "I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior".
- "I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them".
- "I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally".

Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the reliability was 0.88.

*Perceptions of organizational politics*. We measured POP using eight items from Kacmar and Carlson's (1997) scale. This scale is the most accepted measure of POP in the literature. Sample items include:

- "People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down".
- "There has always been an influential group in this organization that no one ever crosses".
- "Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas".

Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the reliability was 0.81.

*Job satisfaction*. We used the Schriesheim and Tsui (1980) six-item scale, where respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with different aspects of their job. Sample items include:

- "How satisfied are you with your current job?"

- "How satisfied are you with your current salary?"
- "How satisfied are you with your opportunities for promotion?"

Responses ranged from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), and the reliability was 0.8.

*Turnover intentions*. For this variable, we used a four-item scale based on Farrell and Rusbult (1992). Sample items include:

- "I often think about quitting".
- "Lately, I have taken an interest in job offers in the newspaper".

Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the reliability was 0.9.

*Negligent behavior*. We used the four-item scale of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010). Sample items include:

- "Sometimes I postpone important assignments for an unlimited period of time".
- "Sometimes I don't fulfill all of my duties at work".

Like the others, these items were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reliability of this scale was 0.71.

*Job perseverance*. In order to enhance our confidence in the two self-report withdrawal behavior variables (i.e. turnover intentions and negligent behavior), we contacted the organization 51 months after the original data collection and acquired archival information regarding study participants' actual turnover, including the date any participants left the organization. These data were calculated into the "Job perseverance" variable, which refers to the number of months each participant worked in the organization after the original data collection.

*Control variables*. We collected several control variables as a routine procedure. Three of these, namely age, tenure and net income, were included in the analysis due to significant relationship with the research variables. Age (Mean = 29; SD = 7.5) and tenure (Mean = 2.3; SD = 2.3) were measured as continuous variables, while net income was measured on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (up to 4,000 NIS per month, a very low salary) to 6 (over 8,000 NIS per month, a very high salary). Other control variables, such as gender, education and number of subordinates, were also tested throughout the various stages of the analysis but were not included in the final analysis due to non-significant relationships with the dependent variables.

## 4. Results

Table I presents descriptive statistics, an intercorrelations matrix, and reliabilities of the research variables. As the table shows, EI is negatively related to POP, turnover intentions and negligent behavior ($r = -0.24$, $p \leq 0.001$; $r = -0.14$, $p \leq 0.01$; $r = -0.23$, $p \leq 0.001$, respectively), and positively related to job satisfaction ($r = 0.24$, $p \leq 0.001$). In addition, POP is negatively related to job satisfaction ($r = -0.45$, $p \leq 0.001$), and positively related to turnover intentions and negligent behavior ($r = 0.35$, $p \leq 0.001$; $r = 0.43$, $p \leq 0.001$, respectively). The correlations between POP and each of the separate EI facets were significant: self-emotion appraisal ($r = -0.15$, $p \leq 0.01$), others' emotion appraisal ($r = -0.17$; $p < 0.001$), use of emotion

| Variable | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Emotional intelligence | 3.98 | 0.48 | (0.88) | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Self-emotion appraisal | 4.11 | 0.65 | 0.72*** | (0.84) | | | | | | | |
| 3. Others' emotion appraisal | 3.95 | 0.61 | 0.70*** | 0.48*** | (0.86) | | | | | | |
| 4. Use of emotions | 4.05 | 0.64 | 0.73*** | 0.32*** | 0.32*** | (0.81) | | | | | |
| 5. Regulation of emotions | 3.78 | 0.74 | 0.76*** | 0.34*** | 0.31*** | 0.50*** | (0.85) | | | | |
| 6. Perceptions of politics | 2.36 | 0.66 | −0.24*** | −0.15** | −0.17*** | −0.19*** | −0.20*** | (0.81) | | | |
| 7. Job satisfaction | 3.65 | 0.67 | 0.24*** | 0.07 | 0.12* | 0.27*** | 0.23*** | −0.45*** | (0.80) | | |
| 8. Turnover intentions | 2.16 | 1.02 | −0.14** | −0.05 | −0.02 | −0.20*** | −0.13** | 0.35*** | −0.65*** | (0.90) | |
| 9. Negligent behaviour | 1.66 | 0.65 | −0.23*** | −0.13** | −0.07 | −0.31*** | −0.17*** | 0.43*** | −0.48*** | 0.58*** | (0.71) |
| 10. Job perseverance | 31.63 | 19.07 | 0.03 | −0.01 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.07 | −0.05 | 0.10 | −0.21*** | −0.12* |

**Notes** $^*p \leq 0.05$; $^{**}p \leq 0.01$; $^{***}p \leq 0.001$; $n = 368$

$(r = -0.19; p < 0.001)$, and regulation of emotion $(r = -0.20; p < 0.001)$. In addition, we examined the correlations between job perseverance and the two withdrawal behavior variables: turnover intentions and negligent behavior. As expected, job perseverance was negatively related to turnover intentions $(r = -0.21; p < 0.001)$, as well as to negligent behavior $(r = -0.12; p < 0.05)$. These findings lend support to the validity of the self-report turnover intentions and negligent behavior variables.

