



## Open Research Online

### Citation

Bui, Hong; Liu, Gordon; Ko, Wai Wai and Curits, Amy (2021). Harmonious Workplace Climate and Employee Altruistic Behavior: From Social Exchange Perspective. *International Journal of Manpower*, 42(1) pp. 95–112.

### URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/70415/>

### License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

### Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

### Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

# **Harmonious Workplace Climate and Employee Altruistic Behavior: From Social Exchange Perspective**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – Drawing on the social exchange perspective, we explore the roles of satisfaction over material rewards, perceived organizational politics, and career ambition in the relationship between harmonious workplace climate and employee altruistic behavior in the context of British public sector.

**Design/methodology/approach** - We employed SPSS software to estimate ordinary least-squares models to test our hypotheses by analyzing data from 161 supervisor-employee dyads from a UK local government.

**Findings** - Satisfaction over material rewards mediates the relationship between harmonious workplace climate and employee altruistic behavior. Both perceived organizational politics and career ambition moderate the mediated effect of harmonious workplace climate on employee altruistic behavior via satisfaction over material rewards.

**Originality/value** – Our study advances the social exchange theory by showing that the norm of reciprocity (e.g., harmonious workplace climate in this study) may not be the only key driver of exchange for altruistic behavior among public sector workers. Still, it can be mediated by satisfaction with pay and promotion opportunities and may be conditional upon individuals' career ambition, or their perceptions of organizational politics.

**Keywords:** Harmonious workplace climate; employee altruistic behavior; satisfaction with pay and promotion opportunities; perceived organization politics; career ambition.

## **Introduction**

Although research has shown the dark side of performance management of the new public management on employee altruistic behavior (EAB) (Campbell et al., 2016), the public sector has still primarily relied on its employee altruistic behavior to sustain the provision of public good (Luu, 2019). EAB is defined as employees' unselfish acts involving helping co-workers in the working environment without the expectation of formal rewards (Gong et al., 2010). The presence of such behavior in the working environment enhances the daily operations' effectiveness and efficiency of an organization (e.g., Liu et al., 2017). The search for antecedents of EAB remains popular topics in human resource management and organizational behaviour research (e.g., Chun et al., 2013).

One stream of research focuses on examining the effect of "workplace climate" (employees' perception of the working environment) on EAB. For example, Lee et al. (2007) suggest that safety perception in the working environment can affect employees' altruism and courtesy toward others. Walumbwa et al. (2010) show the effects of procedural justice and service (workplace) climate on organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals and group. Shin (2012) finds that the ethical perception in the working environment influence employees' behavior of collectively engaging in helping others. Marinova et al. (2019) advocate the relationship between constructive organizational values (workplace) climate and employees' helping behavior. Generally, this line of research has generated not only enduring insights on the role of many different types of workplace climate in promoting EAB but also opens further research opportunities to examine the effects of other types of workplace climate in this regard.

In this research, we introduce a new type of workplace climate: harmonious workplace climate (HWC) – individual employee's perception of friendly and accommodating in the working environment. As anecdotal evidence suggests, employees' willingness to maintain

harmony may improve altruism in the working environment (e.g., Ma et al., 2013). This is because employees' willingness to maintain harmony is vital to create a favorable working environment (Reade and McKenna, 2013), which in turn motivates them to engage in helping behavior at work (Moorman et al., 1998). Given this important knowledge gap, our goal with this study is to answer the following questions: 1) how HWC affect EAB? and 2) under what circumstances is the case?

Social exchange theory offers a theoretical foundation for answering these questions. The theory suggests that individuals will reciprocate benefits (e.g., goods, friendly environment, attitudes, emotions, etc.) with benefits, and responding with either indifference or hostility (e.g., threat, dishonor, etc.) to harms (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). According to this perspective, employees' satisfaction with pay and promotion opportunities (SPPO) motivated by a felt obligation to reciprocate a favorable working environment (i.e., HWC) (Witt and Nye, 1992) with altruism (Lee et al., 2011) can be considered as a critical intervening variable that explains why HWC may enhance EAB. Furthermore, the social exchange theory also suggests that individuals' self-serving motives may affect the reciprocity norm (Forsyth et al., 2012). Accordingly, we suggest that perceived organizational politics and career ambition – two types of self-serving motives – can be considered as moderating variables in the exchange processes that affect the relationship between HWC and SPPO. We test our hypotheses using data collected from 161 supervisor-employee dyads from a local government in the UK.

Our study makes several contributions. First, we contribute to advancing social exchange theory within the human resource management domain by exploring the exchange processes whereby workplace climate affects EAB. Specifically, we introduce a new type of workplace climate – HWC – that remains unexplored in the prior studies and reveal such workplace climate does not automatically lead to EAB. The presence of HWC will trigger the

exchange processes by affecting employees' SPPO, which, in turn, foster EAB. Second, we also develop social exchange theory by differentiating two types of motivations for self-serving behavior – perceived organizational politics and career ambition – that can affect exchange processes (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). As EAB (affected by HWC) places great emphasis on helping others who are behind in their work (Chun et al., 2013), the examination of perceived organizational politics and career ambition as moderators provides a more nuanced understanding of the links between the self-serving motives and unselfish acts in the working environment. This conditional social exchange framework will help to explain complicated relationships related to employee behavior and action. Finally, public sector employees are known for their desire to provide public services and tend to go beyond their job description to help others (Campbell et al., 2016), as well as displaying self-serving behaviors (Bui et al., 2016). The contextualization of this setting is important to establish boundary conditions for social exchange theory and generate managerial insights for public sector organizations.

## **Theory and Hypotheses**

### ***Theoretical Background***

Social exchange theory is one of “the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior” (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p. 874). The theory denotes three fundamental explanatory powers. The first power refers to reciprocity rules and norms of exchange (Emerson, 1976). The second power is the resources of exchange (Mauss, 1967). The third power refers to social exchange relationships (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Such associations stipulate that specific working environment antecedents lead to interpersonal connections.

In general, social exchange theory advances the idea that the norm of reciprocity is the key driver of exchange processes – benefit provision triggers an appropriate set of responses (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Furthermore, the norm of reciprocity between exchange

partners is not necessarily unconditional (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The degree of reciprocity may vary according to certain conditions (such as the nature of the relationship, environment, value, and others), which offers insight into what type of response is likely to maximize recipients' benefits (Rapp et al., 2013). These social exchange perspectives have been widely applied to study altruistic behavior within a broader scope of employee behaviour (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2017), as well as within this study. In the following parts, we explain how the different perspectives of social exchange theory lay the theoretical foundation for our arguments.

