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**The Impact of LMX and Perceived Control on Justice and Appraisal Politics
Perceptions**

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ABSTRACT

Organizations, particularly leaders and managers, ensure fairness, especially in the performance appraisal processes for employees, as it determines their pay and promotion. Although some research has explored the impact of interactional and procedural justice in different cultures, there remains a gap in the literature that can better explain the significance of each type of justice in various societies. It is possible that in some cultures, one type of justice holds greater importance, and its violation may lead to a strong sense of injustice. This study aims to explore the relationship between organizational justice and the perception of appraisal politics through alternative pathways. Specifically, it seeks to understand the influence of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and perceived control on this relationship.

Keywords:

Procedural justice, interactional justice, leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived control, perception of appraisal politics

INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal evaluations heavily influence pay, rewards, and promotions of employees. If employees are not satisfied with their appraisals, it can give rise to perceptions of political bias in the appraisal procedures (Hochwarter W. et al., 2020). By implementing procedural justice and interactional justice, organizations can potentially mitigate these negative perceptions of perceived appraisal politics.

It is important to note that justice perceptions vary across cultures and align with cultural values. In cultures where power is highly concentrated among higher-ups, employees may seek greater involvement in the appraisal processes to achieve more desirable ratings. On the other hand, in relationship-oriented cultures, the fairness of appraisal processes is closely linked to the quality of relationships with supervisors (Ghosh, 2011). Organizations are microcosms of societies, where employees carry highly ingrained values such as power distance and high relationship-orientation to the work place.

By examining alternative theoretical pathways, we can understand deeply how procedural and interactional justice affect individuals' perceptions in the context of performance appraisals within a specific cultural context characterized by high power distance and high relationship-oriented such as India (Chhokar J. et al., 2007).

Performance appraisal happens in various social context (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995), where the relationship between supervisor and subordinate influences the process of performance appraisal and subordinate's reactions towards it (Elicker et al., 2006). Employees reactions to performance appraisals should also be studied in relation with their perception of justice (Levy & Williams, 2004). It is crucial for organizations to assess and develop employees' skills and competencies, enhance performance and distribute rewards as per their outcomes (Fletcher, 2001). The dissatisfaction among employees with their performance appraisal processes can lead to the arousal of political perception related to appraisal. Political behaviours greatly influence performance appraisal processes and outcomes (Murphy & Cleveland, 1991). Procedural justice is considered more relevant when examining politics (Andrews and Kacmar, 2001). If a member believes that promotions are done based on political manoeuvres rather than following just procedures, it will be seen as unjust or unfair. Similarly, interactional justice is frequently associated with employees' relationships with their managers. Studies have shown that clear and transparent communication can improve justice perceptions and enhance trust in decision-making processes (Ganster and Rosen, 2013). Additionally, research has shown that involving individuals in decision-making processes can improve perceptions of fairness and increase acceptance of decisions (Bies and Shapiro, 1987).

The quality of leader-member exchange (LMX), which includes factors such as information richness, trust, and communication frequency between leader and member, is related to the degree of perceived fairness (Pichler, 2012; Pichler S. et al., 2016). Various studies explore the relationship between the LMX and perception of organizational politics (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), but no studies are available that examine the relationship between appraisal politics perception and leader-member exchange. Leaders are the closest proxy of an organization for an employee working in it. The image of an organization an employee perceives is majorly through the way leaders behave and have relationships with the members.

Perceived control is defined as belief of people that they have ability to change outcomes in desired direction, and has an effect on individual work outcomes (Kahnweiler and Thompson, 2000). Employees having lower control in appraisal processes may feel that appraisals and performance ratings are given based on politicking and not on actual performance. Whereas,

people having higher perceived control will feel that as they had greater control over job information and delivery which resulted in desired result, hence appraisals will also be in their favour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Justice

Fairness is a key factor in fostering unity, stability, and cooperation in organizations, helping resolve conflicts and establish social structures (Konovsky, 2000). Organizational justice is categorized into three types: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, each addressing different aspects of fairness (Moorman, 1991).

Distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcome distribution. Rooted in equity theory, derived from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, it posits that individuals assess fairness by comparing their rewards to their contributions (Cropanzano & Folger, 1991). Distributive justice assumes that fairness is determined by how well outcomes align with individuals' expectations and efforts.

Procedural justice pertains to the fairness of processes leading to decisions. Pichler et al. (2016) highlight two underlying theories: process control theory and the group-value model. Thibaut and Walker (1975) emphasize that individuals prefer control over decision-making processes, distinguishing between process control (influence over methods) and decision control (influence over outcomes). Tyler (1994) asserts that fair process control fosters trust in decisions. The group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988) suggests that people seek fairness as a sign of inclusion and respect within their social groups. Positive treatment within a group enhances self-worth and emotional well-being. Research suggests individuals are motivated to join groups as they fulfil social and psychological needs (Brown et al., 2022; Kramer et al., 2001). Procedural fairness thus contributes to individuals' sense of belonging and social status.

Interactional justice focuses on fairness in interpersonal treatment during procedural implementation. Defined by Bies and Moag (1986), it comprises two components: interpersonal justice (respect and politeness) and informational justice (transparency in communication) (Greenberg, 1990). Employees treated with respect and provided with clear explanations exhibit higher satisfaction and commitment (Bies, 1993). A lack of interactional justice, indicated by negative comments, deception, privacy violations, or public criticism, diminishes perceived fairness, lowering morale and motivation (Bies, 1993).

