

# Antecedents of Perception of Organizational Politics: An Investigation in Vietnam

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## Abstract:

This study aimed to examine the relationships between formalization, centralization, and job ambiguity with three constructs of perception of organizational politics: general political behavior, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies. The results of the investigation of 420 Vietnamese employees revealed that formalization, centralization, and job ambiguity positively relate to general political behavior. We also found that formalization and centralization are negatively associated with go along to get ahead and that formalization and job ambiguity affected pay and promotion policies. The discussion and limitations are provided.

**Keywords:** Centralization, formalization, job ambiguity, perception of organizational politics, Vietnam

## I INTRODUCTION

Job performance is one of the most dominant concerns of managers because it helps businesses to increase their revenue (Khan, Ziauddin, Jam, & Ramay, 2010). According to Vigoda (2000), job performance is influenced by organizational politics. Employees perceive that organizational politics exists in almost organizations (Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995). There is a debate on the impacts of perceptions of organizational politics on organization outcomes. Traditionally, organizational politics are defined as unofficial behaviour creating discords and conflicts in the work environment by dividing individuals into groups against each other, or against the organization in which they are working (Ferris et al., 1996; Mintzberg, 1983). Vigoda (2002) claims that organizational politics results in the loss of job positions, and negative emotions and actions. In practice, organizational politics behaviour, including power struggles and manipulations, is often regarded as undesigned activities (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1980; Vigoda, 2001). Researchers also

find that organizational politics leads to lower commitment to the organization (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998; Nye & Witt, 1993), lower job satisfaction (Ismail & Mohd Raduan, 2013; Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999), higher turnover intentions (Jam, Khan, Hassan, Syed, & Muzaffar, 2011; Vigoda, 2000), lower performance (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Vigoda, 2000), higher job stress and burnout (Jam et al., 2011; Kacmar et al., 1999; Schneider, 2016; Vigoda-Gadot & Talmud, 2010), higher job anxiety (Ferris et al., 1996; Ferris, Frink, Gilmore, & Kacmar, 1994), higher rates of discouragement (Byrne et al., 2005), and lower job involvement (Delle, 2013). Besides, each organizational politics constructs reveals negative correlations with organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour (Seyed Nazari, Hassani, Reza Ghaleei, & Kazemzade Beytali, 2017), which creates ultimately unstable work environments (Schneider, 2016).

On the other hand, organizational politics sometimes leads to positive outcomes. These

outcomes consist of enhancement of the success of an individual or organization (Drummond, 2000; Pfeffer, 1981). Hochwarter, Kiewitz, Castro, Perrewe, & Ferris(2003) argue that perceptions of organizational politics lie somewhere between two extremes: harmless behaviour which does not create negative attitudes such as advocacy or exchange tactics, and misleading behaviour which is to achieve personal goals in the expense of organizational goals. Politics in organizations has a positive effect if it leads to organizational changes, or as a tool for increased productivity (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989).Vigoda (2002) lists some designable outcomes of political behaviours, including career advancement and recognition.

Previous studies have provided frameworks for the emergence of political behaviour in organizations (Ferris &Kacmar, 1992; Parker et al., 1995), perceptions of organizational politics of organizational members(Ferris &Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar& Carlson, 1997), and the consequences of perceptions of organizational politics (Poon, 2003; Vigoda, 2000). However, our study contributes to the knowledge of perception of organizational politics in two aspects. First, previous studies consider perceptions of organizational politics as a composite variable to analyze the relationship with other variables, such as work attitudes, work behaviours, and stress (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999). Our study provides a more insightful understanding of the perception of organizational politics by investigating the perception of organizational politics as three separate variables: general political behaviour, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion policies. Secondly, most of the studies on organizational politics survey employees in developed countries, such as the United States, and few studies in developing countries in Asia, and none studies in Vietnam,

whose culture is complex and different from the West. The cultural differences lead to differences in perceptions of politics and members reaction to political behaviour in organizations. The results of multi-national sample research of Vigoda (2001) show that the sample of UK employees reacted more politically than their Israeli counterparts, leading to their higher tendency to leave the organization, lower level of job satisfaction, and lower level of job commitment.

