Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review
www.plhr.org.pk

Impact of Attitudinal Homophily on Organizational Cynicism and Employee Loyalty through the Mediating Role of Organizational Politics

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ABSTRACT

The mediating role of perceived organizational politics has been examined in this research to determine how homophily affects organizational cynicism and employee loyalty. This research is based on the idea that people feel more comfortable around similar people. Similarities foster a feeling of affinity, leading to the formation of a relationship known as homophily. This principle asserts that individuals who interact tend to share similar attitudes, perspectives, educational backgrounds, and social standings. A quantitative methodology was employed in the current study. The model was verified by analyzing data from 300 respondents using SEM, following the two-step approach proposed by Andersen and Garbing (1988). The findings derived from the administration of survey questionnaires indicate that attitudinal homophily has an indirect adverse influence on organizational cynicism, while simultaneously having a favorable influence on employee loyalty. These effects are mediated by the perceived presence of organizational politics.

| **KEYWORDS** | Employee Loyalty, Homophily, Organizational Cynicism, Perceived Organizational Politics |

Introduction

Individuals with varying traits, such as age, gender, ethnicity race, social background, and academic attainment, appear to possess distinct features. Certain key elements of group membership are commonly attributed to these qualities (McPherson et al., 2001). As an illustration, it is commonly believed that women tend to exhibit heightened emotional responses, individuals having greater levels of education do have greater levels of tolerance, and members of gangs are often associated with higher propensities for violence. The essentialist attributions fail to acknowledge the significant variations in the social environments in which these individuals participate. The tendency for individuals to form meaningful connections primarily with those who have similar characteristics results in the clustering of certain qualities within specific socio-demographic contexts. The reinforcement of our emotions and perspectives occurs when we exclusively engage with people having similar characteristics and backgrounds. This statement aligns with the concept of homophily. According to (McPherson et al., 2001), In various economic, political, and social contexts, individuals sharing comparable backgrounds or interests tend to exhibit a tendency to gravitate towards one another. Likewise, within professional settings, it is shown that managers exhibit a tendency to recruit individuals who are graduates of the same university(Egorov et al., 2010). Hence, the inclination of individuals to develop relations with others sharing similar characteristics has been extensively studied and recorded within the field of social sciences. The adage "birds of a feather flock

together" encapsulates the concept of homophily as identified by Lazarsfeld and Merton in their seminal work in 1954. Thus, Homophily refers to the inclination to engage with others who possess like attributes, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, among others (McPherson et al., 2001;Rogers & Kincaid, 1981).

The concept of similarity can be understood as the presence of shared interests and worldviews, which in turn promotes effective communication and nurtures trust and friendship among persons. According to (McPherson et al., 2001), homophily plays a significant role in shaping the many social systems that individuals are part of. The formation and restructuring of communities, distribution of status, and development of subgroups within professions and organizations are influenced by various factors. Individuals tend to form friendships and seek advice from others who share similar characteristics such as gender, age, race, attitudes, beliefs, and faith more often than would be anticipated through random chance (McPherson et al., 2001). In the context of an organizational environment, the concept of homophily pertains to the level of likeness observed amongst individuals in terms of their identities and affiliations with various organizational groupings (Ibarra, 1993).For instance, the study conducted by (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954) revealed that individuals who possess comparable attributes exhibit a higher propensity to form friendships. This phenomenon enhances the quality of communication, fosters an atmosphere of trust, and cultivates more robust interpersonal connections. According to Prisbell & Andersen, (1980)individuals who perceive homophily in their interactions tend to experience good emotions due to the unambiguous confirmation of their views, attitudes, values, or interests. The authors also noted that this concept is closely associated with the notion of identification. As a result, recent research has substantiated that individuals inside work organizations derive satisfaction from engaging with individuals who have similar beliefs and preferences, and tend to adopt their attitudes and actions through imitation (Block & Grund, 2014) Hence, the present study posits a hypothesis that suggests a correlation between the perception of homogeneity among individuals and the emergence of good emotions. Furthermore, it is proposed that these positive interactions serve to mitigate unfavorable perceptions of the organization and its employees. When such circumstances arise, individuals often exhibit heightened dedication towards their work and the organizational structure.