Perception of Appraisal Politics

Appraisal politics involves the manipulation of performance ratings by appraisers to serve personal interests (Longenecker et al., 1987). Murphy and Cleveland (1995) suggest that appraisers may alter ratings to achieve personal goals, such as promotions or rewards. Dhiman and Maheshwari (2013) and Longenecker and Gioia (2000) describe appraisal politics as deliberate actions to influence ratings.

Appraisal politics is a subset of organizational politics, where individuals use authority, resources, or influence to achieve favourable outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). It often involves impression management or influence tactics (Hochwarter et al., 2020). Dhiman and Maheshwari (2013) outline three dimensions: appraiser political behaviour, appraisee political

behaviour, and the influence of pay and promotions. These dimensions align with broader organizational politics, shaping employees' perceptions of fairness.

Negative consequences of appraisal politics include decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions (Poon, 2004; Arshad et al., 2013). Employees perceiving unfair performance evaluations experience disengagement, dissatisfaction (Brown et al., 2010), and reduced organizational commitment (Sogra et al., 2009). Given its impact on work attitudes and behaviors, appraisal politics is a critical factor influencing job outcomes.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX theory focuses on dyadic leader-member interactions (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Strong leader-member relationships drive positive and negative employee changes over time (Liden et al., 2006). LMX research highlights its role in shaping employee performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, and impression management (Wayne & Green, 1993). Recent studies emphasize psychological effects, such as employees' mental adjustments (Creary et al., 2015; Ilies et al., 2010). LMX theory is central in leadership research, explaining how leader-member relationships influence teams and organizations (Erdogan & Liden, 2002; Wayne et al., 1997, J. Kim et al., 2020). Understanding LMX helps organizations enhance employee engagement, performance, and workplace relationships.

Perceived Control

Perceived control refers to an individual's subjective assessment of their work situation, serving as a resource for managing stress (Vander Elst et al., 2011). It differs from internal locus of control (Ng et al., 2006), job control (Karasek, 1979), and actual control practices (Folkman, 1984). Organizational psychologists conceptualize perceived control through two frameworks: self-determination and impact (Greenberger et al., 1989). The self-determination framework, based on De Charms (2013), posits that individuals feel control when they perceive their actions as self-initiated rather than coerced. High discretion in work increases perceived control. The impact framework suggests control is influenced by individuals' beliefs about their influence on outcomes (Seligman, 2004). Employees perceive greater control when they believe their actions significantly affect key results. Perceived control includes perceptions of self-determination and impact, shaped by dispositional and situational factors. It is crucial in shaping employees' experiences and well-being at work.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Relationship between procedural justice and perception of appraisal politics

Procedural justice is about how fair and unbiased the procedures and processes are followed to make decisions. One of the key themes in the literature on procedural justice is the importance of perceived fairness in the decision-making process. Research has shown that individuals are more likely to accept and comply with decisions if they perceive them as fair and impartial (Tyler and Huo, 2002). This has important implications for organizations, as it suggests that ensuring fairness in decision-making processes can improve employee engagement and motivation (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007).

Studies have shown that trust in decision-making outcomes is positively associated with perceptions of fairness and equity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). When employees feel like they are being treated unfairly, they may attempt to compensate for injustice in indulging

into behaviours like withdrawing, sabotaging, resisting, stealing (Pan et al., 2018), engaging in deviant behaviour (Shoaib & Baruch, 2019); refusing to follow instructions (Yean and Yusof, 2016), or engaging in appraisal politics to boost their ratings. Organizational justice is rooted in how people compare themselves to others (Koopman *et al.*, 2020). Performance reviews are always about making comparisons, and it is highly likely for employees to feel that both the processes and the rewards are unfair (Dhiman and Maheshwari, 2013). When appraisees think that political considerations affect how appraisals are done, how ratings are given, and how they interact with others, the comparison becomes more important. Studies have also shown that organizational politics and unfairness are positively correlated (Khattak *et al.*, 2017).

The control theory of procedural justice suggests that individuals have a psychological need for control and predictability in their lives (Thibaut & Walker, 1978). When individuals perceive that their voices are being considered in decision-making processes in an organization, they consider it to be fair. Subsequently, they are more likely to feel a sense of control and predictability, thus feeling more satisfied with the organization. Research has shown that when individuals perceive organizational procedures as fair, they are highly unlikely to perceive organizational politics as a problem. For example, a study by Tyler & Blader (2000) found that perceptions of organizational politics were negatively related to perceptions of organizational justice. Similarly, a study by Lind & Tyler (1988) found that perceptions of organizational justice were positively related to perceptions of procedural justice and negatively related to perceptions of political behaviour in the organization. If in an organization employees perceive that they have better control over the processes, have established voice mechanisms, goals are pre-decided with their consent and have proper grievances redressal system, they perceive more control over their jobs and its outcomes. This perceived control brings perception of procedural justice and reduces perception of appraisal politics.