## II Literature review

### *Perceptions of Organizational Politics*

Organizational politics is difficult to define (Drory&Romm, 1988; Ferris, Fedor, Chachere, &Pondy, 1989). Political activities can be used to influence society (Kacmar& Carlson, 1997), and to promote or protect individuals' interests. Organizational politics exists when there are at least two rival parties who possess different interests (Farrell & Petersen, 1982; Kacmar& Ferris, 1991; Madison et al., 1980). People in organizations use politics to socially influence decision-makers to protect their interests (Cropanzano&Kacmar, 1995).

Organizational politics includes three aspects: general political behaviour, go along to get ahead, and pay and promotion (Kacmar& Ferris, 1991).

### *General political behavior*

Political behaviours in organizations will increase if there are no clear policies and procedures (Fandt & Ferris, 1990; Ferris, Fedor, et al., 1989; Madison et al., 1980; Tushman, 1977). Without specific rules and policies, individuals are unlikely to understand which behaviours are acceptable, so they develop their behavioural norms for their benefit (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). The decision-making process is also affected by the uncertainty in an organization with unclear rules and regulations (Drory & Romm, 1990). When information is flawed and unpredictable,

managers have to rely on their algorithms for data collection. Different ways of collecting and understanding the same information can lead to ineffective and political decisions (Cropanzano & Kacmar, 1995).

Besides, the scarcity of valuable resources, such as salary, job rotation, office space, and budget also creates competition in organizations (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Previous researches point out that competing for valuable resources is purely political behaviour (Drory & Romm, 1990; Farrell & Petersen, 1982; Kumar & Ghadially, 1989). This finding implies that organizations with limited resources have a highly political environment. Since most organizations have limited resources in certain areas, political activities generally occur in almost all organizations (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997).

#### *Go along to get ahead*

Go along to get ahead is seen through the performance of employees who do not fight to protect their benefits (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). As political behaviours are self-interested, they potentially threaten the interests of others in organizations (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). According to Drory & Romm (1990), the existence of conflict is a fundamental element of organizational politics. Some individuals desire to avoid conflict; therefore, they do not resist other counterparts efforts. Although this resilience might be a non-financial action, it can be considered as a kind of political behaviour (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Individuals who fight political behaviour are isolated by individuals who perform them (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Non-threat individuals can be added to the closed group and receive valuable benefits because they do not interfere and be silent with political actions (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Thus, ignorance or silence may also be a reasonable approach to promote personal interests

when working in a political setting.

#### *Pay and promotion*

Organizations can reward and maintain political behaviour through pay and reward policy implementation (Ferris, Fedor, et al., 1989; Ferris & King, 1991; Michele Kacmar & Ferris, 1993). Although managers in organizations may not be willing to do so, the human resources system can reward those who have influential behaviour and penalize those who do not (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Organizational reward systems can maintain political behaviour in a variety of ways. Rewarding political behaviour can also encourage those who have not committed such action in the past to conduct future political behaviour (Michele Kacmar & Ferris, 1993).

#### *Organizational influences*

##### *Centralization.*

Centralization refers the degree to which decision making is concentrated at the top level of an organizational system (Aryee, Chen, & Budhwar, 2004; Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, & Turner, 1968), or to which power is distributed within the organization (Hage & Aiken, 1967). A high level of centralization, which power and control are concentrated at the top organizational level, leads to emergence politics in the workplace (Ferris et al., 1996; Welsh & Slusher, 1986). Yılmaz, Özer, & Günlük (2014) suggest that an increase in centralization results in a rise in political behaviour in organizations.

#### *Thus, we hypothesize that*

*Hypothesis 1a: There is a positive relationship between Centralization and General Political Behavior.*

*Hypothesis 1b: There is a positive relationship between Centralization and Go Along to Get Ahead.*

*Hypothesis 1c: There is a positive relationship between Centralization and Pay and Promotion Policies.*

*Formalization.*

Formalization is defined as the degree to which rules, procedures, instructions, and communications are written (Pugh et al., 1968); or relative emphasis on the use of rules and administrative measures in the organization (Hage & Aiken, 1967). Studies suggest that politics tends to emerge in uncertain and ambiguous environments, happening in formalized organizations (Ferris et al., 1996); adversely in highly formalized organizations, political activity is generally weak (Mintzberg, 1979). Besides, highly formalized organizations limit personal interests and facilitate the application of universal rules and instructions to the handling of employees, leading to their better understanding of regulations in their organizations (Aryee et al., 2004). Formalization has been identified as having a negative relationship with organizational politics (Andrews, Witt, & Kacmar, 2003; Ferris et al., 1996). Rules and procedures that promote uniform administration of workers in highly formalized organizations will eliminate uncertainty, thereby minimizing perceptions of organizational politics (Aryee et al., 2004). Therefore, we hypothesize that formalization increases when an organization is under external control from sources such as shareholders, government, parent companies, etc.