The concept of organizational cynicism has been observed for a significant period of time, despite the contemporary attention it receives from scholars and practitioners. Cynicism refers to the sentiment of discontentment within an institute, when employees perceive a deficiency in integrity, justice, and transparency among the organization's leadership (Özler & Atalay, 2011). Dean et al., (1998)provided a description of organizational cynicism as a detrimental attitude or cognitive disposition directed towards the organization. Hence, it signifies a manifestation of adverse sentiments directed towards the regulations, protocols, guidelines, and operational methods of this institution.

Dean et al., (1998), underscored the significance of the emotional aspect in organizational cynicism. The concept of cynicism was elucidated as an attitude encompassing an emotional component. The concept under consideration encompasses both an emotional experience and a cognitive process. According to T. Miller, (2018) cynics often encountered a range of adverse affective states, including but not limited to despair, rage, disdain, and humiliation, when contemplating their affiliations with organizations. These negative attitudes and thoughts will only be weakened if employees develop positive emotions and try to communicate effectively on the sender and receiver (homophily). Individuals then embody others who appear to be similar in thought and attitude, and share their ideas, values, and morals, and this leads to increased recognition among members of homophilic clusters or groups. It allows for a smooth flow of

knowledge(Sidiropoulou, 2009). In this way, they enjoy harmony and prosperity and build interpersonal trust by imitating like-minded people. Homophily harmonizes the employer-employee relationship and builds trust (Jackson et al., 2017).Negative opinions among employees and their ideas about the organization will be fair and cooperative, and this will only be possible because of homophilic attitudes.

Employee loyalty is primarily concerned with the employee's sense of attachment to the organization and the concept of employee behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This commitment later became associated with more specific behaviors, such as supporting the organization and the people within it (Butler & Cantrell, 1984). It is about being loyal towards a thing (Rosanas, 2003; Arvidson & Axelsson, 2014), being dedicated to someone or something (Arvidson & Axelsson, 2014), or devoting oneself to something else. (Hajdin, 2005; Elegido, 2013), or it can also mean identifying with a particular group within society or an organization, as loyalty is a type of faithfulness and honesty (Rosanas, 2003). Therefore, when employees share their values, beliefs, attitudes and ideas with others, trust and positive attitudes are created. When employees feel that positive interactions are occurring between the organization and the individual by imitating their attitudes and behaviors with similar people, that similarity makes employees more loyal to the organization. This positive interaction between organizational leaders and employees strengthens trust, commitment, and loyalty (Tyler & Blader, 2001). Current research therefore argues that loyalty prevails when there are similarities in individuals' attitudes and identification with others, as homophily is a phenomenon that constitutes the "like attracts" rule. For example, smokers are best friends with, and build relationships with, smokers. Previous work by (Wiklund & Jansson, 2019) explained that people identify with other people they work with. It can be beneficial to allow groups to stay united and strong. Therefore, similarity is amongst the positive elements that influence interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1961). The emergence or prevalence of interpersonal communication and attraction within organizations suggests that individuals form bonds with others because they believe these partners can be trustworthy (Jackson et al., 2017)and ultimately enhance social bonds and create empathic understanding between communicating individuals (Mavondo & Rodrigo, 2001). Therefore, individuals tend to share their ocean of ideas and thoughts and spread optimism. This ultimately leads that the positive attitudes of managers and their employees lead to employee loyalty, which ultimately leads to individuals being loyal to their jobs and environments (Locke, 1976)

Organizational politics refers to the informal strategies employed to acquire power within an organization, which are distinct from chance or merit-based mechanisms (DuBrin, 1978). According to Ferris et al.,(1989)the concept of organizational politics is characterized by being a subjective view rather than a genuine reality. Ferris et al., (1989)introduced a hypothetical framework wherein they posited a deleterious association between individuals' perceptions of organizational politics and their behavioral and attitudinal results. According to Kacmar & Ferris, (1991)the concept of perceived organizational politics (POP) refers to the perception individuals hold about their work environment as being political in nature, where the promotion of self-interests of others is prioritized, resulting in a perception of unfairness and injustice from an individual standpoint. The perceptions of politics have a significant influence on employees' attitudes towards their organization, colleagues, and leaders. These perceptions have a direct impact on their job performance(Nazir et al., 2023). Consequently, this phenomenon leads to various negative outcomes in terms of attitudes and behaviors, such as reduced organizational commitment (Vigoda, 2000; Wilson, 1995; Miller, 2018)and diminished satisfaction and loyalty with the job (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007; Buenger et al., 2007; Bodla & Danish, 2009). Employees inside an organization may experience dissatisfaction if they believe the decision-making processes pertaining to awards and