The group engagement model of procedural justice is a theoretical framework that suggests that people's perceptions of procedural justice are shaped by their engagement with the group (Tyler and Blader, 2003). According to group engagement model, when individuals feel engaged and connected to the group, they are more likely to perceive that the procedures and decision-making processes are fair and thus feel more satisfied with the organization. The feeling of belonging to a group enhances interpersonal relations with coworkers as well as with their supervisors and increases procedural justice perception simultaneously reducing perception of appraisal politics.

The three dimensions of appraisal politics, which include appraiser's politics, appraisee's politics, and politics in pay and promotion, are also affected by procedural injustice. If there is a lack of trust between subordinates and their supervisor. In that case, it will be reflected in political behaviour from their supervisor, such as not involving targeted employees in goal setting, deliberately providing them lower ratings to teach them a lesson, or reducing deviant behaviour. This will enhance the political perception of employees. The lower quality of relationship between supervisor and subordinate will hamper the political perception of employees. Also, lack of procedural justice reduces employees' status in the group, which can affect their rating if their co-workers do politics to enhance their rating. The lower rating and poor performance appraisal will also be reflected poorly in pay and promotion. Whereas, if employees trust their supervisors greatly, co-workers' political behaviour will not affect their performance appraisals and ratings. Hence, from the above discussion, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Procedural justice will be negatively related to the perception of appraisal politics.

Relationship between interactional justice and perception of appraisal politics

Another dimension of organizational justice is interactional justice, typically achieved at the individual level when a person works in a team. Consequently, interactional justice is frequently associated with employees and their managers. Studies have shown that clear and transparent communication can improve perceptions of fairness and trust in decision-making processes (Ganster and Rosen, 2013). Additionally, research has shown that involving individuals in decision-making processes can improve perceptions of fairness and increase acceptance of decisions (Bies and Shapiro, 1987). Equity in information sharing between organizational members can build trust in leader-follower relationships (Lee *et al.*, 2015). This built trust will strengthen the appraiser-appraisee relation leading to a reduced perception of appraisal politics and enhancing interactional justice.

Scholars often investigate the relationships between workers and managers in the workplace. The quality of relationship between appraiser and appraisee is found to be negatively related with the perception of appraisal politics in the study of Dhiman & Maheshwari (2013). A manager's open and candid communication for appraisal rating and decision will enhance the interactional justice from the worker's perspective. The increased perception of interpersonal justice will mitigate the negative perception of appraisal politics.

In employee appraisals, perceptions of informational justice may hinge upon perceived fairness regarding the explanation of achievement standards, performance advice, and rationale for determination of performance ratings (Thurston and McNall, 2010). Similarly, a fair voice opportunity for appraisal processes will enhance the sense of control over performance appraisal processes in employees and decrease the perception of appraisal politics. Also, detailed and adequate explanations and information about the appraisal rating and decision give perception of control and enhance the sense of informational justice and reduce the perception of appraisal politics. Hence, based on the above discussions and explanations, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Interactional justice will be negatively related to the perception of appraisal politics.

LMX as a mediator:

Organizational justice research has consistently demonstrated that employee behaviour such as organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction are positively associated with the fair distribution of rewards, fairness in decision-making processes, and equitable treatment of employees by their colleagues and leaders (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of justice within the workplace; hence leaders' attitudes and actions influence employees' perceptions of procedural fairness (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

The relational model of procedural justice posits that individuals evaluate fairness in decision-making processes based on their interpersonal relationships with authority figures (Blader & Tyler, 2015). This model suggests that fair procedures are valued not solely for their outcomes but for the message they convey regarding an individual's status within the group or organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Employees tend to perceive procedures as fairer when they believe that their supervisors respect, acknowledge, and treat them with dignity (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2002). The relational model of procedural justice indicates that members treated interpersonally well by their supervisors will try to form and maintain good relationships with their managers.

Organizational politics involve actions taken by individuals to acquire, develop, and use resources to obtain desired outcomes, particularly in ambiguous or uncertain environments (Pfeffer, 1981). In the scenario of appraisals in organization, actions taken by employees which benefits them in getting desired outcome such as ratings and rewards is known as appraisal politics from employees' point of view. Appraiser-appraisee relationship being the important antecedent of perception of appraisal politics (Dhiman & Maheshwari, 2013), proves that employee's relationship with their managers hold immense importance in deciding whether appraisal involved politics or not from employee's perspective. The better relationship reduces the negative perception of appraisal politics whereas opposite happens in worse relationships. Employees with high-quality LMX relationships are likely to perceive lower levels of appraisal politics due to increased access to information and resources, which reduces ambiguity (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014; Rosen et al., 2010). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships are associated with higher perceptions of political behavior as employees attempt to compensate for a lack of managerial support (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001; Atinc et al., 2010). This perception is crucial in collectivist societies where managers are more oriented towards maintaining harmony and relationships (Chhokar 2007, pg. no. 987).

High-quality LMX relationships, characterized by mutual respect, trust, and obligation, have been found to positively correlate with perceptions of procedural justice (Burton, 2008; Erdogan & Bauer, 2010). Employees who perceive their leaders as fair tend to reciprocate by fostering high-quality LMX relationships, whereas those perceiving unfair treatment deteriorate the quality of LMX (Masterson et al., 2000; Murphy et al., 2003).