To examine whether POP mediates the effects of EI on the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, we followed Shrout and Bolger (2002) and estimated the direct and indirect effects of EI on the three outcome measures using the bootstrap method (via AMOS with 2,000 samples). All models included age, tenure and income as control variables. The results are shown in Table II. The zero-order effects of EI on the outcome measures (excluding POP from the regression equation) are also presented.

Our analysis provides strong evidence in support of the mediating role of POP. For turnover intentions, full mediation was found: the significant zero-order coefficient $(\beta = -0.106; p < 0.05)$ dropped to non-significance $(\beta = -0.041; p = \text{n.s.})$ when POP was added to the regression equation; the indirect effect was significant $(\beta = -0.069; p < 0.001)$. Partial mediation was found for negligent behavior: the zero-order coefficient $(\beta = -0.213; p < 0.001)$ dropped considerably but remained significant $(\beta = -0.133; p < 0.01)$; the indirect effect was significant $(\beta = -0.085; p < 0.001)$. Partial mediation was also found for job satisfaction: the zero-order coefficient $(\beta = 0.206; p < 0.001)$ dropped considerably but remained significant $(\beta = 0.119; p < 0.05)$; the indirect effect was significant $(\beta = 0.092; p < 0.001)$. POP had a significant effect on the three outcome measures: turnover intentions $(\beta = 0.284; p < 0.001)$, negligent behavior $(\beta = 0.350; p < 0.001)$, and job satisfaction $(\beta = -0.379; p < 0.001)$. The results indicate that while POP mediates the effects of EI for all three outcome measures, EI maintains a direct effect, over and above POP, on negligent behavior and job satisfaction.

Finally, we examined the overall mediation effect by combining the three outcome measures into a latent construct (Outcomes), and using structural equation modeling to estimate the direct and indirect effects of EI on this latent construct. As with the previous mediation analysis, the indirect effect was tested using the bootstrap method

| Effect | Estimate | Z/t | $p$ | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Turnover intentions* | | | | 0.17 |
| Indirect (mediation) | −0.069 | −3.450 | 0.000 | |
| Direct (controlling for POP) | −0.041 | −0.825 | 0.409 | |
| Zero-order | −0.106 | −2.122 | 0.034 | |
| *Negligent behavior* | | | | 0.19 |
| Indirect (mediation) | −0.085 | −3.969 | 0.000 | |
| Direct (controlling for POP) | −0.133 | −2.714 | 0.007 | |
| Zero-order | −0.213 | −4.216 | 0.000 | |
| *Job satisfaction* | | | | 0.27 |
| Indirect (mediation) | 0.092 | 4.000 | 0.000 | |
| Direct (controlling for POP) | 0.119 | 2.577 | 0.010 | |
| Zero-order | 0.206 | 4.321 | 0.000 | |

**Table II.**
Meditational analysis EI
→ POP → Outcomes;
standardized estimates

**Notes:** $n = 368$; EI = Emotional intelligence; POP = Perceptions of organizational politics

with 2,000 samples. The model also included age, tenure and income as control variables (not shown in Figure 2 to avoid visual clutter). In addition, we added the job perseverance variable to enhance the validity of the "Outcomes" construct.

As shown in Figure 2, the loadings of the three outcome measures are high and statistically significant, indicating good measurement properties of the latent construct. The latent "Outcomes" construct predicted actual job perseverance ($\beta = 0.173$; $p < 0.01$). Note that the loadings for turnover intentions and negligent behavior are negative while the loading of job satisfaction is positive. Hence, the positive direct effect of EI on the "Outcomes" construct was in the expected direction and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.114$; $p < 0.05$), yet rather small. The indirect effect, through POP, was also significant ($\beta = 0.104$; $p < 0.001$). As expected, the direct effect of POP on the Outcomes construct was fairly strong ($\beta = -0.43$; $p < 0.001$). Overall, 23 percent of the variance of the "Outcomes" variable was predicted by the model.