### ***Harmonious Work Climate and Employee Altruistic Behavior, and the Mediating Role of Satisfaction with Pay and Promotion Opportunities***

EAB refers to employees' acts of helping other co-workers in their jobs when such help is needed (Williams and Anderson, 1991). We conceptualize EAB as the dependent variable in our framework. This conceptualization builds on the social exchange perspective of altruistic behaviour. According to the theory, EAB represents the ultimate actions that employees feel obligated to reciprocate (Walumbwa et al., 2010). In the realm of public sector research, employees display the tendency of responding to certain experiences in the working environment with altruism (Campbell et al., 2016).

We conceptualize SPPO as a mediator in our framework. This consideration is also built on social exchange theory. Prior work has examined the relationship between job satisfaction and the EAB relationship (e.g., Organ et al., 2006). According to social exchange theory, job satisfaction is an essential condition under which employees feel obligated to reciprocate by helping co-workers in their jobs (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). How we differ in our study is that we focus specifically on employees' job satisfaction perception toward pay and promotion opportunities only. Pay and promotion opportunities are two of the

most critical factors used to assess the fairness and equality at work (Witt and Nye, 1992). Given EAB's emphasis on employees' actions to help co-workers who are currently behind in their work (Chun et al., 2013), they are more likely to take such actions as reciprocation when they feel that their level of salary and promotion opportunities are secured. Thus, SPPO is likely to be considered better predictor than general job satisfaction of the occurrence of EAB in the context of the public sector.

Also drawing on the social exchange theory, we examine HWC as an independent variable. More specifically, prior studies have suggested that an employee's perception of the favorable working environment can be considered as an important condition that creates obligations for them to reciprocate with helping behavior toward co-workers in both public (e.g., Moorman et al., 1998) and private sectors (e.g., Biswas and Varma, 2007). HWC consists of two salient characteristics: friendly and accommodating (Reade and McKenna, 2013). A friendly perception of the working environment reflects an employee's experience that their co-workers are behaving pleasantly and kindly toward each other (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). A workplace is interpreted as accommodating by an employee when his/her co-workers show a willingness to inhibit their harmful or destructive behavior, and instead seek to compromise on conflicts and address them more constructively (Aquino and Thau, 2009). When an employee perceives the working environment is friendly and accommodating, he/she is more likely to presume that he/she will not need to cope with uncommunicative or aggressive behavior among co-workers. Scholars describe this kind of working environment as "harmonious" as the levels of relationship quality and cohesiveness are high in such an environment (Reade and McKenna, 2013). Thus, we define HWC as the extent to which employees perceive that characteristics of the working environment are friendly and accommodating.

According to social exchange theory, workplace climate can obligate employees to reciprocate either positive or negative feelings toward their job (Cropanzano and Mitchell,

2005). When employees perceive the workplace climate is favorable, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes. In line with prior studies, we argue that HWC can be viewed as a favorable workplace climate. More specifically, public sector employees, who often have high levels of altruistic behaviors (Campbell et al., 2016), tend to behave pleasantly and kindly toward each other and trying their best to resolve conflicts in constructive manners in a harmonious workplace (Aquino and Thau, 2009). They are more likely to experience pleasurable feelings when working in a friendly and accommodating environment because, they do not need to continually deal with co-workers' reserve or aggressive behavior, which often depletes their energy and increases work-related stress. Subsequently, the perception of HWC imposes obligations on public sector employees to reciprocate positively towards ensuring job satisfaction, particularly SPPO. This is because public sector employees are less likely to consider salary and promotion prospects to be the most important reasons to continue working in a harmonious workplace. Besides, the pleasurable feeling obtained from working in HWC can help improve employees' overall positive feelings about their job (Campbell et al., 2016).

Furthermore, SPPO does not always reflect measurable objects, but the relative workplace climate (e.g., Moynihan and Pandey, 2007). When employees perceive the characteristics of workplace climate are competitive, they are more likely to become sensitive to the fairness issues related to pay and promotion opportunities. This argument is in line with prior works that suggest employees are more likely to focus their attention on the issues related to fairness in a highly competitive workplace (Choi and Messinger, 2016). HWC, in contrast, reduces employees' competitive behaviors. When employees perceive that the workplace climate is friendly and accommodating, they are less likely to feel that they are in direct competition with one another. As a result, the perception of HWC creates conditions under which employees are likely to feel obligated to reciprocate positively toward SPPO.

Scholars have also identified several conditions under which individuals feel obligated to reciprocate the benefits that they enjoy in the workplace by helping their co-workers in work-related tasks (Brunetto et al., 2012). Among these conditions, the most widely studied is job satisfaction as an antecedent of EAB (e.g., Organ et al., 2006). We focus specifically on employees' perceptions of satisfaction concerning pay and promotion opportunities because prior studies suggest that SPPO has a strong influence on behavior in the workplace (Boselie, 2010). It is believed that SPPO can lead to EAB based on the exchange of resources (i.e., monetary incentives) described by social exchange theory (Foa and Foa, 1980). The emphasis of EAB is on employees' actions in helping co-workers (Chun et al., 2013). Employees often evaluate their pay and promotion opportunities by comparing their situation to that of their co-workers (Witt and Nye, 1992). When they are satisfied with their pay and promotion opportunities, they tend to develop confidence about the organizational reward systems for compensating individuals who invest modest efforts in their works (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997). Thus, employees tend to respond positively to this condition and reciprocate by engaging in EAB when they feel that their levels of salary and promotional opportunity are secured. In combining the above discussions, we hypothesize that:

**H1:** *SPPO mediates the relationship between HWC and EAB.*

### ***The Moderating Role of Self-Serving Motives***

Further drawing on the social exchange theory, we conceptualize two types of self-serving motives as moderating variables in our framework. Specifically, prior efforts on refining the theory have indicated that the norm of reciprocity between exchange partners is not necessarily unconditional (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). More precisely, although the fundamental premise of social exchange theory describes an individual's attempts to reciprocate favors (norm of reciprocity) toward exchange partners; the degree of reciprocity

may vary according to whether the types of behavioral responses can help maximize the individual's benefits (Rapp et al., 2013). In other words, individuals will determine whether and, if so, to what extent reciprocating favors that best serve their interest in the future. In this research, we distinguish two types of self-serving motives that may affect the degree of reciprocity in the exchange relationship – perceived organizational politics and career ambition –, which are highly relevant in public sector study settings.

