# THE IMPACT OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN UK BASED ORGANISATIONS

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## Abstract

The purpose of the research is to investigate and analyse the impact of workplace politics on employee performance. The objectives of the research were to understand the nature of workplace politics influencing employee performance and critically investigating the impact of workplace politics on employee performance in UK based organisations. Finally, the last objective was to provide recommendations to organisational managers to develop appropriate strategies to achieve favourable outcomes of workplace politics.

The methodology implemented to carry out the research comprised of the abductive approach and the worldview maintained by the researcher was pragmatism. Using the mixed methods to data collection, both quantitative and qualitative methods were followed to collect data. The quantitative method involved surveying the employees of the chosen organisations using structured, closed-ended questionnaires as the instrument. The questionnaires were mainly built upon the five-point Likert scale and the survey was conducted online. On the other hand, the quantitative method involved interviewing the managers of the same organisations using semi-structured, open-ended questions.

Findings indicate that the presence of organisational politics is usually perceived by employees as negative and therefore its impact is detrimental in terms of employee behaviour. It reduces the extent of employees' commitment towards the organisational goals, citizenship behaviour and daily work performance. A highly politicised work environment is also characterised with the presence of Machiavellians who are self-centred, maintain hidden agendas and take unfair advantage of others to fulfil their personal goals. Politicised environment also gives birth to an influential group, promotes lack of transparency in performance appraisals and rewards. However, managerial views indicate that employees led by dynamic leaders are less likely to develop a negative perception of politics. Based on the findings obtained from the empirical studies and gaps identified, suitable recommendations are given to the organisational managers to develop effective strategies to overcome the negative impact of politics.

## Acknowledgement

It gives me immense pleasure to submit this thesis that aims to analyse the extent to which workplace politics impacts organisational performance in organisations based in the UK. However, the successful completion and submission of the project could not have possible without the valuable contribution I received from both of my supervisors in terms of guidance and moral support.

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..............MUHAMMAD AWAIS RIAZ................................. (candidate)

Date ...............24-07-2020.......................................................

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

In the light of socio-political, economic, technological and environmental challenge (for instance, concern over widespread trade wars, geopolitical uncertainties, environmental destruction, political mayhem, and technological infiltration), organisational stakeholders remain engaged in continuous interaction to make sense of a situation, adapt to, or influence any emerging change that arises (Kapoutsis and Thanos, 2018). Nevertheless, any kind of change that intimidates the status quo may fail unless the initiators of such change mobilise the support of dominant and powerful members (Franke and Foerstl, 2018). This interplay of power between those who support change and those who oppose change is reflected in political behaviour. Based on these discussions, political behaviour may be defined as an intended action within a social environment to acquire, uphold, and replenish power to be used to endorse personal and/or shared interests (Kapoutsis and Thanos, 2016). From this perspective, an organisation may engage in corporate politics (for instance, lobbying policymakers or fundraising for political campaigns) to influence key policies of the government or get involved in politically-motivated corporate social responsibility (e.g. initiatives undertaken for environmental protection and sustainability) to explore solutions to governance challenges across the globe (Rasche, 2015). At the same time, within organisations, staff members across the hierarchical set-up may exhibit political behaviour, above their basic job-related efforts to lessen the discrepancy in goals between the aspired state and the actual state (Kapoutsis et al., 2019). The formation of a political background is one of the main outcomes of political behaviour that people consider while determining their future behaviour and attitudes.

In management science, the leading perception is that organisational politics is omnipresent yet morally questionable and detrimental to those who presume that success is derived through their competency level, job-related efforts and commitment towards the organisation (Landells and Albrecht, 2017). This viewpoint led academic researchers and organisational managers to consider politics with disdain or maintain a prejudiced perception that politics is troublesome and self-serving (Lampaki and Papadakis, 2018), and interrupt the proper functioning and efficiency

of the organisation, thereby need to be eliminated (Chinomona and Mofokeng, 2016; Sambrook and Herrmann, 2018). This perception was maintained by academic researchers and management practitioners dominantly until the past few decades. Without a doubt, researchers in the field of organisational politics have indicated that it may have pervasive unfavourable effects on critical management functions such as resource allocation (Khan and Hussain, 2016), decision making and policy implementation (Eldor, 2017; AL-Abrrow, 2018), rewards and performance appraisals (Patyal and Koilakuntla, 2016; Dello Russo et al., 2017; Eldor, 2017).

However, contemporary researchers have undertaken efforts to balance the scales by investigating the positive effects of politics for the employees as well as the organisations they work for (Cacciattolo, 2015; Kapoutsis and Thanos, 2016;Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Elbanna et al., 2017; Malik et al., 2019). These researchers also argued that political behaviour may serve domestic/personal or global/shared interests based on the political mindset of the actors (Eldor, 2017); therefore, organisational politics may be viewed by individuals as a challenge or a barrier depending on the person-organisational fit (Bryne et al., 2017; Hanif et al., 2018). Opoku and Arthur (2018) made a point that organisational politics is not essentially toxic or damaging, despite traditionally perceived as self-serving, and meant for selfishly promoting self-interest, and increasing self-centredness, to be derived at the expense of the wellbeing of others, since it is unfavourable to the goals and pursuits of others.

## 1.2 Problem statement

The commonness of organisational politics in the process of goal setting/achievement and outcomes dissemination and their influence on individual and organisational welfare is largely accountable for the continuous interest in this concept within management and organisational literature (Cacciattolo, 2015; Khan and Hussain, 2016; Landells and Albrecht, 2017; Elbanna et al., 2017). Despite this, extant research on this concept is fragmented across various management fields (such as organisational behaviour, human resource management, strategic management and leadership).