Research suggests that procedural justice significantly impacts employees' perceptions of performance appraisals (Bettenhausen & Fedor 1997, Iqbal, Akbar & Budhwar, 2014). Employees who perceive fair decision-making processes in performance evaluations are more likely to trust their supervisors and exhibit positive work attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2013). Given that LMX is influenced by perceptions of justice, it is plausible that LMX mediates the relationship between procedural justice and appraisal politics. Studies have shown that high-quality LMX can reduce employees' negative perceptions of organizational politics by fostering open communication and mutual trust (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar et al., 1999; Miller & Nichols, 2008). The mediating role of LMX in the relationship between procedural justice and perceptions of appraisal politics is particularly relevant in collectivist cultures such as India, where managers are highly relationships oriented (Chhokar, 2007 pg. no. 987).

Leung et al. (2001) compared two collectivist countries, Spain and Japan, and showed that both countries preferred procedures that strengthens the harmony amongst group members and with the authority. In collectivists societies voice may be viewed as negative signal to group identification. Employees view voice and dissent as disruptive to group cohesion, thereby placing greater emphasis on maintaining favourable relationships with their supervisors (Hofstede, 2001). We also propose that maintaining relationship is prioritized by employees in cultures where managers are also relationship-oriented. Hence, the relationship between procedural justice and the perception of appraisal politics is likely to be mediated by LMX.

The present study suggests that the importance of procedural justice in shaping leader-member relationships and perceptions of appraisal politics. High-quality LMX relationships foster trust, communication, and access to resources, reducing perceptions of appraisal politics. Given the collectivist orientation of Indian workplaces, the mediation of LMX in this relationship is particularly significant. This suggests that procedural justice perceptions in India are more likely to translate into high-quality LMX relationships, which, in turn, shape perceptions of appraisal politics.

H3: The leader-member exchange will mediate the relationship between procedural justice and perception of appraisal politics.

The interpersonal dimension of interactional justice pertains to the quality of interpersonal treatment that employees receive from their supervisors during the implementation of organizational procedures. Demonstrating respect and dignity in these interactions fosters stronger relationships between employees and supervisors. Maintaining propriety in communication (Bies & Moag, 1986) further reflects an intention to minimize conflict, thereby promoting a harmonious work environment. Employees who perceive fair and respectful treatment during performance appraisals are more likely to develop high-quality relationships with their managers compared to those who experience negative interactions.

Existing literature indicates a significant correlation between interactional justice and leader-member exchange (LMX) quality (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Zeb et al., 2019). Wayne et al. (2002) highlighted that leaders' fairness in interpersonal interactions can enhance social exchanges within organizations. This observation aligns with behavioral leadership theories, where core elements such as individualized consideration parallel aspects of justice, particularly the fairness and transparency characteristic of interactional justice (Piccolo et al., 2008).

Furthermore, high-quality relationships with supervisors can enhance perceptions of interactional justice. Members of in-groups often report higher perceptions of justice due to the increased care and support they receive from their leaders and peers (Dansereau et al., 1975; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1993). LMX also mediates the relationship between interactional justice and perceptions of appraisal politics (PAP). The quality of the appraiser-appraisee relationship, a key antecedent of PAP, is significantly influenced by the strength of the LMX bond. Masterson et al. (2000) provided evidence supporting the mediating role of LMX in the link between interactional justice perceptions and outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and supervisor-directed organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).

Cultural values, particularly collectivism, also shape perceptions of interactional justice. In collectivist cultures, where relational harmony and social cohesion are highly valued, interpersonal sensitivity significantly impacts justice perceptions. Tata et al. (2003) demonstrated that social sensitivity had a more substantial effect on overall justice perceptions in collectivist societies like China compared to individualistic cultures such as the United States. Additionally, approaches to managing service failures differ across cultural contexts. While individualistic cultures may rely on punitive measures such as pay cuts or fines, collectivist cultures favour strategies emphasizing explanation, contrition, and apology (Hui & Au, 2001; Mattila & Patterson, 2004). This difference in dealing with same situation may be attributed to difference in orientation of managers in different cultures. In collectivist cultures like India, managers are nurturant where they foster growth through care and guidance, gradually empowering subordinates to take responsibility, increasing productivity and participation (Sinha, 1984). These differences reflect the cultural importance of face-saving, social standing, and conflict avoidance, all of which underscore the critical role of interpersonal care in shaping justice perceptions within collectivist contexts.

This study highlights the crucial role of interactional justice in influencing leader-member relationships and perceptions of appraisal politics. Strong LMX (Leader-Member Exchange) relationships promote trust, effective communication, and resource accessibility, thereby minimizing perceptions of appraisal politics. In the context of Indian workplaces, where leaders are bent towards maintaining relationships, the mediating role of LMX is especially important. This indicates that perceptions of interactional justice in India are more likely to lead to high-quality LMX relationships, which subsequently impact how appraisal politics are perceived.

H4: The leader-member exchange will mediate the relationship between interactional justice and perception of appraisal politics.

Perceived control as a mediator:

Perceived control refers to employees' assessment of their physical, social, psychological, and material resources in handling challenging and unpredictable work situations (Vander Elst et al., 2014). Rather than being a fixed personality trait, perceived control is generally understood as stemming from an individual's perception of themselves and their environment (Robinson & Lachman, 2018). In this study, perceived control in performance appraisal settings is defined as the extent to which employees feel they have influence over their appraisal ratings and the processes used to determine those ratings.

