

Integrating Artificial Intelligence into the Analysis of Organizational Politics in Academic Settings: Drivers and Effects on Staff Behavior

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Abstract

The study focuses at cultural aspects of organizational politics in Indian State Universities in order to place this institutional kinetics within broader conversations about meritocracy, transparency, and the evolving role of artificial intelligence in organizational research. Organizational politics are perceived as a response to ongoing resource limitations, ambiguous policy processes, and external political interference, all of which threaten cooperative and performance-oriented learning environments. To identify the fundamental factors that drive employees' political behavior, an explanatory qualitative study approach was utilized. In order to gain access to secret and politically sensitive networks, 41 academic and non-academic staff members from State Universities in Madhya Pradesh were chosen by snowball sampling for semi-structured interviews. The investigation methodically compared theoretically informed expectations with empirically occurring themes using replication logic and pattern matching. The results show that senior staff members are more involved in macro-level political maneuvering related to control overresources, appointments, and policy implementation, whereas lower-ranked personnel are more involved in micro-level, daily politics. The lack of merit-based systems, restricted policy transparency, and national political parties' control over public finances and institutional governance all exacerbate political behaviors. According to the study, strong resource management techniques and open, consistently implemented laws can lessen the dysfunctional effects of organizational politics, even when political meddling and resource scarcity are enduring contextual elements. Future AI use in qualitative analysis: The paper also describes how AI-based methods for coding and pattern recognition can be used in organizational politics research in the future, although the results will still need to be interpreted and explained by the researchers.

Keywords: State Universities, organizational politics, snow ball sampling, replication logic, explanatory-qualitative analysis, pattern matching technique (matrix)

[A] Introduction

Organizational politics, comprises informal influence behaviors, power struggles, and self-interested actions that individuals and groups attempt to get what they want from an institution (Ferris et al., 1993; Mintzberg, 1983), has long been seen as a natural and important part of how things work at work. Gandz and Murray (1980) recognized it as a subjective condition wherein individuals perceive that actions are deliberately focusing at self-serving objectives, frequently in conflict with the interests of other organizational members. Mintzberg (1983) further defines organizational politics as informal, divisive, and technically illegitimate behaviors. It is geared and motivated by self-interest, neglecting the welfare of the organization as a whole. Buchanan (2008) underlined that organizational politics is an important tool to affect how resources are distributed, helping people reach their goals, and shaping the reputations of institutions. — making it nearly impossible for organizational members to remain neutral without risking and reviewing career stagnation or vulnerability (Buchanan, 1999; Miller et al., 2008).

The examination of organizational politics has progressed through enduring interdisciplinary collaboration among political science, sociology, psychology, management, and public administration (Parvin et al., 2011). It produces theoretical contributions that have profoundly contested traditional management views. It is of significance to career advancement well-documented: Greenhaus et al. (2001) insist that identity evolution and ongoing learning characterize career paths in the twenty-first century, with organizational politics serving as a crucial influence on these paths (Porter et al., 1981; Drory, 1993). The research substantiates that workplace politics and job satisfaction display an inverse correlation, even within higher education contexts, where an escalation in political behavior is consistently linked to diminished employee satisfaction (Khan Asif et al., 2022). The introduction of artificial intelligence in schools and universities changes the political landscape in a way that has never happened before. Unlike previous waves of educational technology, AI systems can change not only how administrative tasks are done, but also how professionals make decisions about who judges performance, who gives out resources, and who has the authority to interpret institutional knowledge. These abilities activate and amplify the political dynamics that organizational theorists have explained long, creating new power centers, new sources of perceived threat, and new competitions for professional authority in academic organizations.

These AI-driven political kinetics are quite strong in academic settings, which have guidelines for collegial governance, tenure structures, and strong professional identities. When AI is added to an organization, it doesn't happen in a neutral way; it goes through the existing hierarchies, professional interests, and cultures of the organization. Aronow (2004) says that being able to change complex organizational systems with conflicting goals, values, and motivations is a key part of good human resource management. AI integration adds exactly that kind of complexity on a large scale.