Studies by Lee and Chang (2013) indicate that politics is strongly correlated with stress at work, including reduced employee commitment and job satisfaction, and increased turnover intention. Karatepe (2013) pointed out that employees' perceptions about organisational politics may also

have a range of adverse outcomes, such as communication gaps, concealing information related to critical factors, taking an active part in gossips, wastage of time, and weakening of the relationships with colleagues, peers, and immediate supervisor. Khalid and Ishaq (2015) researched to examine the correlation between organisational politics and job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention. The findings of this research indicated that organisational politics predicts employee intention to turnover in a positive way; however, organisational commitment and job satisfaction is impacted negatively. The research also insinuated that out of all other variables, organisational commitment tends to have a greater impact on employees turnover intention. Studies by Naseer et al. (2016) indicated a negative correlation between organisational politics and extrinsic motivation, exhibited through lack of affective commitment toward the organisation, this negative correlation results in lack of trust between employees and the organisation where they work, as the former have lack of faith on the external contingencies of the organisation.

Therefore most studies on organisational politics consider it as negative construct that has a detrimental impact on employee behaviour and performance. However, very limited studies consider it as a favourable construct, the presence of which enhances employee skills, behaviour and performance capabilities. This is the main gap that this research aims to address. Therefore, the current research aims to conduct empirical enquiry into UK based organisations to identify whether organisational politics leads to negative employee behaviour and performance, or it has a positive impact.

## 1.3 Background of the research

According to Wainwright (2013) power are a core and intrinsic element of politics that emerges as a possibility to make a person's interests voiced and to add authority to it. In the case of a conflicting situation, power is the concept that determines the type of preferences that are enforced. Based on the conceptualisations of Rahim (2014), it can be said that most definitions and descriptions of power constitute an inherent element stating that power is the ability of a social actor to overcome resistance while accomplishing the desired results.

 On the other hand, organisational politics is described by several authors such as Kimura (2013); Boswell and Rodrigues (2016); Lampaki and Papadakis (2018) as actions which affect human behaviour, activities and most essentially the process of decision-making by making use of

power. Organisational politics within a workplace implies the pre-meditated use of power by people to fulfil their interests and personal goals (Lam and Xu, 2019). Often managers prefer using their power and hierarchical position to affect decision-making, formulate policies and initiate actions that favour their interests and goals within the organisation. They use their rights and autonomy in a manner that is unethical, prejudiced and take decisions that favour their growth and benefit the allies (Lampaki and Papadakis, 2018).Politics used in the wrong way implies to act as an opportunist, manipulate behaviours and transform organisational concord into more conflicting and destructive outcomes. Destructive outcomes in an organisation comprised of, but not restricted to the reduction in job satisfaction, lack of motivation and commitment towards the organisational goals, and therefore, high turnover intention

Keeping aside the unfavourable outcomes of organisational politics, Eldor (2017) considers it to be an essential part of an organisation's societal fabric. While some researchers presume it to be an inherent element of organisational behaviour that emerges naturally in a social togetherness (Munyon et al., 2015; Landells and Albrecht, 2017), other researchers such as Kartono et al., 2017; Letshaba and Chinomona (2019) consider it to be an evil, stress-creating factor that unfavourably affects the proper functioning of an organisation. Nevertheless, background review of extant literature indicates the presence of mixed evidence with regards to the impact of perceived organisational politics on different job outcomes. For example, research carried out by Bodla et al. (2014) reveals that the impact of organisational politics differs across different cultures. These researchers clarified that cultural differences lead to differences in practices of organisational politics across different countries and the way employees react towards the perception of politics.

A background review of extant literature also relates organisational politics with contextual performance. Contextual performance refers to discretionary behaviours of individuals and their voluntary contributions to the organisational wellbeing ahead of their fundamental role mentioned in the job descriptions and which increases the psychosomatic core of the organisation for more effective goal achievement (Yasmeen et al., 2019). Employees with high-performance capabilities shoulder extra responsibilities apart from their formal roles and tasks, assume higher initiatives, work in close coordination with others, reduce idle time and work for additional hours, safeguard the interests of others and therefore contribute favourably towards

the effectiveness of the organisation. In extant literature relationship between leadership and performance has received significant attention. Yue et al. (2019) identified a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership (demonstration of personal power) and employee performance while weaker relationship between transactional leadership (demonstration of positional power) and performance.

According to Wihler et al. (2017), organisational politics is an essential ingredient inherent in an organisation that is required to rise through the ranks. While perceived politics is principally considered as a negative aspect resulting in a range of negative outcomes and employee behaviour, 'political skill' is considered to be a set of positive attributes essential for survival in an organisational context. In this backdrop, Frieder and Basik (2017) explain political skill as the ability of an individual, maybe a superior to understand others at work and make use of such understanding to influence them to act in ways that help to achieve one's personal goals as well as organisational objectives. People with high political skills in an organisation have a better understanding of others backed by a fundamental belief that they are capable to be in command of the processes and outcomes of interactions with others (Russell, et al., 2016). Employees with high political skills possess high social astuteness combined with networking skills and are skilled in building relationships, rapport, personal bonding with a sound understanding of the work environment. Moreover, politically skilled people possess the cerebral aptitude to read others' mind, understand situations, forecast the future, and act in ways that result in interpersonal effectiveness. By making use of their social skills, interpersonal skills and networking skills can effectively garner key resources and support from key stakeholders to cope up with unfavourable situations that may arise due to the self-centred use of organisational politics.