The control model of procedural justice emphasizes that employees experience procedural fairness when they are given some level of control over decision-making or the processes involved in it. Within the legal system, perceived control can be enhanced by allowing disputants to have a say in the rules governing conflict resolution. By enabling individuals to participate in rule-making or legislative procedures, they gain a sense of control, even in settings where they may lack direct influence over judicial decisions. This is particularly relevant in inquisitorial legal procedures, where involvement in lawmaking can help counterbalance the absence of direct control over adjudication (Lind et al., 1980).

In an organizational context, employees are more likely to feel a sense of control when they perceive their organization as procedurally just and when established processes are consistently followed. Conversely, if employees perceive procedural unfairness, their sense of control diminishes. A lack of opportunity to express opinions and influence the final outcome reduces employees' sense of control over appraisal procedures (Cropanzano, 2001). When employees feel they have little control over performance evaluations, they may suspect that political factors, rather than merit, influence appraisal decisions.

Implementing voice and appeal mechanisms for contesting unfavourable ratings or decisions can enhance employees' perceived control over the appraisal process. Such mechanisms help mitigate concerns about managerial bias and unfair play in performance evaluations. However, when employees lack control over appraisal procedures, they are more likely to view the process as politically motivated. The failure to adhere to due-process principles in performance appraisals reduces perceptions of procedural justice and strengthens the belief that appraisals are influenced by organizational politics.

Cultural factors also significantly shape perceptions of procedural justice and workplace politics. In high power-distance cultures, such as Taiwan, employees consider both relational and instrumental criteria when evaluating fairness. In contrast, employees in low power-distance cultures, such as the USA, tend to define procedural justice mainly in terms of group relational factors (Blader et al., 2001). High power-distance cultures accept hierarchical structures and status differences, whereas low power-distance cultures emphasize task-oriented relationships between supervisors and subordinates.

In high power-distance societies, employees' sense of control over appraisal ratings is reinforced when organizations strictly follow formal or structural appraisal procedures. However, in collectivist cultures, voicing concerns about appraisals may be viewed negatively and could even harm employees' standing within the organization (Leung et al., 2001). As a result, employees may refrain from expressing their concerns to avoid conflict with their managers (Dhiman & Maheshwari, 2013), thereby further diminishing their perceived control over the appraisal process.

Ultimately, when organizations ensure procedural fairness in performance appraisals, employees experience a stronger sense of control, reducing their perception of appraisal politics. Knowing that appraisals follow due process and established procedures reassures employees, fostering trust in the system and minimizing suspicions of political interference in appraisal decisions. Hence, we propose that:

H5: Perceived control will mediate the relationship between procedural justice and perception of appraisal politics.

The informational aspect of interactional justice emphasizes the importance of providing adequate, honest, and thorough communication to individuals to help them complete tasks effectively (H.S. Kim, 2009). Informational justice revolves around delivering timely and reasonable communication to those who require it, particularly from authority figures responsible for implementing procedures. An empirical study by Guo & Al Ariss (2015) found that informational control is directly linked to outcome favourability. However, simply ensuring that employees receive all necessary information to achieve their goals and earn rewards does not guarantee a consistently positive perception of interactional justice within the organization. Instead, it fosters a sense that the organization is being informationally fair. When employees perceive their organization as informationally just, they feel a greater sense of control over processes and decision-making related to performance appraisals (Guo & Al Ariss, 2015). Consequently, organizations that uphold interactional justice in terms of information sharing enhance employees' perceived control over appraisal processes.

A higher sense of perceived control over information strengthens employees' perception of informational justice and reduces concerns about appraisal politics. Downward communication, which refers to how appraisees assess the degree and effectiveness of communication directed at them, plays a crucial role in increasing their understanding and predictability of the performance appraisal (PA) system and process. Clearly defined and well-communicated appraisal policies and procedures help reduce ambiguity regarding PA processes, as well as related pay and promotion decisions (Dhiman & Maheshwari, 2013). Providing timely, reasonable explanations about appraisal processes and ensuring unbiased implementation of key elements such as feedback and decision explanations significantly lower perceptions of manipulation within the appraisal system (Shapiro et al., 1994; Rosen, Levy & Hall, 2006).

Cultural context also influences perceptions of political and interactional justice. Power distance impacts how employees view interactional justice, as access to information fosters a sense of fairness and perceived control within an organization. When employees perceive a high level of process control, they are more likely to expect positive appraisal outcomes, as access to information strengthens their belief that participation in decision-making will lead to the rewards they anticipate (L. Guo et al., 2016). In cultures with low power distance, such as the United States, employees may react more strongly to critical feedback from superiors compared to workers in high power distance cultures, such as China. However, in both cases, when criticism is communicated with interpersonal fairness, it reduces negative attributions, improves feedback acceptance, and strengthens employee attitudes toward supervisors and the organization (Leung et al., 2001). In high power distance societies like India, where hierarchical structures are widely accepted and employees may hesitate to question their managers, individuals tend to seek greater control over appraisal-related information. This increased access to information can help mitigate negative perceptions of manipulation in appraisal decisions. Ultimately, when organizations demonstrate interactional fairness in their communication, employees gain a heightened sense of control over appraisal processes, leading to a reduced perception of appraisal politics. This is because they have the necessary

information to perform their tasks and access voice mechanisms to express concerns regarding their appraisal ratings. Therefore, organizations that maintain fairness in informational communication create a workplace environment where employees feel empowered, valued, and less susceptible to concerns about unfair treatment in performance assessments. Hence, we propose that:

H6: Perceived control will mediate the relationship between interactional justice and perception of appraisal politics.