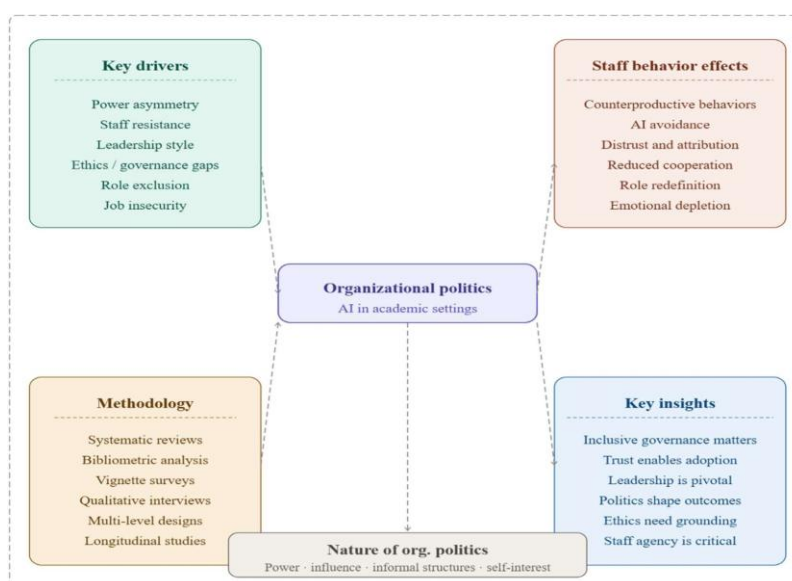
Although there is an increasing amount of research on the effects of AI on organizational behavior in general (Bankins et al., 2024) and on academic work in particular (Frontiers in Education, 2025),

the relationship between AI adoption and organizational politics in higher education is still not well understood. This review aims to fill this gap by combining empirical and theoretical research published up to 2026 to answer two main questions: (1) What are the main causes of organizational politics that AI integration in academic settings brings about? (2) What are the quantifiable impacts on employee conduct?

A.1. Conceptual Framework

Three complementary theoretical traditions serve as the foundation for this examination. First, the analytical framework for comprehending how AI effects spread concurrently at the person, group, and institutional levels is provided by multilevel organizational behavior theory (Bankins et al., 2024). Second, institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) explains why academic institutions adopt AI in ways that reflect moral, mimetic, and coercive forces rather than just logical efficiency calculations—a process that is intrinsically political.

Fig.1: Conceptual Framework



Third, Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987), which is used in a number of the primary examples examined here, provides a framework for comprehending how political tensions arise when AI is introduced due to conflicts between current organizational tools, regulations, and community structures.

These theories all agree that integrating AI into academics is a socio-political process rather than a technical one. The allocation of professional tasks, the visibility of AI-driven surveillance, and the distribution of decision-making authority related to AI are all examples of political activities that cause staff members to react in certain ways.

A.2. The Nature of Organizational Politics and Research

In the broader social sciences, politics is often regarded as a means of resolving conflicts inside organizations. However, the term has a negative connotation and frequently suggests self-serving behavior (Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Vigoda-Gadot, 2003). Similarly, "organizational politics" is often associated with unpleasant aspects of power dynamics, such as manipulation and favoritism, that occur both inside and outside of organizations (Ferris et al., 2002; Harris & Kacmar, 2005; Katrinili et al., 2010).

Organizational politics has historically been examined from two perspectives: macro and micro politics. Early studies focused on macro politics, or political dynamics and structures at the organizational level (Kaufman, 1964). Micro politics, which examines how political acts impact particular employees in the public and commercial sectors, gained prominence throughout time (Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010).

Executives face numerous responsibilities and pressures at work, according to Pamela L. Perrewé et al. (2000). We propose that many leaders' success and ability to manage difficult organizational circumstances can be ascribed, at least partially, to their strong political acumen. Political skill is an interpersonal style that shows itself as social intelligence and the capacity to act in a way that promotes confidence, honesty, and trust. Politically astute executives are better equipped to handle the ongoing pressure they face at work.

In a similar vein, Muhammad Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2019) discovered that the relationship between employees' outcomes and perceived organizational politics is moderated by social capital. The three most important employee outcomes in this study were plans to quit, job satisfaction, and stress at work. According to their research, there is a negative correlation between organizational politics and employee stress and attrition. According to Sharma, J. and Dhar, R.L. (2016), burnout is adversely connected with emotional commitment and is much more common among nursing staff in an institution's political context. Additionally, affective commitment was positively correlated with perceived procedural justice and organizational support instead of exhaustion. Additionally, emotional commitment has a major effect on workers' job performance.

Despite having a major impact on employee well-being, organizational politics received little attention until the 1970s. Researchers began examining the effects of organizations becoming more and more similar to the complex dynamics of national governance, which include conflicts, power battles, and resource sharing. In the late 1970s, theoretical frameworks for analyzing the relationship between politics and employee well-being started to emerge (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Mayes & Allen, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). Pfeffer (1992) asserts that companies, like governments, are political institutions and that effective management of them necessitates an understanding of internal politics. In public systems, organizational politics' structural and functional aspects are particularly crucial. Public sector organizations serve as policy enforcers and are inherently connected to national political systems, claim Mahmood and Ali (2011).