promotions to be unjust. The absence of justice within an organization may serve as a catalyst for the emergence of organizational politics, subsequently impacting the job performance and behaviors of individuals (Rizvi, 2017). However, contemporary research indicates that individuals within companies have a tendency to seek positive influence and trust, as well as share similar values, viewpoints, and ideas. As a result, they are more inclined to exhibit homophily in their attitudes and behaviors. According to Byrne, (1961) it is postulated that this phenomenon diminishes negative cognitions and ambivalence by virtue of acknowledging commonalities, as it is frequently posited that shared characteristics foster interpersonal bonds. Additionally, persons create a cohesive network consisting of like-minded persons who share similar ethical values and viewpoints. They seek and receive support and suggestions from this network (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Gilly et al., 1998; Wang et al., 2008; Wright, 2000). Hence, the undermining of political conceptions occurs exclusively when individuals inside an organization engage in regular interactions and exhibit a tendency to communicate congruent thoughts. This phenomenon can be attributed to the tendency of individuals to primarily interact with others who share similar beliefs and perspectives.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Homophily to the organizational cynicism

The concept of organizational cynicism has been observed throughout history, irrespective of the contemporary perspectives and approaches adopted by researchers and practitioners. Organizational cynicism refers to the sentiment of discontentment experienced by employees towards their organization, accompanied by a perception that the management of the organization lacks integrity, equity, and transparency (Özler & Atalay, 2011) According to Dean et al., (1998), organizational cynicism refers to a detrimental attitude characterized by a heightened negativity towards the organization. Other scholarly investigations have examined many dimensions of organizational cynicism, including animosity, organizational dishonesty, disruption, dissatisfaction, and despair towards the organization (Nair & Kamalanabhan, 2010)But on the other hand, when individuals interact with others whom they perceive similar in thoughts and insights, they tend to defend their thoughts and creates buoyancy and beliefs which further leads to positive outcomes (Byrne, 1961)such as similarity of ideas and attitude will vanish negativity and create friendliness and honesty.

Thus, organizational cynicism is widespread in organizations around the world; studies have been conducted in the United States, Europe, and Asia (Dean et al., 1998; Reichers et al., 1997; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). Through previous studies, the current study highlights that similar characteristics in terms of age, gender, race and ethnicity, attitudes, and values will lead to reduced cynicism because individuals share ideas and thoughts are similar, so believed that if someone experiences like-mindedness, encouragement and credence in others, then other will find out to be gratified, contented, and virtuous personal relationship (Byrne, 1961). Therefore, we conclude that the relationship between homophily and cynicism is significant, because an increase in similarity will create connections, and this regeneration will eventually reduce cynicism. Thus we hypothesized:

H1 (a) Homophily is negatively associated with organizational cynicism.

Homophily to Employee loyalty

The concept of loyalty is commonly understood as an individual's strong sense of dedication or emotional connection to a certain entity, such as another individual or group,

a set of principles, a duty, or a goal (Hart & Thompson, 2007). According to (Safra, 2007), this phenomenon is evident in both cognitive processes and behavioral patterns, as it endeavors to align the loyalist's interests with those of the target entity. Employee loyalty is a term used to describe the emotional connection that employee feels towards their organization, as well as the corresponding behaviors exhibited by the worker towards the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Individuals follow the ambitions and thoughts of a similar person and shape themselves to resemble that in their behavior, actions, and style (Ahlf et al., 2019) This overlap in behavior and approach makes employees become loyal by sharing ideas and behaviors between individuals that they consider similar because if two people are from the same village, have the same ideology, they ultimately want to be engage in same work. Creating these commonalities will make employees work harder and therefore more attached to the workplace because the longer the tenure of the worker, the more loyal and treasured they become (Rajput et al., 2016). Therefore, employee longevity and loyalty to work are possible due to homophily.