Insert figure 1 here

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We are collecting data from working individuals in two phases to reduce the common source bias error and to reduce the fatigue. Participants are briefed about the study and are informed that their identity will not be disclosed to anyone and data will be strictly used for research purposes.

Measures

The study incorporated previously developed and validated scales, and measures are selected depending on their properties and use in similar studies.

Procedural and interactional justice are measured using scales developed by Colquitt (2001). The scale items are slightly reworded to make it more comprehensible for our study, which does not result in any changes in the properties of the scale. The scale has Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. Leader-Member Exchange construct is measured using a 7-items scale developed by Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995). The scale has Cronbach's alpha of 0.92. Perception of Appraisal Politics from the employee's perspective is measured using scale developed by Dhiman & Maheshwari (2013). The Cronbach's Alpha for scale is 0.92. To assess the level of perceived control, we took inspiration from the decision control scale by Dulebohn & Ferris (1999) and the control scale by Tetrick & LaRocco (1987). However, we did not directly replicate these scales; instead, we created a new 4-items scale using similar wording to measure perceived control specifically in the context of performance appraisal. As our study involves data collection from working professionals, we will be measuring and testing statistical properties of scale.

Control variables:

Few variables are controlled because it may influence the outcomes. In this study outcome favourability is controlled. There are strong evidences which suggests that negative perception related to appraisals go down when favourable outcomes are achieved by employees in majority of situations. Therefore, it is important to assess the ratings from the last appraisal. To gather this information, we intend to use self-reported data, using the question: "How was your rating in the last appraisal?" This question allows respondents to rate their appraisal as very poor, poor, average, good, or very good. Also, consistent with similar studies (Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012; Dhiman and Maheshwari, 2013; Wang and Chen, 2022) of this kind few demographic variables, such as age, gender.

Common source bias:

Data required for our study is coming from same individuals and it is their perceptual outcome it is subjected to increase source bias. However, we have planned to collect data in multiple phases it will reduce common source bias, Podsakoff et al. (2012) suggest that by introducing time delay we can reduce participants' tendency to inform their coming answers based on previous answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To date, a total of 233 data points has been collected, and preliminary analyses have been conducted, including scale testing and multiple regression, to assess the data's behaviour. Initially, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to examine the factor loadings of the items and to ensure the appropriateness of the measurement model. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was employed for this purpose.

Table 1 represents correlations in all constructs with significance level and descriptive statistics.

Insert table 1 here

The results indicate that the items are loading onto distinct factors, suggesting that they belong to different constructs as anticipated. This finding provides preliminary evidence that the scale is functioning as intended. However, it is worth noting that some items exhibit lower factor loadings. It is possible that with an increased sample size, these items may demonstrate stronger factor loadings, thereby enhancing the overall construct validity. Further data collection will allow for a more robust evaluation of the factor structure. KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.906 was also satisfactory with significance level of $p < 0.005$. Only one item of Perception of Appraisal Politics scale in Pay and promotion dimension, item-1 is being cross loaded with Co-Workers Politics dimension, this is the anomaly we have found in our EFA.

Linear regression of all constructs was done to observe the initial trend of data and whether it reacts as we hypothesized.

Regression: PJ → PAP

Procedural justice is negatively related to perception of appraisal politics with correlation coefficient being; $r = -0.587$ with significance level of $p < 0.005$. Value of R square for the relation between PJ and PAP is 0.344 which is also satisfactory. Hence, hypothesis 1 is getting support.

Regression: IJ → PAP

Interactional justice is negatively related to perception of appraisal politics with correlation coefficient being; $r = -0.565$ with significance level of $p < 0.005$. Value of R square for the relation between IJ and PAP is 0.319 which is also satisfactory. Hence, hypothesis 2 is also getting support.

Mediation analysis:

To test the mediation in the relationship between IJ, PJ and PAP, Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro was used in SPSS. This method generates confidence intervals (CI) for indirect effects, so it reduces the risk of decreased statistical power due to skew or other deviations from normality in the sampling distribution of the effects (MacKinnon et al., 2004).

Model: PJ→LMX→PAP

Results of mediation test, as depicted in table 2, shows that direct effect of PJ on PAP is $\beta = -0.3124$, $t(233) = -5.3139$, $p < 0.005$. Indirect effect of LMX on PJ and PAP relationship is $\beta = -0.2261$ which is significant.

Insert table 2 here

Model: IJ→LMX→PAP

Mediation test shows that direct effect of IJ on PAP is $\beta = -0.2873$, $t(233) = -4.6071$, $p < 0.005$. Indirect effect of LMX on IJ and PAP relationship is $\beta = -0.2513$ which is significant. Results are presented in table 3.