Because intense rivalry for limited resources fosters political behavior both within and between organizations, this link is especially crucial in environments with limited resources. Alam (2009) asserts that evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector organizations might be challenging due to their unique objectives. External influences frequently motivate organizational activities, making their functional evaluations even more challenging.

A.3. Organizational Politics in the Public Sector

Given their proximity to influential political institutions and governing bodies, organizational politics are particularly noticeable in public-sector organizations (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005). Owing to frequent severe

resource limitations and strong accountability standards, political scheming cannot be avoided (Al-Alawi et al. 2007). Workers in these environments frequently use a variety of influence strategies to achieve their goals, whether personal or professional, which reflects the importance of stakeholder conflicts and power struggles in public organizations (Abbasi et al., 2010). Although perceptions of organizational politics are associated with several performance measures, they differ significantly between industries, and are more prevalent in the public sector than in the private sector (Bodla and Danish, 2008).

A.1. Focus of the Study: Academic Institutions (The Political Character of AI Governance in Universities)

A consistent finding across the reviewed literature is that AI governance in academic settings is experienced as a political phenomenon by staff at all levels. This observation is particularly resonant within academic institutions, where the political dynamics of organizational life are uniquely complex. Academics simultaneously enjoy professional independence, the satisfaction of knowledge contribution, and has the privilege of educating the coming generation. It contends with strict publication standards, slow and delayed promotion processes, and limited career advancement (Vigoda-Gadot, 2003). Against this backdrop, personal experiences of political plotting in academic aggravate these structural hinderances. Three dimensions of political character of Artificial Intelligence in this context are particularly significant.

[B] Algorithmic Authority and Professional Displacement

For student assessment, and their performance evaluation, or resource allocation the introduction of AI-driven decision support systems creates a new decision-making authority not subject to the professional norms controlling human judgment. Staff whose expertise was previously recognized as authoritative find that authority diminished when AI systems are accorded institutional legitimacy. This displacement is political in Mintzberg's (1983) sense: it involves a redistribution of power that is not formally negotiated through governance channels. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are knowledge-centric by nature, placing high value on knowledge as a vital organizational resource (Aryee et al., 2004). Effective knowledge-sharing behaviors (KSB) are crucial to institutional success (Akosile & Olatokun, 2020), and by improving organizational knowledge repositories, Knowledge Sharing Behavior enables staff to tackle challenging problems and develop innovative solutions, facilitating the execution of innovative work behaviors (IWB) (Phung et al., 2019). When algorithmic authority displaces professional knowledge as the institutional arbiter of decisions, this knowledge ecosystem is disrupted, and the political contests that follow directly impair both KSB and IWB. Research in Chinese higher education confirms that organizational politics (OP) exerts a detrimental effect on innovative work behavior and knowledge-sharing precisely because it subordinates collective knowledge to individual or systemic self-interest (Jia, 2024).

[C] Surveillance and Loss of Agency

The deployment of AI for monitoring — whether of student engagement, faculty productivity, or administrative efficiency — introduces forms of organizational surveillance that fundamentally alter the experience of professional autonomy. Frontiers in Education (2025) in his study, finds that when adoption processes of artificial intelligence do not include faculty input, feelings of exclusion, surveillance, and loss of agency are intensified. This finding reproduces organizational behavior research to display that perceived monitoring minimizes organizational citizenship behavior and enhances counterproductive tendencies (Bankins et al., 2024). The political dimension of surveillance is further supported by research on perceptions of politics (POPs): Ugwu and Nwali (2023) found that POPs were a positive predictor of both employee cynicism and workplace exclusion, widely witnessed in academics. Crucially, workplace exclusion reinforced by AI-mediated monitoring represents a bridge from political perception to organizational loss, even while employee scepticism did not directly predict unproductive work conduct.

Scepticism and exclusion, far from being peripheral outcomes, are structural political responses to environments in which AI systems function as instruments of managerial control than professional support.

[D] Governance Exclusion: A Structural Political Act

The systematic exclusion of faculty and staff from governance processes may be the significant dimension of artificial integration. The AAUP (2025) survey data demonstrate that U.S. higher education, formal policy frameworks governing AI use exists in only 20% of institutions as of 2024.

This policy vacuum concentrates effective authority in administrative hands and constitutes a structural political act i.e. the exercise of power through procedural omission rather than explicit command. Ferris et al. (2013) demonstrated that organizational politics, is a strategic social influence process that maximizes individual interests, frequently at others cost. Buchanan (2008) recognizes organizational politics as a critical instrument to influence resource allocation and shaping institutional reputations. The administrative monopoly over artificial intelligence policy decisions is exactly as an exercise of political instrumentality. *Frontiers in Education* (2025), in their research, explicitly links artificial intelligence adoption processes which excludes faculty input to conflict over practical control in the workplace, language dominating the nature of organizational politics. Furthermore, management interventions that implement transparent administration, standardized executive monitoring, and clearly differentiate between political and non-political actions that have been shown to inhibit the negative impact of organizational politics on innovation and knowledge-sharing (Jia, 2024).