## 14 Rationale of the study

According to Rosen et al. (2014), organisational politics comprise of influential acts through informal and irregular means to apply influence with the intent to acquire resources, gain power and other benefits. It is generally known as an informal and unauthorised form of act and behaviour (Lewis, 2015). This is one of the reasons why organisations undertake active measures to evade, discourage, or eliminate politics from the work setting. Sun and Chen (2017) explain

that organisations that are politically influenced have diverse weaknesses because the fundamental nature of politicking is deception and deception results in adverse consequences in the form of job dissatisfaction, low work performance, decreased efficiency, increased anxiety and high turnover intention. However, it may be beneficial to the level that it facilitates employees to leverage their political mind-set and associated skills to accomplish work-related goals ahead of formal decision making (Nilsson, 2015), progress their career, and thereby fulfil their esteem needs (Boddy, 2015). Likewise, political behaviour may benefit sales and marketing personnel who are outward-oriented with extreme sales targets, as politicised work contexts can be used to get performance-based rewards in the form of monetary incentives or commissions. However, Faye and Long (2014) argue that it is more likely that OP may induce employees to exhibit self-serving, dysfunctional behaviours, and give priority to personal goals and interests over organisational wellbeing. Albeit some favourable perceptions exist with regards to the penetration of politics within organisations, a widespread understanding about the term politics is not encouraging (Rong and Cao, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2016). Franke and Foerstl (2018) insinuate that politicised organisations are considered less credible and concerns usually arise with regards to politically motivated human resource decision-making process which are assumed to be biased and unjustifiable. The authors further assert that the core reason is the bias that makes the decision-making process ineffective and unlawful.

According to Maslyn et al. (2017) politics are inherent in any form of organisation and it is an uncomplicated truth of organisational life. A universal concept in the field of organisational politics' literature is the perception of politics that is exceedingly important irrespective of its 'factual existence'. Perceived politics is the extent to which members of an organisation perceive their workplace setting to be political, supporting self-interests of others, and therefore unjust from the viewpoint of an individual. Considering the conceptual understanding of this concept, perception of politics is found to have negative outcomes for organisations and members in the organisation. A work environment with negative political perception leads to a decline in the extent of organisational commitment, in-role task performance, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour. Besides, negative perception of organisational politics enhances stress and frustration, withdrawal behaviour, and intention for turnover. A fundamental issue linked to employee voice and communication is the concern with regards to why they remain unvoiced even when they have access to pertinent organisational ideas, information, or

concerns. Cropanzano et al. (2017) derive from the social exchange theory and assert that complex association among eagerness to communicate, the possibility to speak up, and perceived politics.

In a politicised organisation benefits, rewards and promotions are likely awarded to those with good political alliances rather than the ones committed to the organisation and exhibiting better skills and competencies. This undermines the confidence and weakens the morale of committed employees. Kapoutsis and Thanos (2016) argue that a politically stimulating work environment protects the personal interests, liking or disliking of a dominant group which promote nepotism instead of merit to attain a superior position in the organisation. Also, change in organisational policies and practices may be made to serve the interests of a selected few, rather than the entire work unit (MacKillop, 2016). This incites employees to believe that performance appraisals are based on personal liking and favouritism and therefore not transparent. The outcomes of this kind of behaviour on employees are increased stress and frustration and decreased commitment (Lau et al., 2017). They may also develop a negative attitude, derogatory and decisive behaviour towards the organisation.

Considering the potential outcomes of organisational politics which are mainly perceived to be negative, employees may speculate varying responses ranging from highly favourable to the least unfavourable. Based on the postulations of the frustration-aggression theory, Baloch et al. (2017) point out that when the efforts of employees fail to yield intended outcomes due to prejudice, it causes anger and hostility which may be varied in nature depending on the circumstances or the nature of occurrences. Sun and Chen (2017) identified four potential responses of employees as a consequence of any unpleasant experience they may face, for instance, they may be likely to deviate from the legitimate organisational policies and norms including work assignments, indulge in unproductive activities such as gossip, spread rumours, or form sub-cultural groups (Sun and Chen, 2017). They may raise their voice and /or protest in association with the trade unions or suggest remedial measures. Employees may also develop high turnover intention and persuade co-workers and peers to do the same. Boutilier (2017) argues that employee' immediate reactions towards organisational politics as an aversive condition have hardly been empirically tested. It also rouses a need to examine the extent of

counterproductive behaviour, intention for turnover, affective commitment, and whistle-blowing as a theoretical groundwork of Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, loyalty, vo ice and decline.

## 1.5 Research aim and objectives

Aim of the research is to investigate and evaluate the extent to which workplace politics impacts organisational performance in UK based organisations. The following are the research objectives designed to fulfil the aim of this research.

### 1.5.1 Research objectives

- To understand the nature of workplace politics influencing employee performance
- To critically investigate and analyse the impact of workplace politics on employee performance
- To provide suitable recommendations to organisational managers to develop strategies to manage workplace politics for positive employee performance

### 1.5.2 Research questions

Q1)How does workplace politics influence employee performance?

Q2)To what extent workplace politics hinder or support employee performance?

Q3)How workplace politics could be managed to have a positive impact on employee performance?

## 1.6 Brief discussion of the methodology followed

The methodology includes mixed methods of data collection, i.e. integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods in a particular study. With a pragmatist worldview as maintained by the researcher, the quantitative method involved collecting figurative data by surveying the employees of a few organisations based in the UK. The approach for quantitative data collection involved an online survey. Online survey eliminated the need to gain physical access to the participants. The instrument used to collect quantitative data was structured. Closed-ended questionnaires were distributed online to 100 employees of the chosen organisations. The

questionnaires were mainly built on the basis of the five-point Likert scale tool. Likert scale helped to identify the attitude of employees on a fixed scale. The responses obtained from this tool helped to measure the extent of their agreeability or disagreeability with regards to a given statement or question.

Qualitative data collection involved collecting elaborate, in-depth, views of the organisational managers taking part in an interview. The researcher, as an interviewer conducted telephonic interviews from 8 managers of the same organisations from where survey was conducted. Open-ended and semi-structured questions designed for the interviews allowed the managers to openly share their views, opinion, and real-life experiences about working in a politicised work environment. The descriptive information shared by the managers was saved in the form of transcripts as digital recording the interviews was not permitted.

The sampling procedure followed to sample the employees and the managers to take part in the survey and interviews respectively were simple random sampling and purposive sampling. In case of a survey, considering a comparatively larger sample size it was feasible to implement simple random sampling and select the participants in an unbiased manner. Meanwhile purposive sampling, non-probability sampling procedure helped to select managers with at least five years of tenure/experience in their respective organisation, preferably belonging to the human resource department.