*Thus, we hypothesize that*

*Hypothesis 2a: There is a negative relationship between Formalization and General Political Behavior.*

*Hypothesis 2b: There is a negative relationship between Formalization and Go Along to Get Ahead.*

*Hypothesis 2c: There is a negative relationship between Formalization and Pay and Promotion Policies.*

*Job ambiguity*

Job ambiguity refers to the extent of uncertainty or ambiguity surrounding the work environment (Poon, 2003). In a highly ambiguous environment, employees are unaware of their job objectives, their roles, and what they must do to be rewarded (Poon, 2003). Ambiguity in responsibility, policy, customer classification, crisis management, etc. allows individuals to create events that suit their interests (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). The ambiguity of the role of managers and professionals results in avoidance of responsibility in annoying situations (C. Latack, 1986). When objectives, roles, and productivity criteria are not clear, employees tend to defend their interests with political activities such as repudiation of responsibility, ignorance, pretence, and so forth (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). Also, in highly ambiguous environments, decisions are made by politics rather than by objectivity, leading to the need to accumulate power to protect and enhance personal interests (Poon, 2003). Hence, we hypothesized that job ambiguity is positively related to perceptions of organizational politics [1-19].

*Thus, we hypothesize that*

*Hypothesis 3a: There is a positive relationship between Job Ambiguity and General Political Behavior.*

*Hypothesis 3b: There is a positive relationship between Job Ambiguity and Go Along to Get Ahead.*

*Hypothesis 3c: There is a positive relationship between Job Ambiguity and Pay and Promotion Policies.*

*Personal influences*

*Age.*

Researches have shown different results for the relationship between age and perceptions of organizational politics. Gandz & Murray (1980) contend that the relationship between age and political awareness is negligible. However, Parker

et al. (1995) claim that age explains a significant portion of the difference in perceptions of politics. We believe that there is a negative relationship between age and perceptions of organizational politics. When new employees face political reality which is contrary to their beliefs and expectations of a fair and clean system, they might react strongly (Ferris et al., 1996). As employees become more experienced in organizational life, reactions become less strong as they regard organizational politics as the way the organization works (Ferris et al., 1996). Older employees often do not care about the political nature of the work environment, and they generally perceive political activities as standard behaviours of their organizations (Ferris et al., 1996). In the study of Ferris et al. (1996), age is an important variable affecting perceptions of organizational politics.

#### *Organizational Tenure.*

Because age and organizational tenure are naturally dependent (Ferris et al., 1996; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992), we assume that there is a relationship between organizational tenure and perceptions of organizational politics. Organizational tenure has a negative impact on perceptions of politics (Ferris et al., 1996). It can be understood that, in a given term, older workers often do not care about the political nature of the work environment or perceive the political activity as the standard behavior in the organization and only pay attention to political behavior when they become aware of anomalies or irregularities. Gandz & Murray (1980) argue that low-level managers are more aware of the political nature of working environments than senior managers. Previous studies, however, show varying results regarding the relationship between

organizational tenure and perceptions of organizational politics (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Gandz & Murray, 1980; Parker et al., 1995) and these relationships should be further investigated in future studies. Thus, it is unclear whether it is a positive or negative relationship.

#### *Sex.*

Women are more likely to perceive their working environment as more political than their peers (Ferris, Fedor, et al., 1989). In terms of personality characteristics, people with cunning and self-control nature are more aware of the political work environment than others (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Other evidence of the relationship between demographics and perceptions of politics comes from studies of Fernandez (1988) or Rosin & Korabik (1990). Fernandez (1988) suggests that female managers need to be aware of political behaviours. Rosin and Korabik (1990) find that politics at work is the reason for female employees leaving organizations. Thus, we assume that sex has an impact on the perception of organizational politics.