Insert table 3 here

Model: IJ→PC→PAP

Results of Mediation test as shown in table 4 depicts that direct effect of IJ on PAP is $\beta = -0.5375$, $t(233) = -10.3508$, $p < 0.005$. Indirect effect of PC on IJ and PAP relationship is $\beta = -0.0011$ which is insignificant, as 0 lies in between lower and upper limit of confidence interval.

Insert table 4 here

Model: PJ→PC→PAP

Mediation test shows that direct effect of PJ on PAP is $\beta = -0.5583$, $t(233) = -11.1469$, $p < 0.005$. Indirect effect of PC on PJ and PAP relationship is $\beta = 0.0198$ which is insignificant, as 0 lies in between lower and upper limit of confidence interval. Results represented in table 5.

Insert table 5 here

Based on the preliminary analysis of the 233 data points, several initial trends have emerged that provide partial support for the proposed hypotheses. Specifically, a negative correlation between Procedural Justice (PJ) and Interactional Justice (IJ) with Perceived of appraisal politics (PAP) was observed, which aligns with the predictions made in Hypotheses 1 and 2. This suggests that as PJ and IJ increase, PAP decreases, supporting the proposed negative relationship. Hence, hypotheses 1&2 receive support from dataset.

Additionally, a negative correlation between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and PAP was found, and further analysis revealed that LMX partially mediates the relationship between PJ and IJ with PAP. These findings provide empirical support for Hypotheses 3 and 4, indicating that LMX plays a role in attenuating the negative impact of PJ and IJ on PAP.

However, the analysis revealed little to no correlation between Perceived Control (PC) and PAP, PJ, and IJ, and there was no significant indirect effect of PC on the relationship between PJ and IJ with PAP. These results suggest that Hypotheses 5 and 6, which proposed a mediating role for PC, do not find support in the current data.

Overall, while the data provide support for some of the hypothesized relationships, further analysis with a larger sample size is warranted to confirm these findings and explore the role of PC more thoroughly.

Hierarchical regression: A 3-step hierarchical regression was conducted with Perception of Appraisal Politics (PAP) as dependent variable. Control variables such as age, gender, and educational qualification are entered in first step followed by procedural and interactional justice in step 2 finally mediating variables LMX and perceived control in third step. The table 8 represents the regression coefficients of hierarchical regression.

Insert table 6 here

The results showed that outcome favourability was the significant and major contributor along with age being significant contributor to the regression model: $F(4,226) = 11.350$, $p < 0.1$ and all control variables accounted for about 17% of the variation in PAP. When 2 predictors were added in regression in second step additional 23% of variation was explained: $F(2,224) = 43.305$, $p < 0.01$ and in this step PJ and IJ both came out to be significant contributors for the variation with co-eff 0.330 and 0.206 respectively. Finally in the last step mediator variables were entered, in which about 6% of variation was explained: $F(2,222) = 13.108$, $p < 0.01$. Here LMX was the significant contributor with coefficient value 0.332 and perceived control rendered an insignificant contribution. Here, results shows that LMX being stronger mediator in the model than PC, also mediation through LMX makes effect of IJ insignificant. Together predictors and mediators along with control variables accounted for about 44% of variance in PAP.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The literature review has highlighted several theoretical gaps in the field of procedural and interactional justice, particularly in relation to cultural contexts. Addressing these gaps, our study aims to contribute to the advancement of justice theories by exploring justice perceptions in countries with high power distance and strong relationship orientation, such as India. Specifically, we focused on the ways in which cultural factors shape employees' attitudes towards fairness, appraisal processes, and organizational politics.

Our findings reveal an emerging trend in high power distance and relationship-oriented cultures, where employees prioritize maintaining harmonious relationships with their managers over other considerations, such as control over the appraisal process. In these cultural settings, the fairness and justice demonstrated by managers play a pivotal role in shaping employees' perceptions of the appraisal process. When employees perceive their managers as fair and just, they are less likely to view their appraisals as politicized or biased. This perception, in turn, helps mitigate negative emotional responses and fosters a positive relationship with the organization.

Furthermore, our study suggests that, in these cultures, the sense of control over the appraisal process is less significant to employees compared to the quality of their relationship with their managers. This finding aligns with cultural norms in India, where individuals generally prioritize interpersonal harmony over gaining greater influence in organizational decision-making. Employees are more likely to avoid actions that could jeopardize important relationships, viewing the preservation of these relationships as more valuable than asserting control over procedural outcomes.

These insights provide a foundation for generalizing similar conclusions to other cultures characterized by high power distance and relationship orientation, particularly those where collectivist values and a respect for authority are emphasized. By extending our understanding of justice perceptions in these contexts, our research contributes to the broader field of performance appraisal theory, specifically in terms of the perception of appraisal politics. In addition, by examining the role of cultural factors and the hybrid work environment, we offer valuable insights into how these elements shape employees' views on appraisal fairness and political dynamics within organizations. Our work suggests that cultural orientations can influence not only the way fairness is perceived but also the extent to which employees are willing to engage in or tolerate political behaviour within organizational settings.

FUTURE WORK

Data collection will continue using the adopted approach until a sufficient number of data points are obtained to conduct a comprehensive analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. Currently, the analysis is in its preliminary stages, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has yet to be performed. Once the required sample size is achieved, SEM will be employed to examine the relationships between the constructs in greater depth and to test the full model.