[E] Prior Research and Intellectual Trajectory

Historical research on organizational politics in higher education has a phenomenon including departmental power dynamics, administrative-faculty conflict, and resource allocation politics (Birnbaum, 1988; Tierney, 1988). The emergence of AI as an organizational variable adds a new dimension to this tradition: the political contestation of algorithmic authority.

Bankins et al. (2024) had a comprehensively multilevel reviewed of artificial intelligence in organizations to date, synthesize empirical proofs across five themes. Their framework recognizes human-AI collaboration, employee perceptions of artificial intelligence, effects on the wide workforce, labor market implications, and organizational change as the key domains of investigation. Critically for the present study, they find that employee attitudes strongly predict the technological use, with more negative attitudes resulting in resistance and poor uptake (political dynamic).

A cluster of 2025 publications examined faculty and staff experiences. A Portugaly, the Netherlands, and the United States (*Frontiers in Education*, 2025) studies deploy qualitative methods to document how artificial intelligence deployment in academia may lead to resistance among teachers, researchers, and administrators, particularly when institutional processes are perceived as inequitable.

The methodological profile of the literature has evolved significantly over the review period (2015–2019), tends toward conceptual and theoretical contributions, mapping potential implications of artificial intelligence, for higher education governance. The period between 2020–2022 witnesses the rise of empirical surveys and cases, while 2023–2026 has been characterized by more sophisticated multi-level designs, longitudinal studies, and bibliometric meta-analyses that reflect the maturation of the field.

Selection of State Universities for Study in Madhya Pradesh (sample frame)

State Universities in Madhya Pradesh, from Bhopal, and Sagar, are the subject of this study as a representative academic institution in the public sector. Govt. universities are highly susceptible to organizational politics due to their strong ties to policymaking organizations and their reliance on government money (Ferris et al. 2019). To obtain scarce financial and non-financial resources, stakeholders in these organizations are tend to use political tactics. Punjab University in India and Karachi University in Pakistan, have demonstrated this phenomenon is especially noticeable in poorer nations, where there is lacking of resources that makes political scheming more difficult. In reference to the analysis of Madhya Pradesh State Universities, this study seeks to stress on the causes of organizational politics and provide practical recommendations for legislators to curtail its negative impacts. These dynamics understands the essential for enhancing stakeholder management, allocation of the resources, and organizational effectiveness in public academic institutions.

[B] Research Methodology

This study aims to investigate the causes of organizational politics and its effects within the framework of Madhya Pradesh academic universities only. It is well-suited to meet the study's aims because it is an explanatory study that uses a qualitative research methodology to explore organizational politics in depth (Flick, 2006; McNabb, 2008; Yin, 2003). An embedded case study design was selected to improve the validity and dependability of the analysis. The research reflects the complexity of organizational politics within the institution by employing State Universities in Madhya Pradesh as the main case and incorporating several sub-units comprising academic and non-academic staff. The study was conducted between February and September 2024, a span of eight months.

Power dynamics, resource scarcity, cultural norms, the merit and promotion system, social networks and alliances, external political influence, job insecurity and career advancement, communication and information flow, leadership and management style, individual motivation and personality, and institutional structure and hierarchy were among the variables taken into account for this study. The results or effects that arise from the influence of different causes (independent variables) on organizational behavior are the dependent variables in the context of organizational politics within academic institutions.

Ugwu et al., 2023 underlined some potential dependent variables based on the variables, e.g., employee participation in organizational politics, career progression and job satisfaction, organizational performance and effectiveness, employee well-being and morale, resource allocation and access, leadership and decision-making, institutional culture and climate, and staff trust and cooperation and identified independent variables are lack of resources, organizational culture, hierarchical disparities, lack of merit systems, external political influence, job role and position, individual aspirations, management and leadership styles, workplace climate and environment, intra-organizational communication, and organizational structure. The results (affected by interaction of power, resource scarcity, leadership style, and merit systems in intricate and multifaceted ways) influenced by the kinetics of organizational politics in academic settings are represented by these dependent variables.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) techniques were employed by the researchers in a supporting manner at various phases of the research process in this explanatory, qualitative embedded case study: Firstly, the researcher could refine the important concepts including power dynamics, merit and promotion systems, resource distribution, and external political influence by using AI-based analysis of university statutes, policy documents, and regulations from State Universities in Madhya Pradesh. The selection of independent and dependent variables was influenced by these inputs. Questionnaire based open ended questions were put to the respondents to collect and record information which was further decoded and interpreted using AI technologies, resulting in accurate bilingual transcripts and enhancing the data's completeness and dependability. During the analysis phase, the suggested initial codes related to segments were grouped, and patterns between staff categories, e.g. superior and lower-ranked employees were accentuating using AI functions. Secondly, the researchers examined hypothesized relationships between problems including resource scarcity, leadership style, institutional culture, well-being, job satisfaction, and political engagement. The researcher reviewed, revised, or rejected all artificial intelligence outputs, final coding and interpretation adhered to recognized qualitative case study convention while maintaining a foundation in human judgment.