*Thus, we hypothesize that*

*Hypothesis 4a: There is a relationship between Age, Sex, Organizational Tenure, and General Political Behavior.*

*Hypothesis 4b: There is a relationship between Age, Sex, Organizational Tenure and Go Along to Get Ahead.*

*Hypothesis 4c: There is a relationship between Age, Sex, Organizational Tenure and Pay and Promotion Policies.*

The research model is depicted in figure 1

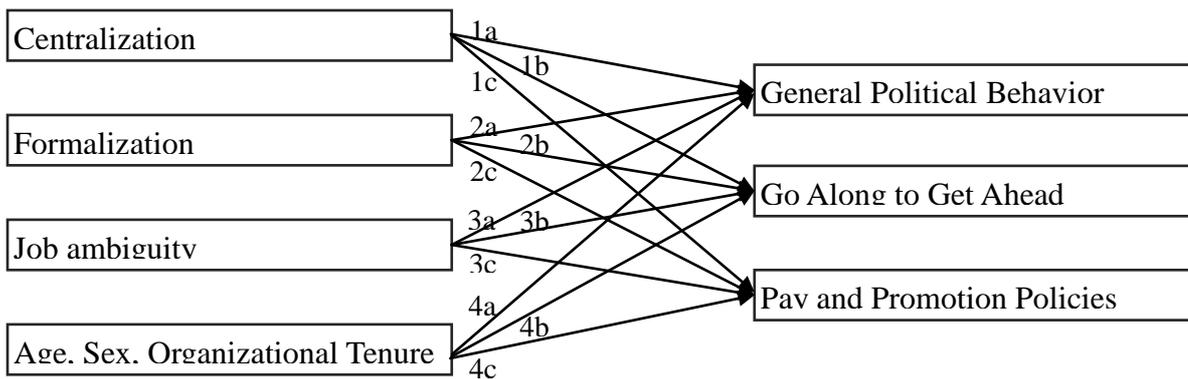


Fig. 1. Research Model

### III Methodology

#### Sample

Our data was collected from 498 employees in about 20 different positions in over 15 organizations, of which 420 were valid and were processed to further analyzed. Jobs varied, including general workers, interns, trainers, managers and doctors. These organizations spread over all three regions of Vietnam. As is displayed in table 1, the number of male respondents was 158 (37.6%), and that of female respondents was 262 (62.4%). Nearly 90% (373) of our respondents were working in the Northern part of

Vietnam, while 7.8% (33) were working in the central part of Vietnam and approximately 3% (14) were in the South. The organizational tenure distribution was as follows: less than one year (172), 1-2 years (62), 3-5 years (32); 6-9 years (28), 10 years or more (126). Most of the respondents were in their twenties (55.71%) or thirties (20.71%). The group aged 40-49 consisted of 56 respondents (13.4%). 27 (6.5%) were younger than 20 years old. Only 16 (3.9%) respondents were in the 50-59 group. None was over 60 years old. The characteristic of Sample was depicted in table 1[20-60].

Table 1 Characteristic of Sample (N = 420)

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	158	37.6%
	Female	262	62.4%
Area	The North of Vietnam	373	88.81%
	The middle of Vietnam	33	7.86%
	The South of Vietnam	14	3.33%
Tenure	Less than 1 year	172	40.95%
	1-2 years	62	14.76%
	3 - 5 years	32	7.61%
	6 9 years	28	6.67%
	10 or more years	126	30.01%
Age	< 20	27	6.42
	20 - 29	234	55.71%
	30 - 39	87	20.71%
	40 - 49	56	13.33
	50 - 59	16	3.90

Note: Sample size = 420

Questionnaires were sent by email or personal message. We also printed questionnaires and guided respondents carefully so as they answered all the questions. Data collection time was from December 2017 to February 2018. Anonymity for everybody was guaranteed. Specific names and other personal information questions were excluded from our questionnaire.

### Measures

**Formalization:** Formalization was measured using the scale developed by Oldham & Hackman (1981). The scale consists of 5 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = very inaccurate; 5 = very accurate). An example of formalization scale was “*The organization has a very large number of written rules and policies*” The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.831.

**Centralization:** Centralization was measured using the scale developed by Hage & Aiken (1967) and tested by Dewar, Whetten, & Boje (1980). The scale consisted of 5 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = definitely false; 5 = definitely true). One of the five items was “*There can be little action taken here until a supervisor approves a decision*”. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.841

**Job ambiguity:** Job ambiguity was measured using the scale developed by Poon (2003). The scale consists of 6 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = totally disagree; 5 = totally agree). An example of job ambiguity items was “*In my organization, it is unclear what employees are expected to do to be rewarded*”. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.845.