## 5. Discussion

In recent years, researchers have begun to acknowledge that incorporating aspects of emotion such as PA/NA and emotional reactions into our understanding of
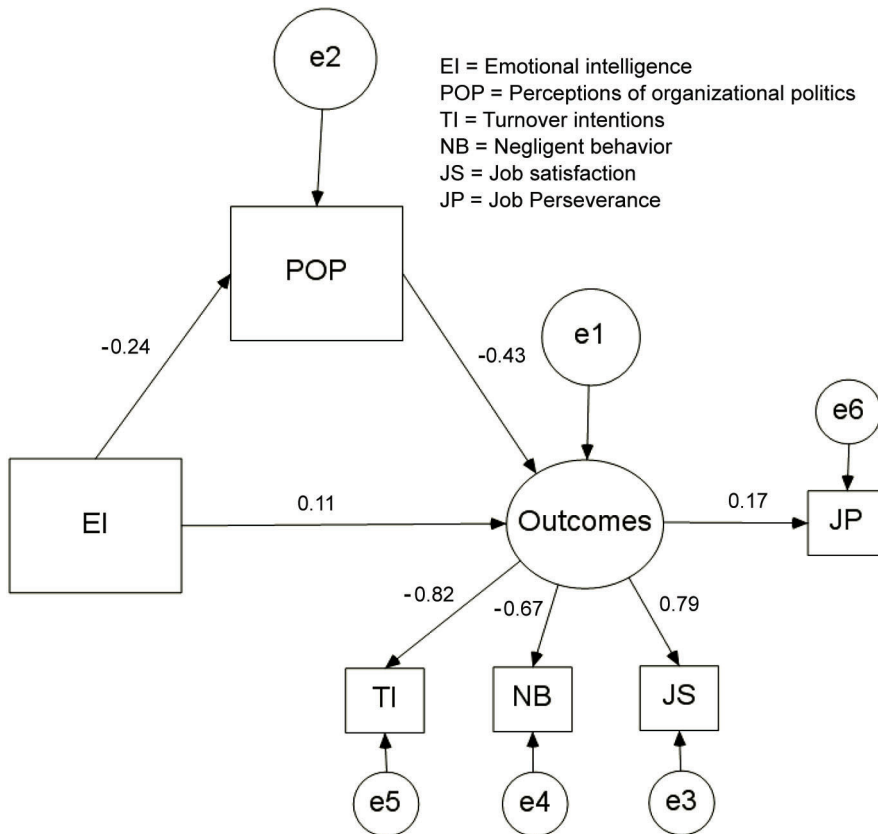


**Figure 2.**
Mediation model with latent outcome construct

organizational politics can help illuminate the antecedents, consequences, and context of this important element of organizational life. Nonetheless, the role played by emotional intelligence *vis-à-vis* organizational politics has not been extensively explored. The present study addressed this issue.

We suggested that emotional intelligence affects how organizational politics is perceived, and that POP mediates the effect of emotional intelligence on three attitudinal and behavioral outcomes: job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior. Our findings confirmed these suggestions. We found a negative correlation between EI and POP, supporting *H1*. Furthermore, POP was found to fully mediate the relationship between EI and turnover intentions, and to partially mediate the effect of EI on both job satisfaction and negligent behavior, thus supporting *H2*.

It should be noted that in contrast to previous research which found an insignificant relationship between EI and POP (Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010), the present study confirmed the assumed relationship between the two variables. These findings are in line with previous research that revealed differences between the public and the private sectors in the level and implications of POP (Miller *et al.*, 2008; Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010).

The present study contributes to the organizational politics literature in several ways. First, its findings enrich the scope through which the intersection between organizational politics and emotion is viewed, and advance the notion that the role of emotion in organizational politics is more significant than previously assumed. To the best of our knowledge, our findings are the first to show that elements of emotion can shape perceptions of politics, and that the manner in which employees understand and regulate felt emotions affects their interpretation of the political arena. Second, our findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence not only affects perceptions of politics, but indirectly affects employees' work attitudes and behaviors, through a mediation effect of POP. Third, previous research has shown differences in the implications of POP between the public and the private sectors (Miller *et al.*, 2008). The current study's findings show that the two sectors differ not only in the relationship between POP and its implications, but also in the relationship between POP and its antecedents. Finally, given that most research on emotion and POP was conducted in the USA (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2003; Hochwarter and Treadway, 2003; Rosen *et al.*, 2009), findings from our study, which was conducted in Israel, demonstrate that the integrated effects of emotion and POP on work outcomes are not limited to the US workplace arena.