We are targeting a minimum of 300 data points to ensure the robustness and reliability of the analysis. This sample size will provide the necessary statistical power to conduct a thorough SEM analysis and to draw more definitive conclusions regarding the hypothesized relationships. The ongoing data collection will allow for a more refined understanding of the constructs and their interrelations, ultimately enabling a more accurate evaluation of the proposed theoretical framework.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of the mediating effect of LMX and Perceived control and moderating effect of hybrid form of work

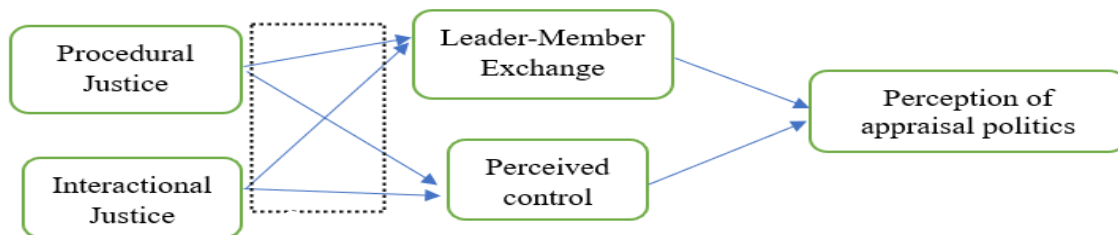


Table 1

Correlation and descriptive statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11
1. Perception of Appraisal Politics (PAP)	1									
2. Procedural Justice (PJ)	-.587**	1								
3. Interactional Justice (IJ)	-.565**	.786**	1							
4. Leader Member Exchange(LMX)	-.605**	.634**	.640**	1						
5. Perceived Control (PC)	-.051	.235**	.048	.075	1					
6. Outcome Favourability (OF)	-.373**	.426**	.468**	.511**	.065	1				
7. Education	.038	-.017	-.064	-.057	.126 [†]	.063	1			
8. Gender	.017	.047	.026	.046	-.016	.113 [†]	.044	1		
9. Age	-.169**	.071	.099	.040	.041	.119 [†]	.124 [†]	-.146*	1	
10. Work exp	-.199**	.076	.129*	.041	.007	.144*	-.018	-.182**	.871**	1
Mean	2.63	3.50	3.85	3.53	3.14	4.03	1.62	0.16	39.85	186.41
SD	0.71	0.77	0.74	0.74	0.82	0.82	0.51	0.37	6.99	81.51

Table 2

Mediation of LMX in PJ and PAP

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
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.659	.435	.287	88.52	2.00		230.0	.00
Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		t-stat	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
PJ→ LMX → PAP	-0.371 (0.00)	-0.3124 (0.00)	-0.2261	-0.314	-0.143	-5.31	Partial mediation

Table 3

Mediation of LMX in IJ and PAP

Model Summary							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.647	.4192	.294	82.996	2.00	230.0	.00	
Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		t-stat	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
IJ→ LMX → PAP	-0.393 (0.00)	-0.287 (0.00)	-0.251	-0.344	-0.166	-4.607	Partial mediation

Table 4

Mediation of PC in IJ and PAP

Model Summary							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.5653	.3195	.3455	54.0051	2.00	230.0	.0000	
Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		t-stat	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
IJ→ PC → PAP	-0.021 (0.00)	-0.538 (0.00)	-0.001	-0.016	-0.0085	-10.35	No mediation

Table 5

Mediation of PC in PJ and PAP

Model Summary							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.5937	.3524	.3288	62.5848	2.00	230.0	.0000	
Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		t-stat	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		

PJ → PC → PAP	-0.080 (0.09)	-0.558 (0.00)	-0.0198	-0.0016	-0.0512	-11.147	No mediation
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Table 6

Hierarchical multiple regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% CI		R ²	ΔR ²	Sig.
	B	Beta			LL	UL			
	Step 1						.167	.167	.000
Education	.105	.076	1.241	.216	-.062	.273			
Gender	.071	.036	.580	.562	-.169	.310			
Age	-.013	-.130	-2.077	.039	-.026	-.001			
OF	-.323	-.373	-6.044	.000	-.428	-.217			
	Step 2						.399	.232	.000
Education	.052	.038	.718	.474	-.091	.196			
Gender	.064	.033	.621	.535	-.140	.269			
Age	-.011	-.109	-2.045	.042	-.022	.000			
OF	-.101	-.117	-1.960	.051	-.203	.001			
PJ	-.330	-.360	-4.263	.000	-.483	-.177			
IJ	-.206	-.216	-2.490	.014	-.369	-.043	.463	.063	.000
	Step 3								
Education	.022	.016	.322	.748	-.115	.160			
Gender	.059	.030	.600	.549	-.135	.254			
Age	-.013	-.123	-2.428	.016	-.023	-.002			
OF	-.023	-.027	-.445	.657	-.125	.079			
PJ	-.258	-.281	-3.218	.001	-.416	-.100			
IJ	-.096	-.100	-1.158	.248	-.258	.067			
LMX	-.332	-.348	-4.967	.000	-.464	-.200			
PC	.046	.052	1.001	.318	-.044	.135			