## 1.7 Structure of the thesis

The Introduction chapter sets the background of the research by introducing the topic to the readers, justification/ rationale to choose the topic to carry out the study and its significance. The chapter outlines the research aims and objectives and the subsequent questions based on which the investigation is carried out. The first chapter also provides a brief insight into the research design (methodology) followed to conduct the research to find answers to the research questions. The thesis is systematically divided into six chapters with each chapter having its purpose and association with the subsequent chapters. The rest of the study is organised as follows -

Section two is the literature review that conducts a critical discussion of the relevant theories and conceptual frameworks that underpin the concept of organisational politics and other

variables. A thorough review of existing literature is undertaken by re-examining the empirical studies that focus on the impact of organisational politics on various facets of organisational behaviour in the global context. Based on comprehensive studies and in-depth review of the extant literature, gaps in existing academic studies have been identified. Based on these gaps the research objectives and questions were designed in the previous chapter.

Section three is the research methodology that discusses about the philosophical standpoints, approaches and the relevant design that could be implemented to conduct the research. Discussion is also carried out on the type of research, relevant methods, whether quantitative or qualitative or mixed methods are feasible to collect data to find answers to the research questions. The chapter also explains the most feasible research instrument to collect data and the mode of data collection, whether online or offline, and sampling strategies to choose the intended sample. The sampling procedures are accompanied with discussion on whether the research is cross-sectional, i.e. carried out as a one-off investigation, or a longitudinal study, i.e. conducted over several phases over a prolonged time. The sample size is also justified for the type of data collected and justification for implementing a specific type of sampling strategy. Ethical considerations are also discussed with regards to data protection, anonymity, the confidentiality of data, and the protection of participants' rights. The timelines and duration to conduct and complete the research and submit the final draft are also highlighted using the Gantt chart.

Section four is the 'Findings and Data Analysis' that presents the results of the empirical research conducted on the UK based organisations. Findings obtained from the survey, i.e. quantitative data collection are presented with the help of diagrammatic representations such as tables and graphs. On the other hand, findings obtained from the interview, i.e. qualitative data collection are presented under specific themes that underpin the research problems. The findings obtained from the survey are backed up and validated against the in-depth, comprehensive information collected from the managerial interviews.

Section five is the 'Discussions' that conducts a critical discussion of the key findings obtained from the data collection and how it links to the theoretical debates carried out in the literature review. The findings that align with the literature review and that deviate from the extant literature are discussed in this chapter. Any new piece of finding or knowledge generated from

the in-depth enquiry is acknowledged. Therefore the discussions triangulate with the research problems and questions and the theoretical assumptions undertaken in the literature review.

Section six is the Conclusions and recommendations that concludes the entire research by revisiting the research aim and objectives and linking them with the overall findings obtained from the survey and the interviews. In this chapter, each objective is revisited and arguments put forward to ensure that all the objectives are fulfilled. While linking the objectives, the overall findings are also integrated with the research questions formulated in the first chapter. Based on the shortcomings obtained from the empirical research, appropriate recommendations are given to the organisational managers and those in the decision-making positions. The recommendations are directed towards the adoption of appropriate measures to use politics in the most beneficial way that yields positive outcomes relating to employee behaviour, commitment, performance, and organisational productivity. This chapter outlines the limitations of the study and scope for future research.

# Chapter 2

# Literature review

## 2.1 Concept of Power

Power is considered to be a central part of management and human relations. It is closely linked to most of the organisational processes such as management, leadership, transformation, decision making, change, conflict, knowledge sharing, satisfaction, and motivation. It also promotes a better understanding of each of the aforementioned variables (Dahl, 2017). In an organisational context, power is described as a collection of hierarchical relations of authority, the interplay of command and influence between the tracheotomy of a boss/supervisor, employee and the job (Fletcher, 2017).

The idea of 'power' is valued in any kind of social establishment. Individuals are perceived and treated in different ways depending on the extent of power they possess (Ahonen et al., 2014). Researchers such as Reiley and Jacobs (2016) indicate that subordinates have a preference to raise their issues to supervisors who they consider to be powerful. Therefore, immediate reporting authority in the form of team-leaders or supervisors, judged to be powerful is liable to attract increased extent of communication from their subordinates. In extant literature, the conceptualisation of power is done in different ways (Ahonen et al., 2014; Ojo et al., 2016; Munduate and Medina, 2017). The broadly accepted five bases of power are expert power (employee perception that the supervisor has competencies in the given arena); reward power (employee perception that the supervisor possesses the authority to reward the desired behaviour); referent power (the identification of a subordinate with the superior based on individual fondness and respect); coercive power (the perception that the supervisor has the authority to penalise for failing in the desired behaviour, such as transactional management); and legitimate power (the perception that the supervisor possesses the formal rights to impose the desired behaviour). Each of the various forms of power is theoretically discussed in the subsequent sections.

Expert power refers to the employees' perception that the immediate superior or supervisor possesses the skills and competencies in a particular area. Ferris and Treadway (2012)

researched organisations undergoing strategic reorientation and identified that 'change recipients' could get influenced by superiors acting as change agents if they consider that the latter hold expert power. Munduate and Medina (2017) researched hairdressers and identified that the expert power of dressers was positively correlated with the customer's voice. Hairdressers perceived as experts in their areas could attract more voice service users who perceived that their problems could be better solved an 'expert'. Since voice is identified as a 'change-oriented behaviour that emphasises on ideas and concerns Holmes and Stubbe (2015), it is likely that subordinates would be open to communicate with those in superior position holding a greater amount of expert power and could bring changes suited to their competencies.