**Perceptions of organizational politics:** POP was measured using the scale developed by Kacmar & Ferris (1991). The scale consists of 12 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Of total 12 items, 6 items were used to measure general politic behaviours. An example of those 6 items was “*Influential group no one crosses*”. The alpha coefficient for general politic behavior was 0.867. Go along to get ahead was measured by 4 items developed by Kacmar & Ferris (1991). One of the 4 items was “*No place for yes man (Reverse score)*”. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.863. Pay and promotion policies was measured using 2 items. One of the 2 items was “*Pay and promotion policies are not politically applied*”. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.776.

**Personal Influences:** Several personal characteristics of employees were included in this category, such as sex, age, and organizational tenure.

## IV RESULTS

### Factor analysis

#### The dependent Variable

The potential dimensions of perception of organizational politics were tested by conducting a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. The results of varimax rotation suggested the clear factor structure of the three constructs since the loadings of all items were more than 0.5 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The factor analysis results confirmed that perception of organizational politics was three separate variables rather than a global construct.

Table 2  
Results of Factor Analysis of Perception of Organizational Politics items

	Factor loadings		
	1	2	3
One group always get their way	0.847		

Influential group no one crosses	0.793	
Policy changes help only a few	0.826	
Build themselves up by tearing others down	0.771	
Favoritism not merit gets people ahead	0.546	
Don't speak up for fear of retaliation	0.857	
Promotions go to top performers (RS)	0.829	
Rewards come to hard workers (RS)	0.754	
Encouraged to speak out (RS)	0.881	
No place for yes man (RS)	0.870	
Pay and promotion policies are not politically applied		0.821
Pay and promotion decision are consistent with policies		0.863

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*Note: sample size = 420; RS: Reversed score  
Varimax Rotated Factors*

*The independent variables*

The potential dimensionality of independent variables was tested by conducting components' factor analysis with varimax rotation. Table 3 demonstrates a distinguish factor structure of formalization and centralization. Those

Varimaxrotation results divided the six items measuring job ambiguity into two factors, namely job ambiguity of duties and rewards and job ambiguity of roles and objectives. All the loadings of the two above factors were above 0.5.

Table 3  
Results of Factor Analysis of Items of Formalization, Centralization and Job Ambiguity

	Factor loadings			
	1	2	3	4
The organization has a very large number of written rules and policies		0.687		
A "rules and procedures" manual exists and is readily available within this organization		0.767		
There is a complete written job description for most jobs in this organization		0.757		
The organization keeps a written record of nearly everyone's job performance		0.739		
There is a formal orientation program for most new members of the organization		0.826		

There can be little action taken here until a supervisor approves a decision	0.679	
A person who wants to make his own decisions would be quickly discouraged here	0.808	
Even small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer	0.591	
I have to ask my boss before I do almost anything	0.836	
Any decision I make has to have my boss's approval	0.876	
In my organization, it's hard to tell what one must do to get ahead		0.731
In my organization, it is unclear what employees are expected to do to be rewarded		0.896
I am uncertain about my job duties and responsibilities		0.853
There is a lot of uncertainty in my workplace		0.786
Employees in my organization are clear about their roles (RS)		0.871
Work objectives in my organization are clearly communicated to employees (RS)		0.852

Note: sample size = 420; RS: Reversed score

### Regressions

Table 4 presented the means, standard deviation, and pairwise correlations. The Pearson correlation tests showed no potential threat of multicollinearity. To ensure there was no concern for multicollinearity, variance inflation factors were calculated. The value of variance inflation factors ranged from 1.026 to 3.597. Three out of four predictors (formalization, centralization and job ambiguity of duties and rewards) were closely related to general political behaviour (0.444;

0.519 and 0.350;  $p < 0.01$ ). Go along and get ahead was positively related to job ambiguity variables (0.148, 0.573;  $p < 0.01$ ) and was negatively related to formalization and centralization (-0.176, -0.168;  $p < 0.01$ ). The pay and promotion policies were negatively associated with formalization and centralization (-0.536, -0.354;  $p < 0.01$ ) and were positively linked to job ambiguity of duties and rewards and job ambiguity of roles and objectives (0.102;  $p < 0.05$ ; 0.250;  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4  
Means, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and Cronbach's Coefficient Estimates