Perceived organizational politics describes employees' perceptions of how political the working environment is in an organization (Vigoda, 2000). Politics are often associated with “perceived or actual self-serving behavior” that are deployed at an individual level or a group level to gain access to resources and power in organizations (Naseer et al., 2016, p. 15). It is more appropriate than the actual existence of politics within organizations (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992) because an individual's behavior is based on their perceptions of reality, rather than the actuality itself (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). High levels of politics within organizations often emphasize collective efforts in avoiding conflicts (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997). For example, when perceived organizational politics is high, employees are more likely to interpret their co-workers' cordial and fond (friendly) behavior as a way of avoiding confrontation with each other (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997). Similarly, employees are more likely to perceive that their co-workers employ accommodating behavior in the workplace to deal with conflicts through passive (political) acceptance in high levels of perceived organizational politics condition. Both misinterpretations can hamper the perception of HWC that leads to a decrease in the likelihood that employees will reciprocate HWC with SPPO because they will likely demand additional compensation in exchange for the extra effort expended to cope with such stress. Thus, we propose:

**H2:** *Perceived organizational politics negatively moderates the relationship between HWC and SPPO*

Career ambition reflects individuals' determination to achieve hierarchical progression in their career (O'Leary, 1997). Several studies have implicitly suggested that employees' career ambitions can be stimulated by the intense, competitive attitudes of co-workers (e.g. Vigoda, 2000). Ambitious employees are likely to engage in self-serving activities that are fuelled by their desires to achieve career progression (Homberg et al., 2016). When ambitious employees observe HWC, one conclusion that they may draw is that such a friendly and accommodating working environment is favorable in supporting their career progression. Because, in such a working environment, the likelihood of co-workers developing competitive attitudes toward their ambitious working attitudes and actions is low. Hence, they can take advantage of such a working environment by being aggressive toward their jobs in earning more salary, rank, and prestige. Thus, employees with high levels of career ambition are more likely to appreciate HWC and reciprocate with the satisfaction of existing pay and promotional opportunities. Thus, we propose:

**H3:** *Career ambition positively moderates the relationship between HWC and SPPO.*

In combining the above arguments that lead to H1 ~ H3, we suggest that SPPO plays an essential role in channeling the effects of HWC to EAB. We also recognize that the strength of the relationship between HWC and SPPO highly depends on their self-serving motives. More specifically, different self-serving motives will lead employees to have a different interpretation of the friendly and accommodating working environment that they have experienced. When the levels of perceived organizational politics are high, they interpret the presence of HWC resulting from collective efforts (among co-workers) in avoiding conflicts at all costs. They tend to feel obliged to cope with any work-related stress which often leads to the dissatisfactions of pay and promotional opportunities (demanding additional compensation in exchange for the extra effort expended to deal with such stress). In so doing, the entire

mediating relationship from HWC through SPPO to EAB may be impaired. In contrast, when the levels of career ambition are high, employees may consider the presence of HWC allows them to be aggressive in pursuing their career progression without worrying about co-workers' negative responses. This proactive behavior often leads to the SPPO (earning fair salary, rank, and prestige as career progressed). Thus, the entire mediating relationship from HWC through SPPO to EAB can be strengthened. Therefore, we propose:

**H4a:** *The indirect relationship from HWC through SPPO to EAB will be stronger when there is a lower rather than higher level of perceived organizational politics.*

**H4b:** *The indirect relationship from HWC through SPPO to EAB will be stronger when there is a higher rather than lower level of career ambition.*

Figure 1 presents the framework of this study.

*[Insert Figure 1 here]*

## **Research Method**

### ***Data Collection and Measurement***

To reduce possible research bias, we collected data from different sources, including employees and their direct line managers, of a local government department in the UK. The employees completed a questionnaire containing questions related to HWC, SPPO, perceived organizational politics, and career ambition, while their line managers completed a survey on their EAB. The population of a local government chosen for the study was approximately 600. The sample itself was initially identified through cluster sampling, in which the population was divided into certain groups, namely their unit of work (Saunders et al., 2000). Once the six groups had been identified, simple random sampling from within each group was used to identify the actual sample itself. This sampling technique was to minimize the bias so that the sample could be deemed to be representative of the population (Saunders et al., 2000).

Likewise, it provided all possible groups with an equal chance of being selected. They comprised full time and part-time workers, shift workers, zero-hours/casual workers, night workers and manual and non-manual workers. In the end, we identified 375 employees from the six groups as our sample. Among them, 200 employees (with the support of their supervisor) agreed to participate (85% female), with an average age of 46.72 and an average tenure of 9.38 years. The response rate was 53% for the employee survey and 100% for the manager survey. Incomplete surveys were omitted, and we obtained complete data on a total of 161 supervisor-employee dyads for the final analysis.

All the variables were adopted from existing studies and measured using a multi-item, Likert-type scale ranging from *disagree strongly* (1), *disagree* (2), *disagree slightly* (3), *neutral* (4), *agree slightly* (5) and *agree* (6), to *agree strongly* (7). HWC was measured by using a two-item climate scale (one item relating to ‘accommodating’ and the other to ‘friendly’) derived from Bui and Baruch (2012). Satisfaction with pay and promotion opportunity was adapted from the scale of Price and Mueller (1986). Following the advice of Podsakoff et al. (2003), we used a formative measurement to assess SPPO. This is appropriate because a summary index of observed variables define and determine the construct without necessarily being correlated (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001). Furthermore, other management studies (e.g., Law and Wong, 1999) have treated job satisfaction as a formative construct. Given that each item covers different aspects of the formative construct, the removal of any item can ultimately alter the empirical meaning of the composite construct (Jarvis et al., 2003). Thus, we followed the approach of previous studies in computing composite measures of formative multi-item measures by calculating the average of the items (Homburg et al., 2012). Perceived organizational politics was measured by using a four-item scale adapted from Kacmar and Carlson (1997). A four-item measurement of career ambition was developed by Bui et al. (2016). Finally, a six-item scale was derived from Williams and Anderson (1991) to assess

EAB. All the scales are presented in Appendix 1. Employee gender, age, and tenure were used as control variables because the literature suggests that these might influence SPPO and EAB (e.g., Boselie, 2010).

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

### ***Reliability and Validity***

Table 1 presents a correlation matrix and descriptive statistics. Assessments of the measurement model of formative constructs and reflective constructs follow different guidelines. For the reflective measurements (i.e., HWC, perceived organizational politics, career ambition, and EAB), we followed Hair et al. (2010) guidelines to compare the comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) among various confirmatory factor analysis models. Our hypothesized model exhibited the best fit ( $X^2 = 146.75$ ;  $df = 84$ ;  $X^2/df = 1.75$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $NFI = .90$ ;  $CFI = .95$ ;  $GFI = .91$ ;  $RMSEA = .06$ ). We also calculated the value of the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 1 displays our findings, which show that the value of the CR is greater than .70 for all constructs, the value of the AVE for all constructs exceeds the .50 benchmark, and the square root value of the AVE for each construct is greater than all of its correlations with other constructs (see Table 1). Based on the above points, it shows that reflective constructs possess validity and reliability. Furthermore, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated and found that all VIFs are below 3 (less than 10), which indicates that multicollinearity does not pose any serious problem for our analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

*[Insert Table 1 here]*

For the formative construct SPPO, we could not follow the same approaches used in assessing the validity and reliability of a reflective measurement because an assessment of a formative measurement's psychometric properties is not appropriate (Jarvis et al., 2003).