Referent power refers to the identification of a subordinate with the superior based on individual attachment and respect. Pauksztat et al. (2011) found the existence of referent power in with regards to having superior interpersonal relationships, as a key determinant of being the receiver of voice (communication) in a dyadic affiliation. Research undertaken by Nasurdin et al. (2014) in the Chinese context, among employees of a private firm indicates that people prefer to communicate with such supervisors with whom they maintain a close personal bond, identification and fondness. Therefore, Reiley and Jacobs (2016) argue that subordinates in an organisation feel comfortable and interested in voicing their opinion to superiors whom they respect and admire and with whom they maintain a close personal bond. Subordinates, amidst such dyads, tend to feel more familiar and likely to remain more eager to voice their issues and concerns.

Superior exercising legitimate power has the authority to take core decisions and make use of organisational resources to apportion enviable outcomes to others in the organisation (Hofmann, et al., 2017). As a result, superiors in the organisation holding legitimate power are best suited to receive propositions by way of employee voice (Riasi and Asadzadeh, 2016). Other studies conducted by Wellman et al. (2016) indicate that employee voice or communication helps to enhance the performance levels of a central unit when it is targeted to a legal authority. Therefore, subordinates in an organisation who desire to voice their concerns are likely to be more eager to raise their concerns to supervisors whom they perceive to be possessing higher legitimate power.

According to Landa and Tyson (2017) voice could be linked to day-to-day or occasional work-related issues, such as a situation that speaks of misconduct, unfairness, or instances of discrimination, sexual harassment, or assault. It can also be a strategic issue of utmost significance, or a viewpoint that does not match with the views of others, or a suggestive idea for team/organisational welfare. Embedded in the aforementioned conceptualisations of voice is the notion that communicative behaviour is directed under an asymmetry based on risk-reward where rewards are fundamentally shared, whereas risks are at an individual level (Singh and Swarup, 2020). In this way, voice constitutes of risk, although offering a practical suggestion resembles a challenge to the status quo. This may be likely to backlash from a superior in the organisation who maintains a coercive relationship with employees.

A coercive relationship is interpreted as an unusual form of Gesellschaft relations (constituting logical instrumental, contractual, and actions that are task-oriented), where there are uncontrolled obligations to adhere to the terms established by others. In these kinds of relationships, subordinates are subject to treatment as slave labourers operating under contractual obligations. Kamal Kumar and Kumar Mishra (2017) argue that subordinates are reluctant and fear to express their concerns up to such superiors. In the case of coercive relationships, employees as subordinates may tend to emotionally isolate themselves and hold back their voice. Therefore, it may be conclusively argued that subordinates may be less eager to express themselves to the superiors who demonstrate coercive power.

Norbom and Lopez (2016) put forward that power can be drawn from norms that are embedded deeply within the structural components of an organisation. Formal power in the form of authority is the only power source within an organisation and linked with hierarchy, a core part of the organisational structure implying that power emerges from a person's structural position in an organisation (Burke and Barron, 2014). On the other hand, informal power is considered to be the influence which emerges from the bases of personal powers such as certain capabilities and personality traits (Norbom and Lopez, 2016). Wainwright (2013) asserts that these two major sources of power, namely formal and informal power, determine the extent of allocation of resources to innovative activities such as new product development. These authors signify that the allocation of resources can be influenced by political activities and intra-firm distribution of power that takes place between social actors' involved. Organisational members involved in

activities such as research and development can make use of technological know-how or information as a comparatively high power to impact the selection of the project. Hoppner et al (2014) explain power base as a personal characteristic or a positional trait, such as the resource capabilities and attributes of those involved, and the capability to influence crops up from these. Lunenburg (2012) considers the key differences between the concepts of authority and other forms of power as that the former is steered downwards while the latter works in several other directions in an organisation. Nevertheless, position in an organisation may provide a person with authority; however, the exercise of authority necessitates interaction, similar to any source of power. The exercise of power is also evident in the relationship between actors which implies that power may not be established as a characteristic attribute in itself, and an individual needs to act (Tang, 2019).

## 2.2 Concept of Workplace Politics

Workplace politics (organisational politics) is a ubiquitous part of any organisation. Organisational politics is present across a wide range of job types, from top management positions down to line employees, and can affect a wide variety of organisational behaviours. Karatepe et al, (2012) define organisational politics as "An intentional social influence process in which behaviour is strategically designed to maximise short-term or long-term self-interest." Members of the organisation engage in politics to try and make them look better. Also, workplace politics can be seen in multiple ways by the employees. For example, sometimes employees may not be affected by political actions that are taken; however, other employees who are the target of these actions can be harmed. This subjective evaluation of political actions makes them difficult to connect to work outcomes because people interpret these actions in many different ways.

The construct of workplace politics is rooted in notions of power, politics, and social influence. Even early philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, were interested in the effective use of power (Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud, 2010). Power drives influence; politics incorporates the techniques and strategies of influence; and political skill is the mechanism through which power transforms into influence. Within these different views, workplace politics can take functional forms, such as consensus building and negotiation, or dysfunctional forms, such as

manipulation, defamation, and illegitimate use of power (Byrne et al., 2016). Bedi &Schat (2013) suggested that positive outcomes of workplace politics include enhanced power, career advancement, and recognition; while potential negative consequences were the loss of credibility and power, feelings of guilt, and lower job performance. It is important to note, however, that the determination of benefit or harm is a matter of perception, not reality (Frazier et al., 2010).

Perceptions of workplace politics can guide employees' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours within an organisation. Much of the prior research on the perception of workplace politics and work outcomes has focused on the negative consequences of politics at the workplace (Byrne et al., 2017). Some negative outcomes that stemmed from these studies include decreased job performance, job stress; lower job satisfaction, turnover intentions, fewer OCBs, and less effective commitment (Byrne et al., 2017) showing that politics influences an employee's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours within the organisation. However, as stated previously the relationship between workplace politics and work outcomes needs further exploration in the research literature (Christian et al. , 2011).