The social exchange theory is commonly recognized as a highly significant theoretical framework within the field of organizational behavior. Blau, (1964) underscored the significance of social exchange among persons that extends beyond just economic advantages. This theoretical framework posits that the majority of interpersonal interactions and subsequent relationship formations are contingent upon social exchange. Based on the principles of social exchange theory, it may be posited that when an individual perceives a favorable exchange between themselves and the organization, there is a greater likelihood of fostering employee loyalty towards the business. The act of engaging in positive interactions can result in tangible advantages, such as increased compensation, opportunities for career advancement, and additional financial incentives. Additionally, it can foster interpersonal exchanges among employees, including the development of trust, loyalty, and commitment (Tyler & Blader, 2001).Consequently, this positive exchange creates trust and satisfaction and can stimulate interpersonal cooperation among employees (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Following this line of research, the study concludes that homophily affects employee loyalty in terms of mutual trust, emotional investment, sacrifice, and commitment to the organization, in which individuals have similar characteristics, imitating each other in this respect. Therefore, if people have similar approaches, ideologies, and interests, they will eventually feel that there will be a positive exchange of thoughts, communication, and values between employees and the organization. Therefore, people tend to be committed and loyal to the organization. Thus, the study hypothesizes that:

H2 (b): Homophily significantly and positively affects employee loyalty.

Attitude Homophily to Organizational Politics

Attitudinal homophily denotes to the level of similarity observed among persons in terms of their experiences related to values, employment, and social standing (Prisbell & Andersen, 1980). Consequently, it can be observed that persons who possess comparable attributes, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, class background, educational background, culture, and language, tend to exhibit similar sets of values (McPherson et al., 2001). The presence of shared values within an organization might contribute to a reduced perception of organizational politics, as it fosters a collective comprehension and alignment among individuals. When individuals possess congruent values, they tend to exhibit a collective belief system and a shared organizational vision. The establishment of a common objective fosters an atmosphere of confidence and collaboration among personnel, hence diminishing the necessity for political conduct. Moreover, in instances where individuals possess comparable values, there is an increased propensity for the development of

camaraderie and the provision of mutual assistance. This phenomenon has the potential to foster more robust interpersonal connections and cultivate a heightened propensity for collaborative efforts directed towards shared objectives.

Within such a context, it is seen that individuals exhibit a decreased propensity to partake in power dynamics or employ deceptive strategies with the intention of securing personal benefits. Instead, they emphasize the overall prosperity of the collective over individual profits.

Numerous researches have demonstrated that homophonous interactions play a crucial role in providing social support to minority individuals within organizational contexts. These studies consistently indicate that the presence of resemblance between individuals fosters a strong link, which in turn mitigates the negative perceptions held by individuals (Cox, 1994; Ibarra, 1993; James, 2000). The provision of social support fosters a heightened sense of comfort among individuals, hence facilitating their engagement in interactions with those who have similar characteristics or experiences. According to Ibarra, (1993) interpersonal similarity plays a crucial role in enhancing communication, promoting behavioral predictability, and cultivating trust and reciprocity. The presence of interpersonal resemblance fosters a tendency among individuals to eschew feelings of uneasiness and perceptions of uneven justice, hence leading to the exclusion of political players. Individuals tend to eliminate bias and discrimination from their attitudes and perceptions, resulting in a perception of increased trustworthiness, agreeableness, and predictability towards those who share similarities with them. This observation is supported by several studies conducted by (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; McPherson et al. 2001;Piekkari et al., 2005; Makela et al. 2007; Kossinets & Watts, 2009 and Rivera et al., 2010). Hence, the present study posits that the presence of homophilous attitudes may hinder the influence of political issues within the workplace.

Based on Turner et al., (1987)self-categorization theory, individuals have a tendency to categorize themselves and others based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, and education level. These categories are then utilized to distinguish between individuals who are perceived as similar or distinct (Turner et al., 1987). According to Monge & Contractor, (2003)individuals tend to regard others as more similar to themselves when those individuals belong to the same social group, as opposed to when they belong to a different social category. Additionally, due to homogeneity in attitudes, beliefs, and values, people tend to see themselves as similar to others even though they belong to a different social status. They behave similarly because they share common things and ideas, because similarity between individuals increases behavioral predictability and reduces communication apprehension (Ibarra, 1993)communications among similar others are more likely to occur. Therefore, homophily factors influence interpersonal communication with similar others (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1969) and perceptions of unfairness. People who share similar characteristics, qualities and many ideas based on attitudes and beliefs tend to protect themselves from negativity. People with congruent attitudes and thoughts will interact with each other and this interaction will bring about positive results (Byrne, 1961)which will eventually weaken negative thoughts or perceptions about politics related to the organization. They will promote the common good and fairness in their relationships with others. Thus, it is concluded that homophily reduces glumness by weakening perceptions of unfairness and injustice. Additionally, the social learning theory, as postulated by Albert Bandura in 1969, places significant emphasis on the role of observation, modeling, and imitation in shaping individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses. The idea of social learning investigates the dynamic interplay between environmental and cognitive elements in shaping human learning and behavior. Learning theory holds that positive thinking can be learned. An athlete trains external