Instead, we employed two approaches. First, we examined the theoretical relationships of the formative measurement against other constructs (Jarvis et al., 2003). The rationale for this approach is that each item of the formative construct should correlate with a specific variable whose connection with such item has already been confirmed by theory and prior empirical studies. Our study also confirms that SPPO has a significant correlation with EAB ( $r = .19$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

Second, we identified the formative construct by estimating a latent measurement model (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001). This model involved two indicators (satisfaction with pay, and satisfaction with promotion opportunities) whose direction of regression causality flows from the indicators to the latent construct (SPPO), to one reflective indicator (global indicator of job satisfaction) and to one reflective construct (EAB) ( $\chi^2 = 52.41$ ;  $df = 25$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.10$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $NFI = .91$ ;  $CFI = .95$ ;  $GFI = .92$ ;  $RMSEA = .08$ ). Our results suggested that each individual indicator of SPPO has a significant correlation with EAB: satisfaction with pay ( $r = .17$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and satisfaction with promotion opportunities ( $r = .15$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Together, the two approaches suggest that the validity, reliability, and identification of our formative SPPO construct are established.

Given that some of the hypotheses predict the associations among the variables that were collected from the same respondents, we followed the suggestion of Podsakoff et al. (2003) to use multiple statistical remedies on the reflective measurements. Harman's single factor test and latent common method factor analysis were performed. Both results suggest that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern for this study. Summarizing the above points, we argue that our measurement possesses both validity and reliability. In addition, to follow Hurlbert et al.'s (2019) suggestion, we report accurate  $p$ -values, but remove the term 'statistically significant' and its cognates and symbolic adjuncts completely.

## Data Analysis and Findings

### *Main findings*

We employed SPSS to estimate ordinary least-squares models to test our hypotheses (Hayes, 2018). Table 2 presents the results of our multivariate regression analysis. H1 predicts that SPPO mediates the relationship between HWC and EAB. Three conditions need to exist to confirm the mediating effect (Hayes, 2018). In essence, 1) the effect of the independent variable on the mediator is significant, 2) the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable is significant when accounting for the effect of the independent variable, and 3) the indirect effect in mediation is significant. In our analysis, HWC (predictor variable) shows significant impact on SPPO (mediator) (Model 1:  $\beta = .29$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Thus, condition 1 is supported. Furthermore, the effect of SPPO (mediator) on EAB (outcome variable) is significant when accounting for the effect of HWC (predictor variable). The results from Model 2 support condition 2. In particular, the effect of SPPO on EAB is positive and significant (Model 2:  $\beta = .19$ ,  $p = .01$ ) when accounting for the effect of HWC on EAB. Finally, to meet condition 3, the confidence interval of the indirect effect was calculated using 10000 bootstrap analysis samples. It is found that the indirect effect between HWC and EAB through SPPO is positive ( $\beta = .06$ ) with a 95% confidence interval [lower-level = .01; higher-level = .09] which does not include zero (See Table 3). Thus, this supports H1.

[Insert Table 2 here]

To confirm the moderating effects in H2 and H3, the relationship between the interaction term (predictor variable x moderator) and outcome variable needs to be significant when including both the predictor variable and moderator in the regression model (Hair et al., 2010). H2 predicts that perceived organizational politics weakens the relationship between HWC and SPPO. Model 3 shows a negative and significant effect between the interaction term (perceived organizational politics x HWC) on SPPO ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p = .04$ ). This supports H2. H3

predicts that career ambition strengthens the relationship between HWC and SPPO. In Model 4, the effect of the interaction term (career ambition x HWC) on SPPO ( $\beta = .13, p = .50$ ). Thus, this supports H3.

When including the two interaction terms simultaneously (Model 5), their effects become insignificant. Previous research indicates that the inclusion of multiple interaction terms simultaneously may prevent the detection of the moderating effects, due to a complex constellation of factors (De Clercq et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the consistency of the signs (negative for perceived organizational politics x HWC, positive for career ambition x HWC) of the interaction terms in Model 4 (includes both moderators) and in Models 2 and 3 (includes moderators separately) indicates some robustness (De Clercq et al., 2017). Figure 2 represents this graphically – the effect of HWC on SPPO is weakened when perceived organizational politics is high. In contrast, the effect of HWC on SPPO is strengthened when career ambition is high.

*[Insert Figure 2 here]*

H4a and H4b predict the moderated mediation effect. According to Hayes (2018), moderated mediation is a conditional effect whereby moderators influence the indirect effect of the predictor variable on the dependent variable through a mediator. This study tests for the possibility of the moderating effects of perceived organizational politics (H4a) and career ambition (H4b) on the entire mediation relationship from HWC through SPPO to EAB. As discussed above, there is a lack of significance when including both interaction terms in the same model. Therefore, the moderating effects of perceived organizational politics and career ambition are tested separately. To confirm the moderated mediation, the index of moderated mediation must be significant (Hayes, 2018). Following the Hayes (2018), two regression models for the moderated mediation effects with one first-stage moderator (moderating effect

on the relationship between predictor variable and mediator) were first estimated and then calculated the index of moderated mediation.

The analysis produces two regression models when perceived organizational politics is the moderator (Model 6 and Model 2) and two regression models when career ambition is the moderator (Model 7 and Model 2). Then the index of moderated mediation was calculated by using a bootstrap analysis with 10000 samples. The results suggest that the index is negatively significant (Models 2 and 6: index = -.03) with a 95% confidence interval [lower-level = -.03; higher-level = -.01] which does not include zero when perceived organizational politics is the moderator (See Table 3). Thus, this supports H4a. Similarly, the index of moderated mediation was also calculated by using a bootstrap analysis with 10000 samples, and the results suggest that the index is positive and significant (Models 2 and 7: index = .02) with a 95% confidence interval [lower-level = .01; higher-level = .03], which does not include zero when career ambition is the moderator (See Table 3). Thus, this supports H4b. In summary, it is found two distinctive moderated mediation relationships. The implications of the above findings are discussed in the next section.