## 2.3 Definition of workplace politics

Although there is a general agreement among organisational scholars that workplace politics is an important area in organisational studies, there is a lack of agreement among them concerning its definition (Karatepe et al., 2014). Scholars have characterised workplace politics in different ways. Some authors view politics as a neutral Mintzberg, 1985) and a potentially useful influence process (positive politics) (Frazier et al., 2010). This first interpretation argues that workplace politics is just "the study of power in action" and power can be used to benefit others (Vigoda-Gadot & Talmud, 2010). However, most laypersons and the majority of scholars describe workplace politics as dishonest, self-serving actions undertaken by individuals to pursue their personal goals. Different organisational scholars tend to offer definitions which emphasise different content elements. In one of the earlier attempts to conceptualise workplace politics, de Barcelona (2013) define workplace politics as "the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organisation or to obtain sanctioned ends through no sanctioned means." This definition focuses on the means and outcomes aspects of workplace politics. (Rupp et al., 2014 ) also, define workplace politics as "intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-

interest of individuals or groups." This definition focuses on the self-serving nature of workplace politics. Besides, they distinguish between proactive political and reactive political behaviours.

According to Ferris et al. (2012), workplace politics is a self-serving behaviour that emphasises on gaining an advantage over others in an organisation and perceived as a burdening stressor identified in an uncertain working context. The standpoint of workplace politics is linked to how members of an organisation affect organisational decision-making either by the use of power or taking actions to exert unfair impact such as bargaining or negotiation, introducing external consultants, agenda control, and tactics linked with the manipulation of crucial information, tactics of timing, and formation of coalition groups (Geiger and Pécoud, 2014).

Based on this viewpoint, organisational decisions are process-based outcomes wherein people tend to have divergent preferences and may form different groups or coalitions to promote their preferences; and wherein the goals of the most dominant person, coalition or group reigns. Cacciattolo (2015) points out that political behaviour is conventionally considered by thinkers as a negative or destructive use of power for the sake of fulfilling personal goals, which could go to the extent to which it violates organisational norms, policies and interests of stakeholders.

Significance of politics in an organisation demonstrates that there exists something crucial at risk for individuals, who have either gained or lost from the outcomes, whether something selfish, or materialistic or increase in reputation (Gao and Zhao, 2014). Considering that organisational politics is a frequently prevailing issue in contemporary organisations, an elaborate understanding of political behaviour may help in averting its unfavourable consequences.

Decades ago researchers such as Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud (2010) explained workplace politics as a process of social impact entailing human behaviour aimed at maximising short-term or long-term self-interest, or opportunism, which may either be at the cost of others' interests or dependable. Generally, human behaviour that is officially acceptable at the workplace is anticipated to be advantageous for the organisation instead of an organisational member or a group that benefits the organisation by meeting peoples' goals (example, leave entitlement, wellness programs, recognition, rewards) (Marcinkowski, 2014). Nevertheless, politics is an informal and unofficial behaviour which is not defined the roles or task structure of an employee, and the beneficiary of which is exclusively determined by people, and not the firm. As

individuals or organisational members compete with each other to accomplish their individual goals and attain power, their behaviour shapes the informal and psycho-social background of the environmental setting at the workplace, which swivels around social influences (MacKillop, 2016). This behaviour occurs when there are apparent gaps in the organisational policies, work-based procedures, and formally forbidden behaviours. This overall process helps in shaping a distinct political environment.

Workplace politics organisational members get involved in different types of opportunistic behaviour for the maximization of their interest. It is not characteristically acknowledged by rules, regulations and formal set of policies established within an organisation, but is fairly apparent in organisations. Cacciattolo (2015) argues that perception of employees' about the presence of organisational politics in an organisation leads to negative outcomes, including lack of organisational commitment, decreased citizenship behaviour, low work performance, and low job satisfaction. Contrary to this, there exist academic studies that suggest a positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and individual outcomes.

### 2.2.1 Machiavellianism as an inherent element of politics

Zhonghua and Chen (2014) designed a conceptual framework based on the person-organisational fit theory. The framework designed by these authors explained the potential conditions of the correlation between politics and employees' work performance while linking the psychological process with each of the variables- 'organisational politics' and 'work performance'. Initially, Machiavellianism was recognised as a mediator and it was found that when Machiavellianism was high, there exists a fragile relationship between the two variables as higher. Machiavellianism aligns with a higher extent of perceived politics. Contrary to this, the correlation is stronger where there is low Machiavellianism. The second mediator identified by Zhonghua and Chen (2014) through their framework was 'organisational identification'. This variable not just acts as a mediator between the relationship but also mediates the extent of the

impact of Machiavellianism on such correlation. The authors conducted a hierarchical regression analysis, and their research showed that perceived organisational politics has a substantial negative impact on task performance as well as organisational citizenship behaviour (OCBI).

Machiavellianism can be explained as the personality trait through which people make use of others for gaining success (Zettler and Solga, 2013).Machiavellianism entails interpersonal tactics that encourage the use of deception, manipulation, and exploitation (Femia, 2013). However, a higher level of Machiavellianism can be described as domineering, cynical, cunning, expediency, indifferent, and aloof. According to the rational choice theory, the nature and behaviour of a person characterised as a Machiavellian indicate the divergent and conforming phenomenon of those are self-concerned (Boddy, 2015). Self-interested people are strongly influenced by their penchant to make choices. For such self-interested people, or groups, social exchanges are merely economic exchange, therefore they tend to maximise their self-interest in the form of opportunism, pleasure, personal gain or advantage.

The neoclassical theory also explains the concept of self-interest and posits that the behaviours of humans are generally directed for fulfilling self-interest, and the concept of self-interest behaviour is defined as 'utility' in economics (Abubakar et al., 2014). Olorunleke (2015) explains that self-centred people intentionally pursue patterns that optimise their interests and minimise their hardship. Also, it further attracts power-seeking behaviour in a work context that is politically driven where people chase their self-interest by way of integration and cooperation.