To sum up, the qualitative software was utilized to produce draft codes, propose potential themes, and highlight ideas that recurred throughout the interviews, particularly in relation to institutional culture, leadership style, resource scarcity, employee well-being, job satisfaction, and political behavior. Before going on to higher-level themes and causal explanations, these recommendations were always compared to a codebook created by the researchers, who determined which codes and patterns to retain or alter. The program only served as an analytical tool in accordance with contemporary guidelines on transparent AI use; the researchers made the final judgments about coding, pattern matching, and interpretation based on the particular circumstances of the universities under study.

The AI-augmented methodology leads to the following propositions and hypotheses:

H1: In State Universities of Madhya Pradesh, higher perceived levels of organizational politics are expected to coincide with lower job satisfaction, diminished well-being, and reduced trust and cooperation among staff.

H2: Contextual conditions such as resource scarcity, non-transparent merit systems, authoritarian leadership, and external political interference are expected to intensify employees’ engagement in organizational politics in these universities.

Research Design

Stage.01: Tool: Exploring the acceptance of AI in converting questionnaire-based audio transcription to documents

Satge.02: Tool: Semi Structured Interviews

Stage.03: Tool: Theme based casual explanation

C.1. Sampling:

Artificial Intelligence has been integrated into purposive–snowball sampling mainly to support identification, diversity checking, and documentation, while human judgment and confidentiality remain central.

The sampling frame comprised academic and non-academic employees of State Universities in Madhya Pradesh who were reputed to be involved in organizational politics, identified through purposive and snowball sampling. To compensate for the absence of formal records on political engagement, an initial “seed” participant with a strong reputation for political involvement was located on the basis of recommendations from senior professors, and subsequently invited to nominate colleagues perceived to engage in similar political dynamics across different hierarchical levels and functional areas. AI-supported tools were used in a limited, assistive manner to maintain a log of referral chains, monitor basic diversity indicators (such as role category, rank, and university), and flag emerging concentration around a single network cluster so that the researcher could purposefully seek additional referrals from alternative networks, thereby reducing sampling bias while preserving the integrity of snowball sampling. A total of, 41 respondent employees (non-/academic staff) from three select state universities were interviewed informally, e.g. Assistant Registrar, Superintendent, and Section Officer, Professors were also approached informally to portray the existing political behavior structure within their own institutions, and all identities and departmental affiliations were de-identified in the dataset and reporting to protect confidentiality.

C.2. Case selection and Replication Logic

Replication logic has been used in this study to strengthen the credibility and transferability of the findings to check whether comparable patterns appear repeatedly or whether important differences emerge. Yin (2003) distinguished between literal showcasing similar results (replication), and contrasting cases that still support and refine the theory (theoretical replication). In this current research, the idea of replication logic guides the selection and comparison of university as study cases. It will yield so that repeated configurations of conditions and outcomes can be recognized and used to build more vigorous explanations of organizational politics.

This multi-case design combines replication logic and pattern matching across de-identified cases of the university (e.g., Univ-A1–A2, Univ-B1–B3, Univ-C1–C3). 1, 2, 3, represent, moderate units, Low-Trust/Mixed units and High-Political Influence units respectively. Artificial Intelligence tools created embedded unit wise structured summaries on dimensions like power dynamics, resource scarcity, leadership, merit systems, satisfaction, morale, trust, and politics. Comparisons between universities showed replication (from strong politics, weak merit, external interference to → low satisfaction/trust) and theoretical replication (varying leadership/communication to → better outcomes under similar structures).