behavior over several weeks or months. He has a certain behavior and after a while he will master it. Thinking can be understood as a person's internal behavior. It focuses on positive qualities such as inner peace, strength and happiness. This is how the theory speaks to this study because homophily/similarity creates positivity among employees through trust, satisfaction, fairness and justice, people will tend to emulate positive things in others because similarities in behavior are attributable and people tend to imitate them by source of identification (Bandura, 1969)Thus, people who perceive themselves as similar to others have learned to take a constructive approach and put a positive spin on other thoughts and beliefs. Thus, we postulate:

H2: Homophily positively relates with perception of organizational politics.

Perception of organizational politics to organizational cynicism

According to Kacmar & Ferris, (1991), the construct of perceived organizational politics (POP) refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their work environment as being characterized by political dynamics, favoring the personal interests of others, and consequently being perceived as unfair from an individual standpoint. Hence, the manner in which individuals see politics has a significant influence on their perceptions of their organization, colleagues, and leaders, ultimately affecting their job outcomes (Nazir et al., 2023). According to Ferris et al., (1989)organizational political cognition is a process wherein individuals and organizations actively pursue their own interests. The political consciousness of organizational members inside an organization is influenced by the subjective perceptions and experiences of these members about organizational activity. According to the works Ferris et al., (1989)it can be observed that the presence of perceptions of unfairness has a detrimental impact on employee attitudes and behavior. According to Baron and Richardson, (1994), individuals experience an escalation in their level of hostility. Additionally, Vardi and Wiener, (1996)found that these individuals tend to display inadequate organizational conduct. Furthermore, Miller (2018) observed that such individuals often experience feelings of anger and disdain. Additionally, Spector & Fox, (2002) noted that these individuals tend to demonstrate counterproductive work behavior. This aggression and perception of injustice creates negative thoughts in employees (Davis & Gardner, 2004). When politics arise in the organization, it creates tension, dissatisfaction, apathy, and lack of trust in others (Poon, 2003; B. K. Miller et al., 2008)The presence of tension, dissatisfaction, and lack of trust within an organization can result in a dearth of commitment, a perception of impotence, and a diminished perception of the organization's value for investment. This phenomenon can lead to the cultivation of a cynical disposition among employees towards their work and the organization they are employed for. Thus, the study hypothesizes that:

H3 (a): perception of organizational politics positively affects organizational cynicism.

Perceptions of organizational politics to the employee loyalty

Research shows that political awareness is strongly associated with increased job stress (B. K. Miller et al., 2008) as well as decreased engagement and satisfaction, and decreased job performance. In a recent literature study conducted by (Willem & Scarbrough, 2006) the concept of organizational politics is examined as a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon that encompasses the power relations existing among individuals and groups inside an organizational setting. The authors assert that comprehending organizational politics is crucial for cultivating a conducive work atmosphere and facilitating favorable outcomes for all parties involved. Furthermore, according to Edmondson et al., (2004)lower levels of organizational politics can offer valuable

perspectives on the effective management of power dynamics and the cultivation of an atmosphere characterized by trust and collaboration within organizations. Trust is a fundamental element of employee loyalty, as indicated by the findings of a study done by (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The authors elucidate that the presence of trust within the relationship between employees and their respective firms is correlated with favorable consequences, including heightened levels of job satisfaction, dedication, and a propensity to exceed the expected level of performance. Moreover, a study conducted by (Den Hartog et al., 1999) indicates that trust plays a fundamental role in fostering loyalty. Specifically, the research findings reveal that employees who possess trust in their firm are more inclined to exhibit loyalty towards said organization. Thus, the study postulates that:

H3(b): Organizational politics has a negative relationship with employee loyalty.