Consistent with the rational choice theory and the neo-classical economic theory, Nilsson (2015) considered Machiavellians as manipulators who generally tend to be emotionally detached from others and show more concern towards manipulating things (also classed as low ideological commitment). Such people also exhibit lack of concern towards conventional (traditional) morality, low interpersonal touch in social relationships. Self-interested people also have a strong desire to gain authority, act as an opportunist and derive the best out of every situation, and show low affective partaking in social interactions (Abubakar et al., 2014; Chinomona and Mofokeng, 2016). In this context, Rye (2015) asserts that Machiavellians tend to counterbalance the ethical norms in their personal affairs and consider that deception is justified in following and upholding political power. High Machiavellians often tend to consider their organisations and relationships as social instruments to satisfy the personal ego, fulfil self-satisfying goals at the expense of others (Kessler et al., 2010) and may not feel any empathy or remorse at their deceptive deeds (Sowmya and Panchanatham, 2011).

In the context of workplace politics, Eldor (2017) reviewed the various facets of Machiavellianism in the form of eagerness to make use of manipulative tactics, promote untrustworthy or cynical perceptions of human nature, act unethically, and manipulate things or events to reap maximum benefits. On the other hand, DeShong et al. (2017) identified four distinct elements of Machiavellianism as amoral manipulation, mistrust of others, desire for high status (esteem), and the desire for control. The doctrine of Machiavellianism is based on both veracity and fantasy (Lee and Lawrence, 2013) and it can be perceived as the principle disregarding any empathy or morality coming in the way to attain and uphold power (Zheng et al., 2017). Emphasising on the characteristics of Machiavellianism, AL-Abrrow (2018) considers people high on Mach to possess qualities of ingratiation, flattery, deference and dependence. Such individuals are likely to be easily motivated by teamwork just to chase their interpersonal goals (AL-Abrrow, 2018). Contrary to this, people low on Mach is usually insensitive or oblivious to situational variables, show concern for others, and behave differently in divergent situations.

Aalberg et al. (2012) refer to politics as a strategic process that makes use of power, or challenges power, and acts as the force that exerts social influence on organisations. Waisbord (2014) differentiated between deep structure politics grounded in elements such as culture, symbols and communication, and surface politics as a technique to practice power on various dominant sources (such as gate-keeping, authority, manipulation and resources). Deep structure politics relates to sense-making, structured systems, the taken-for-granted rules, and the prevailing organisational structure (Waisbord, 2014). From a managerial perspective, OP relates to their ability to compel or influence organisational processes or changes and shaping their political agenda (de Barcelona, 2013). From this viewpoint, politics is about forming an insight into the organisational veracity and build the lawful perception and imposing that insight on others. Meanwhile, Kreutzer et al. (2015) inferred that there exists an unfavourable impact of the practices of political behaviour on the process of decision making.

Matthes (2012) pointed out that political tactics and political behaviour are extensively observed in almost all organisations. These tactics tend to have a significant impact on employee performances. Sjöblom et al. (2013) argue that the existence of politics in organisations is also

due to the presence of a diverse workforce, differences in employees' personal goals and agenda, mind-set, knowledge and views.

In the context of OP,Jowah (2014) argues that the existence of workplace politics is not a factor of key importance, rather the extent to which it governs the organisation is an important consideration. Bodla et al. (2015) point out that most studies associated with OP have emphasised on the idea from different perspectives. Specifically, the term OP is as a moderator, or as an intermediary, an antecedent, or an outcome because this construct is measured based on employee perceptions. Ugwu and Anhange (2015) insinuated that there exists OP in every organisation; however, the extent to which it exists is mainly the outcome of varied interests and ideas of members, the underlying culture and organisational behaviour. Nevertheless, Eldor (2017) asserts that OP cannot be categorised solely as a negative or a positive phenomenon, even though most of the previous researchers have found some negative outcomes of this construct.

## 2.4 Dimensions of organisational politics

Review of extant literature indicates that due to the salience of organisational politics in an organisational context, several theorists have categorised its dimensions. Few of the dimensional classifications of organisational politics that exist in the academic literature are the Farrell and Petersen's three-dimensional model, the three-factor classification by Kacmar and Ferris (1991), and the five-dimensional model by Fedor et al. (1998).

### 2.4.1 Farrell and Petersen's three-dimensional models

According to Farrell and Petersen's three-dimensional classification, the political behaviour of employees or members of an organisation can be categorised based on three elements, namely, internal-external, vertical-lateral, and legitimate-illegitimate. The internal-external classifies political behaviour based on external or internal resources of an organisation, for example, whether employees make use of resources from inside or outside of the organisation. The vertical-lateral dimensions refer to the acts of politics that associates with which type and level of hierarchy (Jacobsen et al., 2014). For instance, the use of vertical resources is made (seeking favour from supervisor/boss wherein such favour is not formally defined or lawful) or using lateral resources (taking unfair advantage of a colleague, or bullying a new co-worker).

The third dimension, legitimate-illegitimate indicates whether the acts of politics are within tolerable limits and minor that may occur daily or acts that are seriously extreme and considered illegitimate. Based on the proposition of the aforementioned dimensions, Duckitt and Sibley (2016) emphasise on eight clusters of acts OP comprising of legitimate vertical-internal, legitimate lateral- internal, legitimate vertical-external, legitimate lateral-external, illegitimate vertical-internal, illegitimate lateral-internal, illegitimate vertical-external, and illegitimate lateral-external.

## 2.4.2 Five dimensional classifications

According to the five-dimensional classification perception of politics is categorised into five core dimensions comprising of rewards, key others, distortion and clarity, and image. Rewards refer to the acts of political behaviour that determine the rewards mechanism as a human resource management policy (Kapoutsis and Thanos, 2016). It also relates to acts of political behaviour that determine compensatory increment, career progress, job promotion and similar other forms of rewards. The element 'key factors' relate to dominant groups that are difficult to be crossed over. The subsequent element 'image' refers to behaviours associated with the enhancement of self-image. This could be the use of political behaviour to enhance one's image by undertaking higher responsibilities, or a superior position in an organisation (Cho and Yang, 2018). The perpetrator in this classification pretence as if these behaviours are supposed to enhance others in reality, however, this kind of behaviour intends to enhance self-image.