Table. 1: Pattern Matching Matrix (PMM)

University	University-A		University-B			University-C		
	A-1	A-2	B-1	B-2	B-3	C-1	C-2	C-3
Power dynamics	Md	↑	↑	Md	↑	↓	Md	↓
Resource scarcity	↑	Md	↑	↓	↑	Md	↓	Md

Cultural norms (tolerance of politics)	↑	↑	Md	↑	Md	↓	↑	Md
Merit and promotion system	W	W	Md	Md	W	Md	Stg	Stg
Social networks and alliances	↑	↑	Md	Md	↑	Md	↓	↓
External political influence	↑	Md	↑	↓	↑	Md	↓	↓
Job insecurity & career advancement concern	↑	↑	Md	Md	↑	Md	↓	Md
Communication & information	Pr	Pr	Md	G	Auth	Md	G	↓
Leadership & management style	Auth	Auth	Mx	P	Auth	Mx	P	Mx
Individual motivation & personality salience	Mx	Mx	↑	↑	Mx	Mx	↑	Md
Institutional structure & hierarchy	R	R	SR	Fl	R	SR	Fl	SR
Employee job satisfaction	↓	↓	Md	↑	↓	Md	↑	Md
Employee well-being & morale	↓	↓	Md	↑	↓	Md	↓	Md
Organizational performance & effectiveness	Md	↓	Md	↑	Md	Md	↓	Md
Staff trust & cooperation	↓	↓	Md	↑	↓	Md	Md	Md
Employee participation in organizational politics	↑	↑	↑	Md	↑	Md	↓	↓

Low= ↓ / High=↑ / Medium= Md/ Rigid= R/ Authoritarian =Auth/ Mixed= Mx/ Strong=Stg/ Semi-R= SR/ Flexible= Fl/ Participative= P/ Good= G/ Poor- Pr/ Week= W

1(moderate units), 2 (Low-Trust/Mixed units) and 3 (High-Political Influence units)

In this three-university design (cases Univ. A, Univ. B, Univ. C with subcases like A1, B2), pattern matching and replication logic link constructs (e.g., High/Medium/Low; Authoritarian; Rigid) for empirical cross comparison against theoretical patterns from organizational politics literature (Lizardo Vargas-Bianchi, 2025). This core pattern matching matrix evaluates convergence or divergence between observed and expected configurations and thus comparisons reveal replication logic.

Within a common construct framework, the researcher can investigate whether different constellations result in systematically different political outcomes (theoretical replication) or whether similar constellations of conditions (e.g., high external political influence, weak merit systems, poor communication) are consistently linked to comparable outcomes (e.g., high employee participation in politics, low trust, and reduced organizational effectiveness). The study can go beyond single-case description to multi-case reasoning, where recurrent patterns bolster the validity of the findings and anomalous patterns spur theoretical improvement, by treating each university as an analytically unique case that is interpreted using the same pattern-matching template. (ERIM Report, ERS-2009-034-ORG, June, 2009)

C.3. AI-supported Data Collection Technique

Flick, 2006; McNabb, 2008 suggested to use semi-structured interviews conducted through personal informal interview, audio recording in this study. This approach was selected to provide real-time clarification and elicit complex perceptions of organizational politics. Academic and non-academic staff in the sample were contacted informally, and the purpose and scope of the study was mentioned, assured that their participation was voluntary,

and that the information they provided would remain confidential and be used solely for academic research. Interviews were conducted informally based on references and personal request, and key points were restated and summarized back to respondents to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the accounts. With participants' consent, all interviews were either audio-recorded or were noted down in black -n-white and then transcribed in full. AI-based transcription tools were used to convert recordings into text and, where needed, to handle bilingual segments, thereby improving the completeness and legibility of the corpus while reducing the risk of manual transcription errors.

Fig-2: Conceptual Model Diagram for Organizational Politics in Academic Institutions Block Diagram Representation:



For analysis, the study followed the pattern-matching logic recommended by Flick (2006) and McNabb (2008), in which predicted theoretical patterns are compared with empirically observed patterns. Using an interview guidance from literatures, audio recorded audio and texts, the study conducted semi-structured interviews to capture distinctive perceptions of organizational politics ensuring both flexibility and reliability. This approach clarified real-time situation and its verification, aligning with the research's explanatory purpose (Flick, 2006; McNabb, 2008).

AI outputs were treated as provisional aids only than defining results, with final coding decisions and interpretations resting with the researchers to keep the reflexive and interpretive character of the qualitative design.

Mediating Factors:

Constructs and patterns, these works are categorized as mediating factors:

- **Leadership and Management Style:** impacting employee happiness, morale, and cooperation by channeling how power dynamics, resource shortages, and outside political influence.
- **Communication and Information Flow:** regulating the relationship between politics and trust, stress, and so the performance by influencing how transparent decisions look.

- **Merit and Promotion System:** transforms structural politics into perceived justice or unfairness, further influencing political engagement, job happiness and career anxiety.

- **Staff Trust and Cooperation:** Trust and cooperation are influenced by communication, leadership, and politics, which further affects organizational performance and employees' willingness to participate positively.

- **Employee involvement** in organizational politics: It acts as a mediator between outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, stress, intention to quit the company and structural factors (e.g. resource shortages and outside influence).