<i>N</i>	<i>Variables</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Age (interval)									
2	Work tenure	0.801* *								
3	Formalization	0.332* *	0.472* *							
4	Centralization	0.459* *	0.586* *	0.553* *						
5	Job ambiguity of duties and rewards	0.092	0.003	-0.07	-0.084					
6	Job ambiguity of roles and objectives	- 0.254* *	- 0.367* *	- 0.236* *	- 0.165* *	0.167* *				
7	General political behavior	0.540* *	0.579* *	0.444* *	0.519* *	0.350* *	-0.13			
8	Go along and get ahead	- 0.316* *	- 0.356* *	- 0.176* *	- 0.168* *	0.148* *	0.573* *	-0.097* *		
9	Pay and promotion policies	- 0.281* *	- 0.351* *	- 0.536* *	- 0.360* *	0.102* *	0.250* *	- 0.183* *	0.350* *	
10	Mean	2.32	2.92	3.886	3.633	3.219	1.816	3.321	2.044	3.864
11	Standard deviation	0.910	1.756	0.797	0.862	1.141	0.989	0.933	0.923	0.941
12	Max	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
13	Min	1	1	1	1.20	1	1	1	1	1

Note: Sample size =420. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. Construct reliabilities were shown in brackets along diagonal

The table 5 describes the standardized regression results of the regression models that represented the relationships between predictors (i.e. formalization, centralization, job ambiguity of duties and rewards, and job ambiguity of roles and objectives) and dependent variables (i.e. general political behavior, go along and get ahead, and pay and promotion policies). The columns represent standardized coefficients, significance level and variance inflation factor (VIF). The F-statistic illustrates the overall statistical fit of each model. As is reported in the table, the dependent variable in model 1 was general political behavior, model 1 accounted for 54.80% of the variance. Model 1 shows the positive relationship of all predicting variables with general political behavior. Results shows that general political behavior was each correlated with formalization (standardized  $\beta = 0.137$ ;  $p = 0.046$ ), with centralization (standardized  $\beta = 0.270$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), with job ambiguity of duties and rewards (standardized  $\beta = 0.294$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), and with job ambiguity of roles and objectives (standardized  $\beta = 0.170$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ). Model 1 also presents a positive relationship between work time and general political behavior (standardized  $\beta = 0.305$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Thus, hypotheses 1a, 2a, 3a, were confirmed. In model 2, the dependent variable was go along to get ahead. Model 2 explained the variance by 39.5%. Consistent with

previous research, model 2 revealed that formalization was negatively associated to go along to get ahead (standardized  $\beta = -0.147$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ); however the relationship between centralization and go along to get head was negative, which contradicted to what had been suggested from scholars[61-63]. While the job ambiguity of duties and rewards was not statistically linked to go along to get ahead, job ambiguity of roles and objectives was associated with it (standardized  $\beta = 0.391$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In model 2, age negatively affected go along to get ahead. Thus, hypotheses 1b and 2b were fully supported, while hypothesis 3b was partly confirmed. In model 3, the dependent variable was payment and promotion policies. As displayed in model 3, the results of our estimation verify that formalization was negatively related to payment and promotion policies (standardized  $\beta = -0.287$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Centralization and job ambiguity of duties and rewards were expected to correlate with pay and promotion policies; however, the two were not statistically related. Job ambiguity of roles and objectives positively associated with pay and promotion policies. In model 3, none of the demographic factors were statistically related to pay and promotion policies. Hence, hypothesis 1c was fully supported, and hypothesis 3c was partly supported. The independent variables in model 3 accounted for 44,6% of the variance.

