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Perceptions of Organisational Politics, Ethnicity & Career Satisfaction

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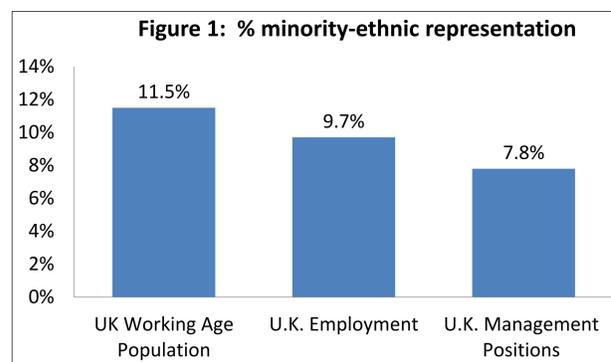
Background

Ethnicity and Career Success

- Figure 1 shows that minority-ethnic individuals comprise approximately 11.5% of the U.K. working age population (ONS, 2010)
- There is a discrepancy between the percentage of minority-ethnic individuals of working age and those in employment
- This discrepancy is even more apparent for those who reach management positions.
- It is therefore important to understand the factors that may influence differential career success for minority-ethnic groups.

Career Satisfaction

- Subjective evaluations have become an increasingly important aspect in many contemporary career paths (Hall, 2004).
- Recent research has identified that career satisfaction can predict long term salary and promotions (Abele & Spurk, 2009)
- Career satisfaction is therefore important for understanding the differential career success of minority-ethnic groups



Perceptions of Organisational Politics (POPs)

- POPs is a “*subjective evaluation about the extent to which the work environment is characterised by co-workers and supervisors who demonstrate self-serving behaviour*” (Ferris et al 2000, p. 90)
- POPs is a workplace stressor, associated with anxiety, burnout, morale, increased intentions to leave, fatigue, depression, justice perceptions and job satisfaction, but thus far has not been associated with career satisfaction
- Minority-ethnic groups have higher POPs, related to a lack of control and uncertainty about how to interpret situations and others’ behaviour in political organisations.
- Therefore, it is hypothesised that minority-ethnic employees will report lower career satisfaction, due to increased POPs

Method

Sample and Procedure

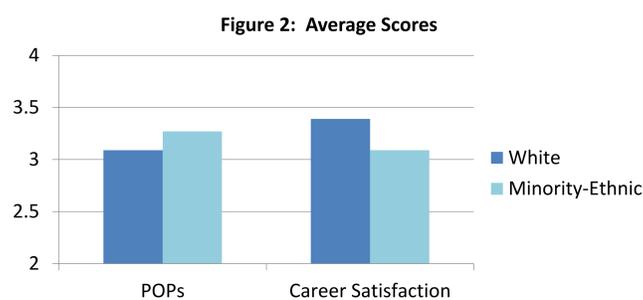
- Participants were recruited from a single large U.K. public sector organisation
- Participants completed a questionnaire
- 311 questionnaire responses were received
- Minority-ethnic sample N = 114, White sample N = 197

Measures

- **Ethnicity:** was coded minority-ethnic= 1, White = 0
- **Perceived Organisational Politics:** Measured using a subscale of Kacmar and Ferris’ (1991) Perceived Organisational Politics scale, measuring ‘general political behaviour’. Responses on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) likert scale ($\alpha=.74$)
- **Career Satisfaction:** Measured using Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley’s (1990) five item career satisfaction scale. E.g. “*I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals*”. Responses on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) likert scale ($\alpha=.88$)
- **Control Variables:** Age, Gender, Organisational Tenure and Grade were controlled for in the analysis

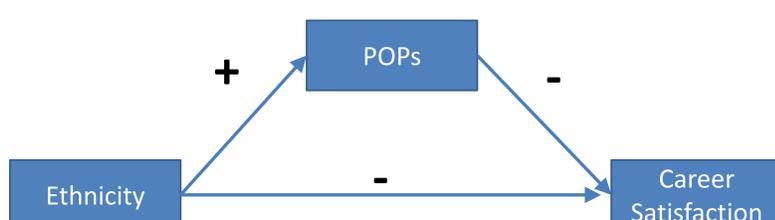
Results

- Figure 2 shows that:
 - Minority-ethnic employees perceived greater levels of POPs than White employees
 - Minority-ethnic employees reported lower levels of career satisfaction than White employees
- Correlations also demonstrate that perceiving politics was associated with lower career satisfaction ($r = -.35, p < .01$)



- Mediation analysis is shown in Figure 3.
- When controlling for age, gender, grade and tenure, minority-ethnic employees perceived significantly higher levels of organisational politics ($B = .22, SE = .11, t(310) = 2.05, p = .04$)
- Higher levels of perceived organisational politics was associated with significantly lower levels of career satisfaction ($B = -.25, SE = .05, t(310) = -5.20, p < .001$).
- In support of the hypothesis, there was a significant indirect effect between ethnicity and career satisfaction via perceived organisational politics (point estimate = $-.06, SE = .03, BCa 95\% CI$ of $-.13$ to $-.003$)
- This suggests that minority-ethnic employees report lower career satisfaction due to perceiving higher levels of organisational politics

Figure 3 Mediation Analysis



Discussion

- Findings indicate that minority-ethnic employees perceive greater levels of politics and this negatively influences their career satisfaction
- In this study perceptions of politics related to illegitimate, self-serving and divisive aspects of organisational behaviour
- There are four possible explanations for why minority-ethnic employees may perceive greater levels of politics
 - 1) Minority groups may simply experience more negative workplace experiences that can be attributed to political behaviour.
 - 2) Minority groups may expect to experience negative political behaviour due to past experiences. They may then look for information in the environment that confirms these suspicions.
 - 3) Minority-ethnic employees may also be more sensitive to political environments because they may depend more on formal mechanisms to progress in their career. Therefore any potential indication that organisational decisions and processes may be political is likely to be perceived as threatening
 - 3) Minority-ethnic employees may simply prefer not to engage in political behaviour or situations.

Practical Implications

- Organisations should look to making potentially political situations, such as informal promotion, performance appraisal, and the allocation of training and development more transparent
- Enhancing ‘**political skill**’ may help individuals navigate political environments and minimise the impact of negative stressors such as POPs
 - Political skill is an interpersonal style related to the ability to build networks, influence others, understand social situations and convey sincerity to others.
 - Political skill has been found to be beneficial for career success, including career satisfaction, salary and promotion (Todd et al, 2009).
 - Research suggests that political skill can be developed through mentoring, drama based training, coaching and leader-member exchange relationships (e.g. Ferris, Davidson, et al., 2005)