Structural conditions leading to different outcomes when these mediating factors (especially leadership style and communication quality) vary across Univ-X, Y, and Z units

[C] Insights from the Study and Implications

As shown in Fig 2 the approach and design of the study provide a thorough grasp of academic institution organizational politics. Staff behavior has been found being significantly influenced by the interaction of institutional structures, power dynamics, and resource constraints. Leadership philosophies and cultural conventions have shaped political interactions. The results indicate that organizational politics has significantly affected institutional efficacy, morale, and work satisfaction. Political involvement frequently resulted in a climate of distrust and decreased cooperation, even while it could help some people succeed in their careers.

To bring substantial change, leaders must understand the root cause and the procedure to address it in the organizational politics fostering a merit-based, transparent culture. It facilitates mitigating negative external pressures ensuring the equitable distribution of resources. Ultimately, these efforts instigate and improve collaboration and trust, resulting in a more productive and satisfied workforce

Study on State universities in Madhya Pradesh may be used as useful data that can be applied to similar situations in other educational establishments, particularly those with limited financial capability and support. The study concludes that well-rounded strategies at every is necessary to manage political dynamics.

[D] Factors Driving Organizational Politics

Academic staff at Madhya Pradesh's state universities put a lot of effort into getting involved in politics for a certain goal to achieve, which makes organizational politics a distinctive aspect of institutional life. This setting demands a thorough apprehension and understanding of the fundamental causes of such conduct. Data analysis finds and explains, severe shortages of resource, hierarchical inequities, the lack of merit-based institutions, and the strong influence of external politics are significant motivators, and it becomes a matter of institutional survival forcing staff to use political maneuvers to achieve set goals (personal & professional). It observes organizational culture, as the bedrock for political behavior.

Park et al. (2004) insists this culture as the shared, basic assumptions that an organization develops while resolving problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Over time, this culture evolves to include formal rules and stated goals, and implicit values and deeply held beliefs (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). These implicit values and beliefs are particularly influential, as they dictate the staff's perception towards acceptable or necessary conduct within the university.

At one of the University, the invisible cultural framework has effectively normalized and validated organizational politics, converting it into an essential survival tactics. Because these behaviors align with established, institutional standards, academic staff often do not look political engagement as unethical (Ferris and Kacmar (1996)).

Consequently, staff members, in powerful positions feel pressured to exploit policy loopholes for personal gain, even at the expense of institutional integrity and results in a self-perpetuating cycle that disrupts smooth university operations. Though the present literature acknowledges the link between culture and politics, it lacks a detailed examination of this influence within academic university settings. This gap highlights a critical need for further investigation into how these cultural norms specifically dictate institutional outcomes.

Factors Driving Organizational Politics

In Madhya Pradesh state universities specific goals drive high participation in activities, and, it means high

involvement in organizational politics. Faculty put their effort into it, so understanding the root causes is the key which the data demonstrate motivators like resource shortages, hierarchy gaps, no merit systems, external politics, personal ambitions, and survival needs. These motivators push academics into politics to get things done. Organizational culture defined by Park et al. (2004) as "the shared, basic assumptions that an organization learns while coping with the environment. It helps solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration." It evolves over time, covering visible parts e.g. goals and rules, along with hidden values and beliefs (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Those invisible parts shape behavior by defining what's "normal." At one of the universities, the culture has normalized politics as a survival tool. Since this university fits the norms, staff don't take it wrong. Ferris and Kacmar (1996) demonstrated how culture drives political behaviors. This culture put pressures on powerful staff to exploit policy gaps for their personal gain, often demeaning institutional integrity and fueling a vicious cycle which disrupts operations. Though literature links culture to politics, it doesn't measure the impact deeply and calls for more research.

[E] **Behavioral and Structural issues in Universities:**

State universities in Madhya Pradesh wrestle with structural and behavioral issues deep rooted in their organizational politics culture. Staff follow their personal agendas over collective organizational or departmental goals, driven by a survival mindset. This ignites policy exploitation for self-gain, damages teamwork, and breeds distrust. Normalized political games erode ethics, corner the merit, and let alliances and favoritism dominate. Those left out of the loops end up demoralized, more frustrated, and exit or get finished off, grated institutional unity even more. External political pressures boost the chaos, fuels conflicts and pulling focus away from real academic and organizational priorities.