Organizational Politics as Mediator between Attitudinal homophily and organizational cynicism and Employee Loyalty

Homophily refers to individuals' inclination to engage in social interactions with those who possess comparable characteristics or traits (Egorov et al., 2010). According to this notion, individuals are more inclined to engage in interactions with those who possess comparable qualities and characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001;Monge & Contractor, 2003). According to Rogers & Kincaid, (1981)interpersonal communication is likely to be more effective when the individuals involved share comparable features or behaviors. This homophily between the source and receiver enhances the communication process. The observed phenomenon can be attributed to the likelihood of these persons possessing shared meanings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and a mutual understanding.

Therefore, people are comforted when interacting with similar people (Sidiropoulou, 2009). Then, individuals increase their level of interaction with others by behaving similarly to themselves by changing their behavior to become similar to their associates. However, this increase in behaving similarly will encourage positive ideas (Byrne, 1961)and discourage injustice. This similarity facilitates effective thought sharing (Sidiropoulou, 2009)Employees then believe that the organizational environment is free of unfairness and injustice, which will ultimately weaken negative thoughts toward the organization, because justice reflects the degree to which individuals believe that they have been treated with dignity, courtesy, and respect (Colquitt, 2001)Thus, individuals will quickly escape from the harmful effects of cynicism.

On the other hand, if people in organization change their behavior to become more similar to their associates, they will share their interests and ideologies. So, it will make them positive about the work environment and keep them positive and satisfied. They perceive justice and the mutual interest because perceptions of justice and fairness have a positive influence on attitudes and behavior. Thus, employees demonstrate productive work behavior which ultimately leads to longevity. They fix their desires over the years as they become loyal to the organization.

In general identification with others will cause employees to have a feeling of belonging to a particular group or organization which establishes a strong emotional connection with the organization. These emotional connections and positive attitudes possess the tendencies to remove the political element from the human psyche. When they perceive that there is no injustice or self-interest, people who classify themselves according to perceptions of shared characteristics with other members will identify with the organization, which affects employee satisfaction as well as behavior and performance in organization. When employees are satisfied and their behavior is positive, the level of

cynicism will decrease and employees will become loyal to the organization. Therefore, this study asserts through the support of social identity theory that homophily in perception and thought creates identification and thus abolishes the status of politics. Therefore, a fair and healthy atmosphere meets the employees' expectations of the organization and they will benefit from positive working conditions. Ultimately, this causes individuals to commit to their work, become loyal, and avoid cynicism. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H4 (a): Homophily negatively affect organizational cynicism through the mediating role or organizational politics

H4 (b): Homophily positively relates with employee loyalty through the mediating role of organizational politics.

Material and Methods

Research Design

The present investigation employed a quantitative research design. The objective of this study was to contribute to the existing literature on attitudinal homophily. The researchers sought to examine the hypothesis that demonstrates the causal relationship between the independent variable (homophily) and the mediating variable (perceived organizational politics), with regards to the dependent variables (organizational cynicism and employee loyalty). The study can be classified as a causal study due to the researcher's focus on explaining the variance in dependent variables, namely organizational cynicism and employee loyalty, in relation to the independent variable of attitudinal homophily and the mediating variable of perceived organizational politics. The present investigation was conducted in a natural context, namely in non-contrived circumstances. The research conducted was a field study, in which the unit of analysis was individual employees. In order to mitigate the potential influence of common method bias and reverse causality, a time-lagged design was employed in this study. The independent variable, attitudinal homophily, was measured at time 1, while the mediator, perceived organizational politics, was measured at time 2. Finally, the dependent variables, organizational cynicism and employee loyalty, were measured at time 3. The measures employed to assess the variables in the study were self-reported by the participants.

Population

The study's target demographic comprised employees in the educational sector, including both public and private institutions, in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

Sample design and size

The utilization of a non-probability sampling strategy was necessitated by constraints in both time and access to the target population. Data was gathered from the readily accessible personnel who were able to furnish it.

Based on the Rule-of-10, a sample size of 10 participants per item in the instrument being utilized is considered adequate (Arrindell & Van Der Ende, 1985; Velicer & Fava, 1998)The questionnaire utilized a total of 270 items, which included 4 items on attitudinal homophily sourced from (McCroskey et al., 2013), 6 items on the perceived organizational politics scale from (Hochwarter et al., 2003), 12 items on organizational cynicism from (Dean et al., 1998), and 5 items on employee loyalty adapted from (Homburg & Stock,

2000). In accordance with the guideline of a minimum sample size of 10 times the number of variables, the sample size for this study was determined to be 270. However, the mediated model was assessed using a slightly larger sample size of 300.