### **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

Drawing on social exchange theory, we have developed a theoretical framework to describe the relationship between HWC and EAB with a mediating role for SPPO and moderating roles for perceived organizational politics and career ambition. This study makes important theoretical contributions to the literature that investigates the influence of HWC on EAB. This study provides valuable insights for both research and practice in improving EAB, and make several important theoretical and practical contributions to the literature because it has extended previous studies in several important respects.

#### ***Theoretical Contributions***

First, we find that the role of SPPO is an important mediator that channels the influence of HWC on EAB. This finding reflects as the norm of reciprocity of the social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). We contribute to the further development of social exchange theory in human resource management. The theory helps explain the exchange process by which HWC affect EAB via SPPO and reaffirms the importance of workplace climate in changing employee behaviors at work. Besides, the identification of SPPO as a mediator in the HWC – EAB relationship also extends the literature in this research domain. Only a few studies in the past have identified and examined mediators (e.g., Marinova et al., 2019) in such a relationship. Overall, our research seems to be the first to consider HWC as an antecedent of EAB and explain how HWC affects EAB.

Second, we find that perceived organizational politics reduces the strength of the relationship between HWC and SPPO, while career ambition improves the strength of such a relationship. Further analysis suggests that these moderating effects are also applicable for the entire exchange process from HWC through SPPO to EAB. The distinction of moderating effects of perceived organizational politics and career ambition are important. This is because these two factors capture different self-serving motives of an employee (Vigoda, 2000), in contrast to EAB that emphasizes an employee's unselfish acts of helping their co-workers who are behind in their work (Chun et al., 2013). In so doing, we advance social exchange theory in explaining the situation where individuals' self-serving motives can affect exchange processes, and the process involves the consequence of the selfless act in a favorable workplace (Forsyth et al., 2012). The results confirm our theoretical logics that, on the one hand, perceived organizational politics is more likely to interfere with employees' interpretation of a favorable workplace, thus reducing the effect of HWC. On the other hand, career ambition is likely to trigger employees' judgments on whether they can take advantage of a favorable workplace setting to pursue a self-interest agenda. This can improve the effect of HWC. Therefore, social

exchange theory scholars should differentiate the sources of self-serving motives to explain their role in affecting the reciprocity norm.

Third, although it is important to encourage EAB in public sector management (e.g., Kim, 2006), researchers have paid relatively little attention to how HWC may encourage EAB in the public sector setting. Our research has explored the role of the equally important objective in having HWC in the public sector (e.g. Garcia-Zamor, 2003) to encourage EAB. While our study only provides a snapshot of how and when HWC affects EAB, it still offers valuable insights for both research and practice in inspiring EAB.

### ***Managerial Implications***

Our study also reveals important implications for managers and practitioners in both the public and private sectors. First, the findings suggest that HWC affects EAB through SPPO. Therefore, managers should be aware of the importance of authentic HWC which positively influences employees' pleasurable feelings about their job (i.e., SPPO). Our study indicates that such feelings can persist and positively affect employees' attitudes toward altruism in the workplace.

Second, conventional wisdom states that all aspects of the working environment that promote employees' subjective evaluations of the politically self-serving actions of their colleagues' self-interest can potentially inhibit the former's attitudes toward altruism (Naseer et al., 2016). Ambitious employees can potentially enhance their attitudes toward altruism because they want to get along to get ahead. At the same time, encouraging materialistic values such as pay and promotions can lower EAB. Our study aligns with this stance and suggests that perceived organizational politics can reduce the strength of the entire HWC– SPPO –EAB relationship, and that career ambition can strengthen that relationship. These findings reinforce the notion that managers should behave ethically to reduce the impact of organizational

politics, for example, by building capacity for ongoing honest self-reflection and self-regulation (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997) because perceived organizational politics is not always good for organizations. In addition, they should also recognize the bright side of the career ambition of their employees.

### ***Limitations and Future Research Opportunities***

There are some limitations in this study that, in turn, can suggest directions for future research. First, even though data were collected from different sources, the cross-sectional design of the study prevents it from drawing a definite conclusion about causality. Future researchers might employ a longitudinal research design to address this limitation.

Second, this study was conducted in a UK context by employing empirical data from a local government, which limits the generalizability of our findings. However, our single organization focus approach is not an exception. Researchers have frequently adopted it to avoid the presence of unobserved differences in the external environments, as well as controlling for potential organization-level confounding variables (e.g., De Clercq et al., 2017). Future studies of multiple organizations could help to generalize these findings and expand the boundary conditions.

Thirdly, the development of two-items measurement for HWC by combining two existing one-item assessments for “friendly” and “accommodating” workplace climate may be subjected to some limitations. This approach has benefits related to its face validity (we conceptualize HWC as a combination of friendly and accommodating workplace climate) and applicability (validated in the previous study – Bui et al., (2016)) in evaluating workplace climate. However, the use of multi-items that design purposely for assessing HWC would be able to capture more additional evidence on the individual’s perception of the levels of harmony in the working environment. Given there is no existing multi-items measurement for HWC, researchers in the future could develop such measurement.

Fourthly, we do not control the types of employment contracts (e.g., full time and part-time workers, shift workers, zero-hours/casual workers, etc.) in this study. This can be a potential limitation for this study. Researchers in the future should consider this when designing further studies related to this research area.

Finally, our findings have several other future research implications. To begin with, it has advanced social exchange theory by developing a conditional form of the theory. Future research can apply this conditional social exchange theory in other contexts and disciplines. Researchers can explore the influence of different types of working environments on EAB. Moreover, we only examine the influence of employees' subjective evaluations of the politically self-serving actions of their colleagues of 'going along to get ahead' and their career ambition as moderators in the relationship between HWC and EAB through SPPO. Finally, other possible moderators may offer an exciting research direction in the future.

## References

- Aquino, K., and Thau, S. (2009). Workplace victimization: Aggression from the target's perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 717–741.
- Biswas, S., and Varma, A. (2007). Psychological climate and individual performance in India: Test of a mediated model. *Employee Relations*, 29(6), 664–676.
- Boselie, P. (2010). High performance work practices in the health care sector: A Dutch case study. *International Journal of Manpower*, 31(1), 42–58.
- Brunetto, Y., Teo, S.T.T., Shacklock, K., and Farr-Wharton, R. (2012). Emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, well-being and engagement: Explaining organisational commitment and turnover intentions in policing. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 22(4), 428–441.
- Bui, H.T.M., and Baruch, Y. (2012). Learning organizations in higher education: An empirical evaluation within an international context. *Management Learning*, 43(5), 515–544.
- Bui, H.T.M., Secchi, D., Thanh, N.Q., and Nhuan, M.T. (2016). Career ambition and performance: A socio-analytic perspective, *Academy of Management*, Anaheim, California, United State.
- Campbell, J.W., Lee, H. and Im, T. (2016) At the Expense of others: Altruistic helping behaviour, performance management and transformational leadership. *Public Management Review*, 18(6), 795-818.
- Chun, J. S., Shin, Y., Choi, J.N., and Kim, M.S. (2013). How does corporate ethics contribute to firm financial performance? The mediating role of collective organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Management*, 39(4), 853–877.