Table 5  
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Model 1: Outcome = General political behavior			Model 2: Outcome = Go along to get ahead			Model 3: Outcome = Pay and promotion policies		
	Standardize d coefficients	Sig.	VIF	Standardize d coefficients	Sig.	VIF	Standardize d coefficients	Sig.	VIF
<b>Control variables</b>									
Age (interval)	0.140	0.097	2.88 5	-0.184	0.061	2.88 5	-0.103	0.951	2.88 5

Work tenure	0.304	0.01	3.59	0.079	0.471	3.59	-0.046	0.657	3.59
			7			7			7
Sex	0.053	0.292	1.02	0.072	0.216	1.02	-0.03	0.269	1.02
			6			6			6
<b>Predicting variables</b>									
Formalization	<b>0.131</b>	0.060	1.89	-0.147	0.065	1.89	-0.287	0.000	1.89
			6			6			6
Centralization	0.273	0.000	1.93	<b>-0.135</b>	0.093	1.93	-0.061	0.434	1.93
			7			7			7
Job ambiguity of duties and rewards	0.293	0.000	1.20	0.093	0.142	1.20	0.082	0.177	1.20
			8			8			8
Job ambiguity of roles and objectives	0.169	0.007	1.54	0.391	0.000	1.54	0.389	0.000	1.54
			8			8			8
N		420			420			420	
F-statistic		31.92			17.14			21.13	
		5			9			4	
Sig F		0.000			0.000			0.000	
Durbin-Watson		1.890			1.838			1.813	
R <sup>2</sup>		0.548			0.395			0.446	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.531			0.372			0.425	

## V DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

### Discussion

The results suggest that the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables are multi-directional, which is different from previous studies. Those studies claim that in organizations which are highly centralized, with little formalization and which have high level of job ambiguity, employees likely engage in general political behaviours (Ferris, Fedor, et al., 1989; Ferris & King, 1991; Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Consistent with

previous studies, our research results reveal that formalization positively affects both perceptions of go along to get ahead and perception of pay and promotion policies. These results inform that employees are likely silent to secure their interests in highly formalized organizations where pay and promotion policies are lowly political. Additionally, congruent with the results of earlier researches, our study results verify that centralization positively influences general political behaviour, which can be interpreted as centralized organizations possessing high levels of

general political behaviour. Moreover, job ambiguity partly relates to general political behaviour. This result indicates that the more ambiguous the job is, the more political behaviours are applied. Finally, in terms of demographic factors, age negatively associates with go along to get ahead and work tenure links to general political behaviour. The results recommend that older employees perceive less organizational political behaviour. They also reveal that more experienced employees are unlikely to be silent to secure their interests.

However, our study results reveal that formalization is positively related to general political behaviour. This relationship could be explained based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2011). Vietnam people have a weak level of uncertainty avoidance (Swierczek&Ha, 2003). In a society with a low level of uncertainty avoidance, people believe that if the majority of rules are redundant and if the rules are ambiguous or workless, they should be abandoned and changed (Hofstede, 2011). Moreover, employees easily detect which behaviour is organizational political behaviours and what is not in formalized organizations. As a result, political behaviour emerges in a highly formalized organization.

Another interesting finding from our study is that centralization negatively impacts go along to get ahead. This negative result is underpinned by the notion that power is synonymous with accountability. The more power people possess, the more responsibility they have to ensure. In a centralized organization, power is given to several key managers who are fully responsible for all their decisions. If a manager is responsible for the results of their decision, they are less likely to decide based on favouritism. Moreover, in centralized organizations, key managers might be powerful enough to allocate resources to support

their in-group subordinates. Manager support facilitates employee performance. Therefore, subordinates of key decision-makers in centralized organizations are paid and promoted based on their supporting performance; hereby, downgrading the perception of go along to get ahead.

#### *Limitations*

As with other empirical studies, this research should be interpreted carefully due to some caveats. Firstly, this study utilized convenient samples, hereby limiting the generalization of results. Future research should investigate random samplesto generalize the results. Secondly, all the measures employed in this study were subjective rather than objective, indicating that the results might be biased since subjective measures tend to suffer from social desirability. In-group subordinates tend to rate organizational politics more lightly than out-group counterparts do. Further research should use a sample of in-group and a sample of out-group to obtain insightful understandings of organizational politics. Thirdly, this study employs cross-sectional measures, hereby, future research should examine the correlations among independent variables. For example, formalization might negatively affect job ambiguity ifan organization has a shortage of rules, job descriptions, and job requirements. Lastly, our research investigates antecedents of perception of organizational politics without considering the consequences of organizational politics. Hence, it would be useful to further investigate the impacts of perception of organizational politics to desired outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance and intention to leave. These limitations aside, we believe that this study contributes to organizational behavior literature by investigating the perception of organizational politics in terms of its three components: general political behavior, go along

to get ahead and pay and promotion policies of Vietnamese employees.

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