Demographics

Following table summarizes the demographic information of the study:

Table 1
Demographics

	Org. Name	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Army public school	37	12.34
2.	Boys degree collage	35	11.66
3.	Punjab collage	25	8.33
4.	Rising future public school	17	5.67
5.	Green hills collage	31	10.33
6.	Pearl valley school	34	11.33
7.	Innovative Montessori	15	5
8.	University of pooch	26	8.67
9.	Skyline school	35	11.66
10.	Flying angel	45	15
	Total	**300**	**100.0**

The data was obtained from the educational sector of Azad Jammu Kashmir. Table 1 presents the comprehensive information pertaining to the educational sector from which the data has been gathered

Measures and Reliabilities

The measurements utilized in this study were gathered by the administration of a self-report questionnaire. The decision to choose self-reporting as the preferred method for capturing the variables under investigation was based on its perceived appropriateness. The measurement of all items was conducted using five-point Likert scales, which spanned from 1 to 5. There was no instance of an item being dropped in any of the questionnaires.

Table 2
Reliability coefficients of all variables

Variables	No. of total items	Cornbach's Alpha
Attitudinal homophily	8	0.97
Organizational cynicism	12	0.95
Employee loyalty	5	0.88
Perceived organizational politics	6	0.97

Attitudinal Homophily

The study presents four items that pertain to attitudinal homophily. These items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, as described by (McCroskey et al., 2013) The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was determined to be 0.97, indicating a high level of internal consistency. This finding is noteworthy as Cronbach's alpha values of 0.8 and above are generally seen as more desirable.

Organizational Cynicism

The present study utilized a 12-item scale on organizational cynicism, adapted from the work of (Dean et al., 1998)to assess levels of organizational cynicism. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was found to be 0.95

Perceived organizational politics

In the present study, the measurement of organizational politics was conducted using a set of six items derived from the work of (Hochwarter et al., 2003).The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was found to be 0.88

Employee loyalty

The study included five factors pertaining to employee loyalty, as derived from the work of (Homburg & Stock, 2000).The scale demonstrated a high level of internal consistency, with a coefficient of 0.88.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	AH	OP	OC	EL
AH	3.94	1.23	(.97)			
OP	3.11	1.37	.66**	(.97)		
OC	3.52	1.41	-.24**	-.68**	(.96)	
EL	3.38	1.24	-.38**	-.58**	.44**	(.95)

Table 3 presents the calculated values of the mean, standard deviation, and reliability for each variable in the current investigation. The mean value for attitudinal homophily is 3.9379 with a standard deviation of 1.23416. Similarly, the mean value for organizational politics is 3.1125 with a standard deviation of 1.37302. Lastly, the mean value for organizational cynicism is 3.5186 with a standard deviation of 1.41170. Additionally, the average value for employee loyalty is 3.3838, with a standard deviation of 1.24170.

Table 4
Measurement Model

CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	RMR	GFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
9.57	3	3.19	.99	.02	.99	.99	.98	.07

Before conducting the hypothesis testing, the measurement model underwent a process of validation. In order to institute the validity of the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The method described refers to a method used to validate the factor structure of a variable (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). All of the fit indices were seen to fall within the specified range, as presented in Table 4.

Table 5
Beta Coefficients of All Direct Paths

Hypothesis	Path	Regression Weights	S.E	P	Supported
H1 (a)	AH→OC	-.49	.05	.000	Yes
H1 (b)	AH→EL	.47	.03	.000	Yes
H2	AH→OP	-.63	.05	.000	Yes
H3 (a)	OP→OC	.52	.06	.000	Yes
H3 (b)	OP→EL	-.69	.06	.000	Yes

The first hypothesis posited a negative association between attitudinal homophily and organizational cynicism. The findings provide empirical support for the first hypothesis (H1a) (B = -.429, p = .000), indicating that there is an inverse association between attitudinal homophily organizational cynicism. The second hypothesis posited a direct relationship between attitudinal homophily and employees' loyalty. The findings provide support for the H1b hypothesis (AH-EL, B=.472, P=.000). Hypothesis 2 posits that there is a negative association between attitudinal homophily and organization politics. The obtained results (B = .644, P = .000) suggest that there is a significant negative association between attitudinal homophily and organizational politics.