- Gong, Y., Chang, S. and Cheung, S.Y. (2010). High Performance Work System and Collective Ocb: A Collective Social Exchange Perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 20(2), 119-137.
- Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E.L., Daniels, S.R., and Hall, A.V (2017) Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 497-516.
- Cropanzano, R., and Mitchell, M.S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 874–900.
- De Clercq, D., Mohammad Rahman, Z., and Belausteguigoitia, I. (2017). Task conflict and employee creativity: The critical roles of learning orientation and goal congruence. *Human Resource Management*, 56(1), 93-109.
- Diamantopoulos, A., and Winklhofer, H.M. (2001). Index construction with formative indicators: An alternative to scale development. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(2), 269–277.
- Emerson, R.M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2, 335–362.
- Ferris, G.R., and Kacmar, K.M. (1992). Perceptions of organizational politics. *Journal of Management*, 18(1), 93–116.
- Foa, E.B., and Foa, U.G. (1980). Resource theory: Interpersonal behavior as exchange. In K. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg and R. Willis (Eds.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 77–94). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Forsyth, D.R., Banks, G.C. and McDaniel, M.A. (2012). A meta-analysis of the Dark Triad and work behavior: a social exchange perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(3), 557-579.
- Garcia-Zamor, J.-C. (2003). Workplace spirituality and organizational performance. *Public Administration Review*, 63(3), 355-363.

- Gong, Y., Chang, S., and Cheung, S.Y. (2010). High performance work system and collective OCB: A collective social exchange perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 20(2), 119–137.
- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., and Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hayes, A.F. (2018). *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Homberg, F., Vogel, R., and Piatak, J.S. (2016). Public service motivation, prosocial behaviours, and career ambitions. *International Journal of Manpower*, 37(5), 804-821.
- Homburg, C., Jensen, O., and Hahn, A. (2012). How to organize pricing? Vertical delegation and horizontal dispersion of pricing authority. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(5), 49–69.
- Hurlbert, S.H., Levine, R.A. and Utts, J. (2019) Coup de grâce for a tough old bull: “Statistically significant” expires. *The American Statistician*, 73(1), 352-357.
- Jarvis, C.B., MacKenzie, S.B., and Podsakoff, P.M. (2003). A critical review of construct indicators and measurement model misspecification in marketing and consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(2), 199–218.
- Kacmar, K.M., and Carlson, D.S. (1997). Further validation of the perceptions of politics scale (POPS): A multiple sample investigation. *Journal of Management*, 23(5), 627–658.
- Kim, S. (2006). Public service motivation and organizational citizenship behavior in Korea. *International Journal of Manpower*, 27(8), 722-740.
- Law, K.S., and Wong, C.S. (1999). Multidimensional constructs in structural equation analysis: An illustration using the job perception and job satisfaction constructs. *Journal of Management*, 25, 143-160.
- Lee, H.-J., Iijima, Y. and Reade, C. (2011), "Employee preference for performance-related pay: Predictors and consequences for organizational citizenship behaviour in a Japanese

- firm" *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 22 No. 10, pp. 2086-2109.
- Lee, T.-Z., Wu, C.-H. and Hong, C.-W. (2007). An empirical investigation of the influence of safety climate on organizational citizenship behavior in Taiwan's facilities. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics*, 13(3), 255-269.
- Liu, D., Chen, X-P. and Holley, E. (2017). Help yourself by helping others: The joint impact of group member organizational citizenship behaviors and group cohesiveness on group member objective task performance change. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(4), 809-842.
- López-Domínguez, M., Enache, M., Sallan, J. and Simo, P. (2013). Transformational leadership as an antecedent of change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 2147-2152.
- Luu, T.T. (2019) Service-oriented high-performance work systems and service-oriented behaviours in public organizations: the mediating role of work engagement. *Public Management Review*, 21(6), 789-816.
- Ma, E., Qu, H., and Wilson, M. (2013). The affective and dispositional consequences of organizational citizenship behavior: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 40(4), 399-431.
- Marinova, S.V., Cao, X. and Park, H. (2019). Constructive organizational values climate and organizational citizenship behaviors: A configurational view. *Journal of Management*, 45(5), 2045-2071.
- Mauss, M. (1967). *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Moorman, R.H., Blakely, G.L., and Niehoff, B.P. (1998). Does perceived organizational support mediate the relationship between procedural justice and organizational citizenship behavior? *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(3), 351–357.

- Moynihan, D.P. and Pandey, S.K. (2007). Finding workable levers over work motivation comparing job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment. *Administration and Society*, 39(7), 803-832.
- Naseer, S. , Raja, U., Syed, F., Donia, M.B.L., and Darr, W. (2016). Perils of being close to a bad leader in a bad environment: Exploring the combined effects of despotic leadership, leader member exchange, and perceived organizational politics on behaviors. *Leadership Quarterly*, 27(1), 14–33.
- Organ, D.W., Podsakoff, P.M., and MacKenzie, S.B. (2006). *Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Its Nature, Antecedents, and Consequences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J.Y., and Podsakoff, N.P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Price, J.L., and Mueller, C.W. (1986). *Handbook of Organizational Measurement*. Marshfield, MA: Pitman Publishing.
- Reade, C., and McKenna, M. (2013). Leveraging indigenous knowledge for sustainable workplace harmony: A conflict management tool for international managers. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 2013(51), 53–71.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 6/e. Harlow, Essex: Pearson.
- Shin, Y. (2012). CEO ethical leadership, ethical climate, climate strength, and collective organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 108(3), 299-312.
- Vigoda, E. (2000). Organizational politics, job attitudes, and work outcomes: Exploration and implications for the public sector. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57(3), 326–347.

