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**When Caregivers Feel Dehumanized: Exploring Political Behavior through
Perceived Injustice in Pakistani Healthcare Settings**



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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's healthcare sector operates under persistent structural and managerial pressures, including resource scarcity, workload intensity, professional hierarchy, limited employee voice, and unequal decision-making power. In such conditions, perceived injustice becomes more than a routine workplace concern; it can trigger political and deviant employee responses that weaken teamwork, service quality, employee dignity, and organizational trust. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, this study examined whether perceived injustice leads to deviant workplace behavior through political behavior and whether Machiavellianism strengthens this relationship in Pakistan's healthcare sector. The study also connects this issue with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, because fair and accountable healthcare workplaces are essential for employee well-being, ethical service delivery, and institutional trust. The study adopted a positivist, deductive, quantitative, and cross-sectional research design. Data were collected through personally administered questionnaires from doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, technicians, and administrative employees working in Pakistan's healthcare sector. Out of 384 distributed questionnaires, 202 valid responses were retained after removing incomplete, missing, and biased responses. Established scales were used to measure perceived injustice, political behavior, deviant workplace behavior, and Machiavellianism. The findings supported the proposed moderated-mediation model. Perceived injustice significantly predicted political behavior ($\beta = 0.43, p < .001$), indicating that unfair treatment encouraged employees to engage in informal and self-protective workplace politics. Political behavior significantly predicted deviant workplace behavior ($\beta = 0.51, p < .001$), confirming that workplace politics can become a pathway toward harmful conduct. The indirect effect of perceived injustice on deviant workplace behavior through political behavior was significant (effect = 0.22, Boot SE = 0.05, LLCI = 0.13, ULCI = 0.33). Machiavellianism also significantly moderated the relationship between perceived injustice and political behavior ($\beta = 0.19, p < .001$). The conditional indirect effect increased from 0.11 at low Machiavellianism to 0.36 at high Machiavellianism, and the index of moderated mediation was significant.

Keywords: *Perceived Injustice; Political Behavior; Deviant Workplace Behavior; Machiavellianism; Social Exchange Theory; Healthcare Workers.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	3
Abstract	4
Chapter 1	11
Introduction	11
1.1 Background of the study	11
1.2 Contextual Analysis	14
1.3 Research Gap.....	15
1.4 Problem statement.....	16
1.5 Research Objectives.....	17
1.6 Research Questions	18
1.7 Significance of the Study.....	18
1.8 Structure of the Thesis	19
Chapter 2	21
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	21
2.1 Overview of the Study Variables.....	21
2.1.1 Perceived Injustice.....	21
2.1.2 Deviant Workplace Behavior	22
2.1.3 Political Behavior	22
2.1.4 Machiavellianism.....	23
2.2 Social Exchange Theory	24
2.3 Hypotheses Development	26
2.3.1 Relationship between Perceived Injustice and Political Behavior	26
2.3.2 Relationship between Political Behavior and Deviant Workplace Behavior ...	27
2.3.3 Mediating role of Political Behavior	28
2.3.4 Moderating role of Machiavellianism	29
2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study	30

CHAPTER 3	32
METHODOLOGY	32
3.1 Research Philosophy	32
3.2 Research Purpose	33
3.3 Research Approach	33
3.4 Research Strategy.....	34
3.5 Time Horizon.....	35
3.6 Data Collection Method.....	35
3.7 Questionnaire Development	36
3.8 Measures	37
3.9 Unit of Analysis.....	38
3.10 Population.....	39
3.11 Sampling Technique.....	39
3.12 Sample Size	40
3.13 Data Collection Procedure.....	41
3.14 Ethical Considerations	42
Chapter 4	43
Results	43
4.1 Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate.....	43
4.2 Demographic Analysis.....	44
4.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis.....	45
4.4 Correlation Analysis.....	47
4.5 Regression and PROCESS Macro (Model 7) Analysis	48
4.6 Summary of Hypotheses Testing.....	50
Chapter 5	52
Discussion And Conclusion	52
5.1 Theoretical Implications	52

5.2	Practical Implications	53
5.3	Limitations and Future Research Implications.....	55
5.4	Conclusion.....	55
5.5	Reflection.....	56
	References	58
	Appendices.....	64
	Workplace Experiences Survey	64

List of Abbreviation

SET	Social Exchange Theory
PI	Perceived Injustice
PB	Political Behavior
DWB	Deviant Workplace Behavior
MACH	Machiavellianism
HRM	Human Resource Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
CR	Composite Reliability
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
LLCI	Lower Limit Confidence Interval
ULCI	Upper Limit Confidence Interval

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study.....	31
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List of Tables

Table 3.1: Measurement Scales and Instrumentation of Study Variables	37
Table 4.1: Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate.....	43
Table 4.2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 202).....	44
Table 4.3: Measurement Model Fit Indices.....	45
Table 4.4: Reliability and Convergent Validity Statistics.....	46
Table 4.5: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix	47
Table 4.6: Regression Analysis for Political Behavior	48
Table 4.7: Regression Analysis for Deviant Workplace Behavior	49
Table 4.8: Indirect Effect of Perceived Injustice on Deviant Workplace Behavior through Political Behavior	49
Table 4.9: Conditional Indirect Effects at Different Levels of Machiavellianism.....	50
Table 4.10: Index of Moderated Mediation.....	50
Table 4.11: Summary of Hypotheses Testing.....	50