Aside from its contribution to the organizational politics literature, this study also offers insights for the field of emotional intelligence. Surprisingly, little research has explored the contribution of EI to shaping employees' work attitudes, behaviors and performance (see: Law *et al.*, 2008). Most research on emotional intelligence in the workplace has explored its contribution to leadership behaviors (George, 2000; Wong and Law, 2002) rather than its effect on the general employees population; and the small number of studies that have examined the effect of EI on behavioral and attitudinal outcomes have chiefly tested direct relationships between these variables (Law *et al.*, 2004; Sy *et al.*, 2006). The current study is one of the few to explore indirect relationships between emotional intelligence and employees' work attitudes/behaviors.

Finally, this study has practical implications worthy of elaboration. Empirical evidence from the emotional intelligence literature has already demonstrated that

emotional intelligence training can improve EI levels (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2004; Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). Keeping in mind our findings that higher emotional intelligence lessens perceptions of organizational politics and its effects, the implication is clear that EI training may enhance employees' performance and reduce negative outcomes such as turnover (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Kacmar *et al.*, 1999; Miller *et al.*, 2008).

A major strength of this study concerns the fact that aside from the original data from the participating employees, we also used archival data to estimate the actual amount of time each participate stayed in the organization after the first data collection. Utilizing this secondary source of data enhances the persuasive power of our findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from them. The large number of participants and their heterogeneous profile are other strengths of the current study. Despite its contributions and strengths, this study has several limitations. First, we evaluated employees' EI levels with a self-report scale, the WLEIS (Law *et al.*, 2004; Wong and Law, 2002). As described above, we used the WLEIS because it is based on the ability model and on Mayer and Salovey's definition of EI (Mayer and Salovey, 1997); it has proven to be a reliable and valid scale (Law *et al.*, 2004, 2008); and it has been utilized as an established measure in different cultures and different ethnic and gender groups (Law *et al.*, 2004; Shi and Wang, 2007; Whitman *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, unlike other self-report EI scales, the WLEIS has been found to be distinct from personality factors (Law *et al.*, 2004) and to be a better predictor of objective job performance compared to the performance-based emotional intelligence test (Law *et al.*, 2008). Although several scholars have argued that common method variance does not invalidate most research findings (see: Crampton and Wagner, 1994; Doty and Glick, 1998; Spector, 2006), relying solely on self-report data may raise concerns regarding this issue. In order to enhance the confidence in our results we incorporated secondary source data, which lends support to the validity of the self-report dependent variables. Nonetheless, we suggest that future studies try to replicate our model employing multiple methods of data collection. In addition, the present study was conducted in one financial organization located in Israel. Further validation of the research model in other organizations, countries and cultures will increase our confidence regarding the conclusions drawn from its findings.

The current study and its findings raise a number of ideas for future research. First, the present study explored the associations between emotional intelligence, perceived politics, and the three attitudinal and behavioral outcomes: job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior. Future studies might expand our model to include other dependent variables, including performance variables such as task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and absenteeism. Such research would advance our understanding of how EI and POP together influence the effectiveness of employees and organizations. Second, as noted above, most emotional intelligence scholars have focused on searching for direct relationships between emotional intelligence and its work consequences. Keeping in mind our findings concerning the indirect relationships between EI and employees' job satisfaction, turnover intentions and negligent behavior, we believe the emotional intelligence field will benefit from uncovering other mediators besides POP for such relationships. Third, in justifying the relationship between EI and POP, we assumed that EI affects both Machiavellianism and the quality of interactions with others, which consequently affect POP. Future

research should put this assumption to empirical test. Fourth, keeping in mind the contradictory results found between the current study and that of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010), future studies should put our model to further empirical tests in both the private and public sectors. Fifth, given recent findings concerning curvilinear relationships between work outcomes and antecedents such as perceived politics (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2010), political skill (Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2004), and leader-member exchange (Harris *et al.*, 2005; Harris *et al.*, 2005; Hochwarter and Byrne, 2005), future research should explore the possibility that the associations uncovered in this research might be non-linear. Finally, it would be of great benefit to investigate whether emotional intelligence training is effective in reducing perceptions of organizational politics and its negative consequences.

In conclusion, our study has contributed to the extant knowledge on emotion and the perceptions and consequences of organizational politics. As far as we know, our study is the first to empirically support the conjecture that elements of emotion influence the manner in which organizational politics is evaluated and perceived (Ferris *et al.*, 2002; Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010). We hope our study will spur other researchers to continue this investigation into emotion and organizational politics.

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