- Walumbwa, F.O., Hartnell, C.A. and Oke, A. (2010). Servant leadership, procedural justice climate, service climate, employee attitudes, and organizational citizenship behavior: a cross-level investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(3), 517-529.
- Williams, L.J., and Anderson, S.E. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 17(3), 601–617.
- Witt, L.A., and Nye, L.G. (1992). Gender and the relationship between perceived fairness of pay or promotion and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(6), 910–917.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Reliabilities**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>1. Gender</b>	---							
<b>2. Age</b>	.01 [.90]	---						
<b>3. Tenure</b>	.06 [.46]	.33 [.00]	---					
<b>4. Satisfaction with Pay and Promotion Opportunities<sup>FM</sup></b>	-.03 [.72]	.01 [.89]	-.14 [.07]	---				
<b>5. Harmonious Workplace Climate</b>	.07 [.41]	-.06 [.46]	-.10 [.22]	.30 [.00]	<b>.81</b>			
<b>6. Perceived Organizational Politics</b>	.09 [.28]	.07 [.36]	.08 [.33]	-.12 [.12]	-.23 [.00]	<b>.79</b>		
<b>7. Career Ambition</b>	.01 [.89]	-.05 [.56]	-.07 [.40]	.05 [.56]	.30 [.00]	-.21 [.01]	<b>.71</b>	
<b>8. Employee Altruistic Behaviour</b>	-.12 [.13]	.12 [.14]	.04 [.58]	.19 [.02]	.04 [.65]	-.14 [.08]	.05 [.50]	<b>.77</b>
<b>Mean</b>	.17	3.78	2.10	3.91	4.60	2.75	5.79	5.71
<b>Standard deviation</b>	.38	.27	.74	1.49	1.19	1.42	1.00	.83
<b>Composite Reliability</b>	---	---	---	---	.79	.87	.74	.89
<b>Average Variance Extracted</b>	---	---	---	---	.65	.62	.50	.59

Notes:

N = 161;

Pearson correlation coefficients are reported with p-value in brackets below

FM = Formative Measurement

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) square root are show in bold on the correlation matrix diagonal

**Table 2: Main Findings**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>
<b>Outcome Variable:</b>	SPPO	EAB	SPPO	SPPO	SPPO	SPPO	SPPO
<b>Control Variables:</b>							
Gender	-.04(-.54) [.59]	-.12(-1.50) [.13]	-.03(-.34) [.73]	-.03(-.36) [.72]	-.02(-.30) [.77]	-.03(-.34) [.73]	-.04(-.46) [.64]
Age	.07(.91) [.36]	.10(1.24) [.22]	.07(.82) [.41]	.07(.82) [.41]	.06(.78) [.44]	.07(.83) [.41]	.06(.79) [.43]
Tenure	-.14(-1.69) [.09]	.04(.53) [.60]	-.12(-1.51) [.13]	-.14(-1.71) [.05]	-.13(-1.56) [.12]	-.12(-1.50) [.13]	-.14(-1.74) [.09]
<b>Predictor:</b>							
Harmonious Workplace Climate (HWC)	.29(3.86) [.00]	-.01(-.03) [.98]	.30(3.75) [.00]	.30(3.72) [.00]	.30(3.76) [.00]	.29(3.74) [.00]	.31(3.96) [.00]
<b>Mediators:</b>							
Satisfaction with Pay and Promotion Opportunities (SPPO)		.19(2.30) [.01]					
<b>Moderator (Main Effects)</b>							
Perceived Organizational Politics (POP)			-.11(-1.34) [.18]	-.08(-.96) [.34]	-.11(-1.34) [.18]	-.11(-1.29) [.20]	
Career Ambition (CA)			-.05(-.57) [.57]	-.05(-.61) [.54]	-.04(-.52) [.60]		-.04(-.48) [.63]
<b>Interaction</b>							
HWC x POP			-.17(-2.07) [.04]		-.13(-1.52) [.13]	-.17(-2.13) [.03]	
HWC x CA				.13(1.71) [.05]	.08(.99) [.32]		.12(1.61) [.09]
<b>Model Statistics</b>							
F-Value	4.80	2.10	3.54	3.32	3.21	4.09	3.72
P-Value	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
R-Square	.11	.06	.14	.13	.14	.14	.13

Note:

Standardized Coefficients are reported with t-value in parathions and p-value in brackets below

EAB = Employee Altruistic Behaviour

**Table 3: Bootstrapping Test**

<b>Indirect Effects</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Lower Level CI</b>	<b>Higher Level CI</b>
Mediation: HWC → SPPO → EAB	1 & 2	.06	.01	.09
Moderated mediation: HWC → SPPO → EAB (with POP as first stage moderator)	6 & 2	-.03	-.03	-.01
Moderated mediation: HWC → SPPO → EAB (with CA as first stage moderator)	7 & 2	.02	.01	.03

Note:

95% confidence interval with 10000 bootstrapping samples

CI = confidence interval

EAB = Employee Altruistic Behaviour; HWC = Harmonious Workplace Climate; POP = Perceived Organizational Politics; CA = Career Ambition