The university's rigid hierarchy, flawed policy execution, and gloomy resource distribution foster political behavior within its institutional setting. Leadership and management often fail to tackle this flawed execution due to negligence or complicity, perpetuating a noxious organizational culture. These inefficiencies, deteriorated by weak accountability and clash on personal-institutional goals, undermine growth and performance. Structural reforms and cultural shifts are essential to restore integrity and excellence. Mismanagement exhibit reputational damage, erodes stakeholder trust, and there by lessening academic standards. People get political to grab scarce resources, as Buchanan (2008) and Badham (1999) note- but plenty of resources cuts the conflict and scheming.

A continuous shortage of resource at Madhya Pradesh state universities renders organizational politics nearly inevitable. Even with ongoing constraints, the study emphasizes that better resource management could abatement of these political behaviors, fostering greater collaboration and equity. Hierarchical disparities, meanwhile, profoundly influence university politics. Hierarchical differences shape the organizational politics at universities.

The political involvement of faculty members is strongly correlated with their standing in the academic hierarchy. Senior academics, including Associate Professors and higher, participate in university-wide (macro-level) politics, whilst those in lesser positions, such as those below Associate Professor, are more interested in departmental (micro-level) politics. According to the study, politics at the macro level have a bigger influence on how university resources are allocated and controlled, which is consistent with Pettigrew's (1973) theory of resource reliance. Cultural differences can nevertheless influence political conduct, despite claims that flatter organizational structures lessen politics. This is because employees may have a desire to rise in the hierarchy.

Political participation at the university is made worse by the absence of a merit-based system. Manipulation and conflict are made possible by opaque and inconsistent enforcement of formal policies. Ferris and Kackmar (1996) point out that when policies are not properly enforced, organizational politics flourish. Violation and overlooking one of the state university merit systems in Bhopal, which attract immediate attention of the media, harm the institutions standing and draw attention to pervasive misconduct. Lack of a strong meritocracy leads to employee discontent and motivates them to behave politically in order to get advantages in resource access and career advancement.

The organizational politics of the institution are further complicated by the meddling of national political parties. Due to the institution's historical and social relevance, strong relationships with political bodies have resulted in external influence over student admissions and faculty hiring. Because State Universities in Madhya Pradesh are

government-funded public institution, its reliance on political parties for funding exacerbates this dynamic. When political parties use their control over money to exercise control over university operations, the combination of limited resources and outside influence strengthens the pervasiveness of political conduct and fosters an atmosphere that is firmly rooted in organizational politics.

[F] Conclusion

The existence of a widespread organizational political culture that operates across hierarchical levels and functional domains is confirmed by AI-augmented qualitative analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with academic personnel in State Universities of Madhya Pradesh. AI-assisted coding and pattern recognition demonstrated how many important choices are influenced by alliances, outside interference, and informal influence rather than by organizational goals or obvious merit, and how employees react by actively participating in political behavior as a perceived survival tactic. The analysis reveals that the belief that political participation is the only practical way to achieve personal and professional goals is reinforced by opaque and inconsistently implemented merit and promotion systems, entrenched power dynamics, and resource scarcity. This normalizes politics in day-to-day academic life.

High levels of organizational politics are linked to lower job satisfaction, weakened well-being, diminished trust and cooperation, and impaired organizational performance, especially in units with authoritarian leadership, poor communication, and strong external political influence, according to AI-assisted pattern matching that synthesizes cross-case patterns. Strong internal and external stakeholders who stand to gain from upholding politicized practices increase structural rigidity, making change more challenging and strengthening the connection between organizational circumstances (absence of merit systems, rigid hierarchies, resource scarcity) and personal motivations (ambition, insecurity, power-seeking). Simultaneously, AI-supported cross-case comparison finds a few units where better staff outcomes and less obvious politics are correlated with more participative leadership, clearer communication, and comparatively stronger merit procedures. This suggests that these elements can partially mitigate the negative effects of a politicized workplace.

According to these results, the study emphasizes the necessity of early and proactive measures to deal with organizational politics before its detrimental effects on academic functioning solidify. Instead of depending only on unofficial containment by individuals, interview data, supported by AI-assisted thematic synthesis, emphasize that "nipping the evil in the bud" necessitates prompt action to improve communication, increase transparency in merit and promotion, and limit undue stakeholder interference. From a governance standpoint, the findings suggest that incorporating responsible AI-based monitoring and diagnostic tools into university administration—while preventing new types of algorithmic bias—could facilitate more evidence-based identification of politicized practices, allow for focused reforms, and assist in realigning decision-making with academic missions and public accountability.

In the end, fulfilling institutional goals and promoting more fruitful and reliable academic work seem to depend on lowering the structural incentives for political behavior and bolstering just, transparent, and participatory processes that are assisted but not controlled by AI systems.

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Disclosure on use of Generative AI

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the authors only. Interaction with the designated staff in the respective universities have been informal. Three University names have been symbolized fully protects its identity, as required by interacting participants' confidentiality.