H3a postulated that there was a positive association between organizational politics and organizational cynicism. The obtained path coefficients (B= -.590, P= .000) demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between organizational politics and organizational cynicism. H3b posits that there exists a negative correlation between corporate politics and employee loyalty. The obtained data (OP-EL, B= .626, P=.000) support the proposed link. In addition, hypothesis H3b posited a negative correlation between organizational politics and employee loyalty, which is corroborated by the findings (WA-TOI, B= .570, P=.000), demonstrating a statistically significant positive association between these two variables.

Table 6
Beta Coefficients of the Hypothesized Model in Presence of Mediator

Path	Regression Weights	S.E	P
AH→OC	-.052	.06	.348
AH→EL	.057	.06	.280

Table 7
Direct, Indirect and Total Effects

Hypothesis	Relation	Total effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Supported
H4a	AH→OP→OC	-.49	-.052	-.438	Yes
H4b	AH→OP→EL	-.47	.057	.413	Yes

Table.7 reveales that in presences of the mediator relationship of independent variable with dependent variables becomes insignificant (AH-OC, B= -.052, P=.348; AH-EL, B= .057, P=.280) which was quite significant as evident by table no. 6 when mediator was not introduced (AH-OC, B= -.49, P=.000; AH-EL, B= .47, P=000) Indicating a presences of full mediation.

Theoretical Implications

The objective of this research is to examine the connection between homophily and organizational cynicism, as well as employee loyalty, with a focus on the mediating influence of perceived organizational politics. Based on a comprehensive examination of existing scholarly works, it has been ascertained that the relationship between homophily and cynicism, as well as organizational loyalty, has not yet been investigated. However, prior research has explored the association between organizational politics and organizational cynicism, as documented by (B. K. Miller et al., 2008).

Practical Implications

This study offers various implications. Awareness of organizational politics is one of the factors that hinder employees' positive organizational behavior (Bukhari & Kamal, 2015). Furthermore Goodman et al., (2011)point out that organizational politics can have an influence on organizational and individual outcomes in the sense that it regulates situations and behaviors. Even though employees work hard and value their work, they still seem to be less satisfied and less passionate, making them less committed to the organization. This happens because the perception of politics creates negativity. Therefore, these perceptions are eroded by similar communication, attitudes, and behaviors between individuals. When negative thoughts are weakened by the homophilous factor, employees will be satisfied with their work environment, which will make them loyal to the organization. Therefore, employees need to be engaged with their organization, feel like citizens of the organization and complete their duties by eliminating various negative thoughts. Additionally, the findings of this study will prove valuable for psychologists seeking to gain insight into the diverse attitudes exhibited by employees.

Moreover, the current research will offer significant advantages to management by mitigating the negative consequences of cynicism through the provision of extensive assistance to employees and the enhancement of their performance, ultimately leading to improved organizational outcomes. If homophily exists in the organization, people or employees in the organization will tend to imitate each other's characteristics and abilities. Furthermore, homophily helps reduce employee perceptions that negative attitudes revolve around the belief that the organization is unfair (Dean et al., 1998) which ultimately produces these dimensions, including the employee's belief that the organization lacks integrity (Cognition), which negatively affects the organization (Affective), and the employee's tendency to engage in judgmental behavior and judgment toward the organization. It appears that negative feelings toward individuals will eventually create disruption, despair, and dissatisfaction with the organization (Özler & Atalay, 2011). Therefore, these negative feelings reinforce employees' perceptions that there is unfairness and injustice because the status and behavior of some employees influences the job perceptions of other employees, thereby affecting employees' attitudes toward work. This study demonstrates that the phenomenon of homophily yields favorable effects for organizations, thereby emphasizing the need to cultivate partnerships based on similarity. These homophilous relationships can be developed if employees and managers work as a team, which contributes to training and development purposes as well as validates the human resource planning and selection process (Yousaf & Palazzo, 2023)

Moreover, team building efforts aimed at improving team performance by improving communication, reducing conflict, and enhancing cohesion and commitment among work group members will be generated by homophily. Efforts should be taken to ensure that the environment in which employees work as a unit/group increases the tendency to have homophilous relationships.

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