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

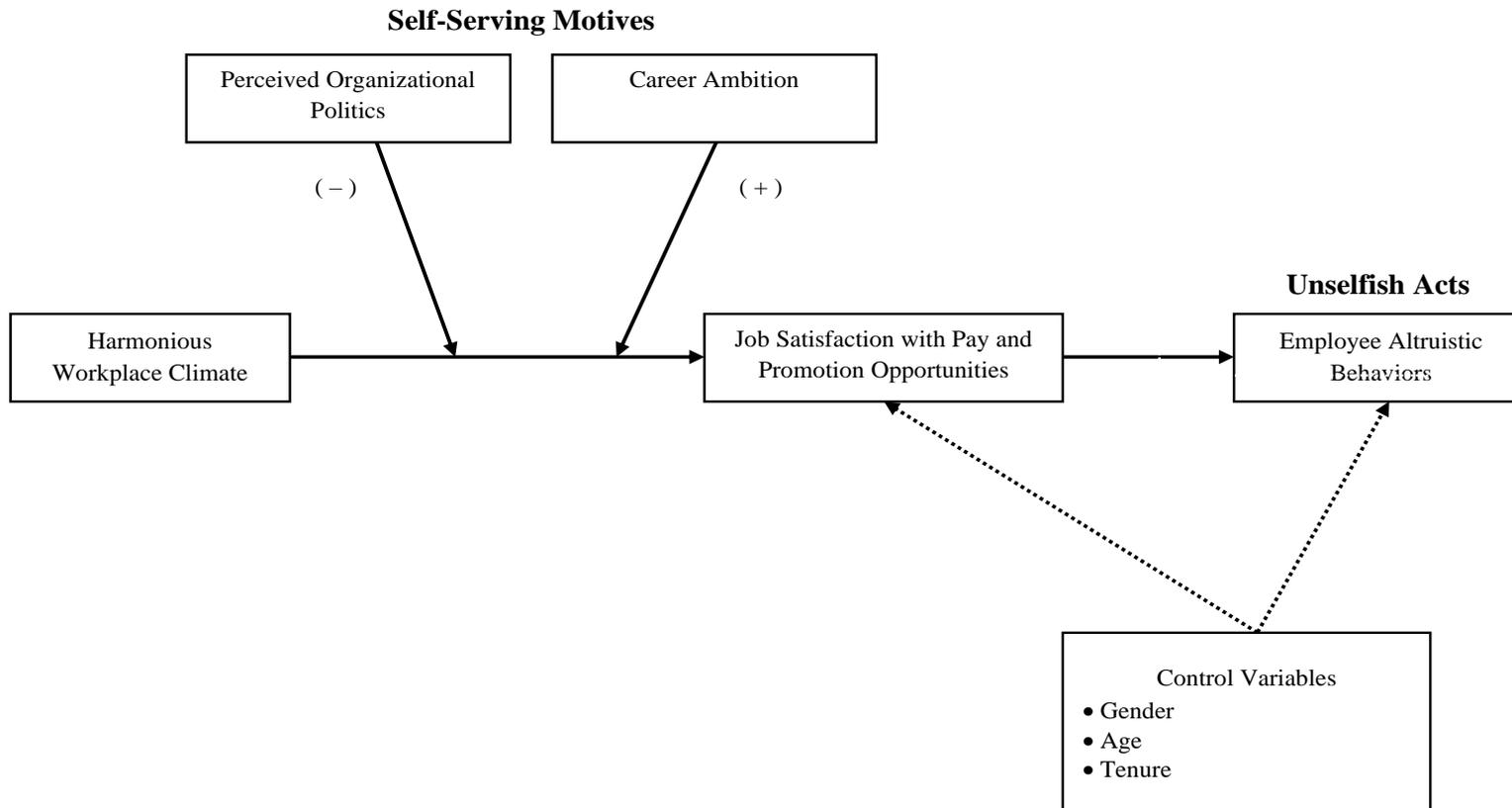
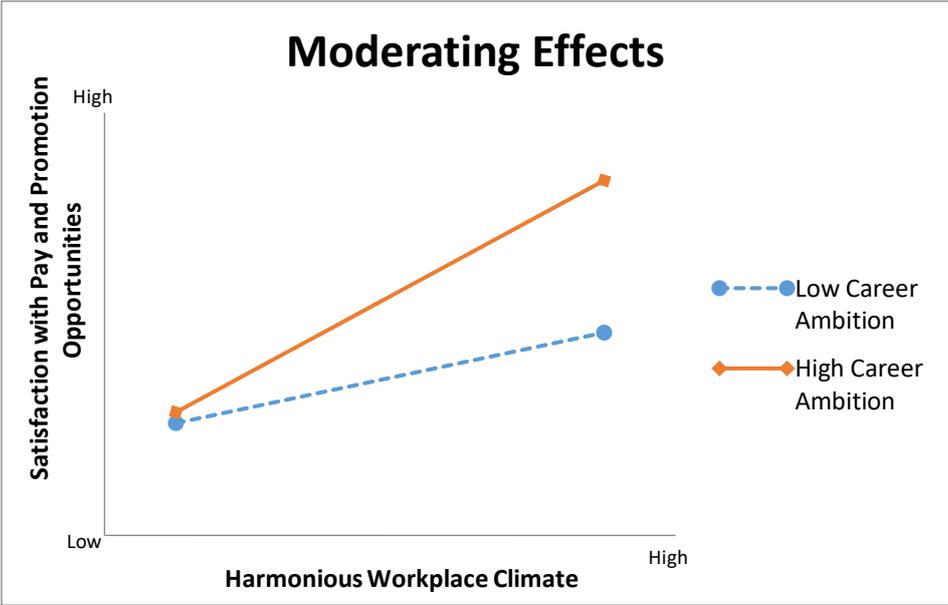
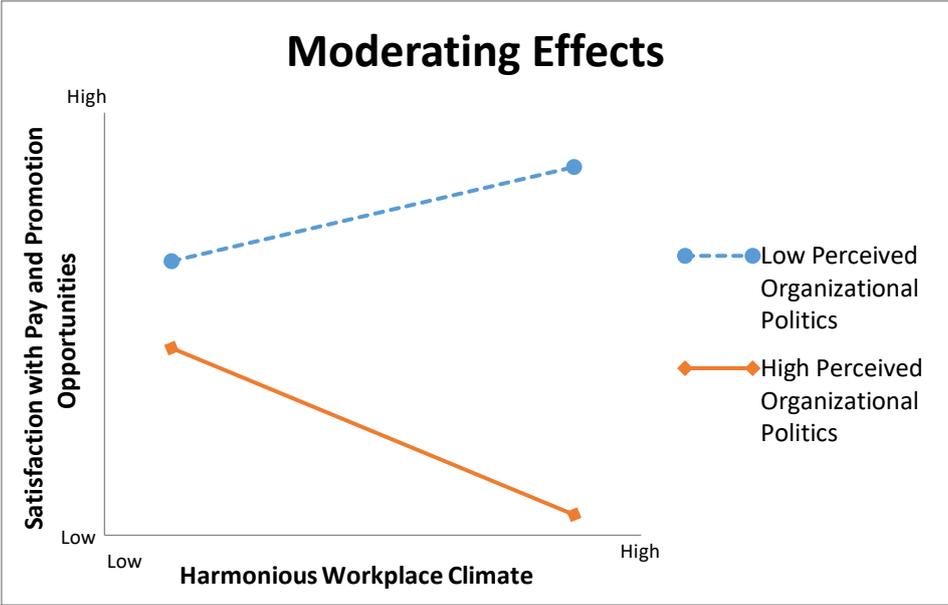


Figure 1: Moderating Effects



## Appendix 1: Measurement and Factor Loading

Measurement	Loading*
<b>Harmonious Workplace Climate</b>	
Aggressive – Accommodating	.74
Reserved – Friendly	.87
<b>Perceived Organizational Politics</b>	
Agreeing with powerful people is the best alternative in this organization	.83
Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system	.86
Telling others what they want to hear is sometimes better than telling the truth	.70
It is safer to think what you are told than to make up your own mind	.75
<b>Career Ambition</b>	
I have the ambition to get to the highest job that my career can give me	---
I would like to obtain a high level of job security in my career	.70
I would like to establish a high standard in my job	.68
I would like to get maximum control over my career	.72
<b>Job Satisfaction over Material Rewards</b>	
All in all, how satisfied are you with promotional opportunities?	FM
All in all, how satisfied are you with the pay?	FM
<b>Employee Altruism Behaviour</b>	
Helps others who have been absent	.72
Helps others who have heavy workloads	.66
Assists the supervisor with his/her work (when not asked)	.71
Takes time to listen to co-workers' problems and worries	.83
Goes out of the way to help new employees	.81
Passes along information to co-workers	.84

\* Factor loadings are standardized

--- Item delete due to low fit

FM = Formative Measurement