Distortion comprises of political acts that embrace self-enhancement by way of intentionally presenting organisational policies and other information in the wrong way for self-gain. Finally, clarity entails acts of politics that entail blurred or imprecise vision of policies relating to pay and promotion.

## 2.4.3 Three factor classification

This is the most universally accepted classification of the concept of perception of politics that uses the same three-factor classification themes as followed by Fedor et al. (1998) in their proposition. Using factor analysis the authors Kacmar and Ferris outlined a give factor structure of perception of politics which was conceptualised as (i) general political behaviour, (ii) go laterally to get ahead, (iii) pay and promotions, (iv) perception of politics linked to co-workers and (v) perception of politics linked to supervisors. The results of another scale including forty

items were observed by the authors who also comprised of a Job Descriptive Index. The conclusions revealed a 12-item three-factor scale of perception of politics which received much acknowledgement among researchers in this field. The factors comprise of (i) general political behaviour (ii) go laterally to get ahead, and (iii) pay and promotion.

## 2.5 General political behaviour-

This is a type of political behaviour of organisational members that entail general acts of politics intended to accomplish one's valued outcomes. These acts of politics are the outcomes of uncertainty or ambiguity where no definite rules are obtainable and are usually expressed when the actor intends to approach scarce resources (Chang et al., 2012). For instance, an employee blaming a colleague or co-worker for an error, using deceit to get a credit of an appreciable act done by someone else, or joining dominant other groups in the organisation to gain a share of power for fulfilling own interests (Shrestha and Baniya, 2016). Such behaviours are generally marked as self-serving behaviours because of such acts aimed at accomplishing opportunist, own valued outcomes (Kurtessis et al., 2017). The antecedents of the occurrence of general political behaviour can be categorised into three factors including (i) organisational factors, (ii) factors related to work, and (iii) personal characteristics

Organisational factors contribute to the occurrence of perceptions of politics among individuals and groups. One of the core organisational factors is the hierarchical level (Rego et al., 2010). Bouckenooghe (2012) observed that the perceptions of politics in an organisational setting are high among employees at a lower level, such as operational level employees. Comparatively, it is less among managerial level employees working at a higher level. Perceptions of politics are high at lower levels because employees at this level are most likely to be vulnerable to OP (Yang, 2017). The span of control that an immediate supervisor has on an employee also determines the occurrence of perceptions of politics. For instance, supervisors undertaking limited communication or information exchange with team-members or paying less attention to their issues lead to a feeling of ambiguity among them, thereby increasing the likelihood of negative perceptions of politics.

Characteristics linked to work are key determinants of perceptions of politics and considered more important than organisational characteristics or personal attributes of an employee. Abubakar et al. (2014) point out that employees working in a friendly work environment, better job design and support from a supervisor are less likely to perceive the existence of OP. Moreover, employees getting recognised for their performance, getting fairly rewarded, feeling involved and a sense of belongingness to the organisation, getting constructive feedback, and fair performance appraisals are less likely to perceive the existence of OP (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014).Conversely, lack of open communication, lack of employee engagement, lack of consensus in decision making, and poorly conducted performance appraisals, and discrimination at work are likely to raise suspicions among employees and consequently, they may perceive the presence of OP.

## 2.5.1Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics or individual traits of an employee also determine the existence of perceptions of politics in an organisation. Personal characteristics are linked to the employees themselves and comprise of demographic variables apart from inherent traits. Few of these variables are gender, tenure and age of the employees which influence the extent of perception of politics for different employees. Chaudhry et al. (2016) found that older employees had a higher tendency to perceive the existence of OP and their performance is affected by the perception of politics. Similarly, tenured employees are more likely to get involved in political behaviour than those who are less tenured.

## 2.5.2Go laterally to get ahead

Go laterally to get ahead is an element that entails those acts of politics where an employee tends to remain quiet and rarely takes action to achieve valued outcomes (Kaya et al., 2016). People may reveal introvert behaviour remain silent and non-threatening and get rewarded because they may not react to, or intervene with the acts of politics undertaken by others (Kaya et al., 2016). Therefore, such employees play safely to win the trust of the politically stronger in the organisation and may reap valued outcomes by building better relationships with them and passively supporting their acts of politics.

## 2.6 Organisational politics and HRM

According to Gbadamosi and Chinaka (2011), most of the problems linked with the conventional functions of human resource (HR) systems are associated with ambiguity in the process of matching a potential employee to the work context. Human resource managers are mainly responsible to carry out this alignment during HR planning, i.e. recruitment, job analysis, job design, training and development, performance management, and job promotion. Mathur et al. (2013) explain that when the human resource processes are effective with clear standards, the possibility of the build-up of ambiguity is low and organisational politics is likely to be less dominant and less destructively influential in the process of HR decisions. Nevertheless, when standards for employee recruitment, job promotions or any related changes in the role of employees is vague, or uncertain, the organisational members with greater influential assets and power may enhance their involvement in the processes and affect them with opportunist, narrow-minded, unprofessional, or personal considerations (Johnson and Szamosi, 2018).

Albeit the link between organisational politics and HRM seems to be apparent, there exist inadequate empirical research on its meanings and implications. Researchers such as Awan et al. 2014; Windsor (2016) mainly focuses on the previous conceptual models designed by Ferris and King (1991) showing the relationship between HRM and organisational politics. The viewpoints of these authors are portrayed in Figure 1 which shows that the use of influence behaviour, i.e. organisational politics is affected by three core factors, namely, (i) skills in the use of influence behaviour, (ii) ambiguity in the context of decisions, and (iii) inclination to use influence behaviour. The key outcomes of the use of organisational politics in HRM are to be recognised in the light of the three-fold functions of HRM, namely, (i) personnel selection, (ii) performance evaluation, and (iii) job promotions.
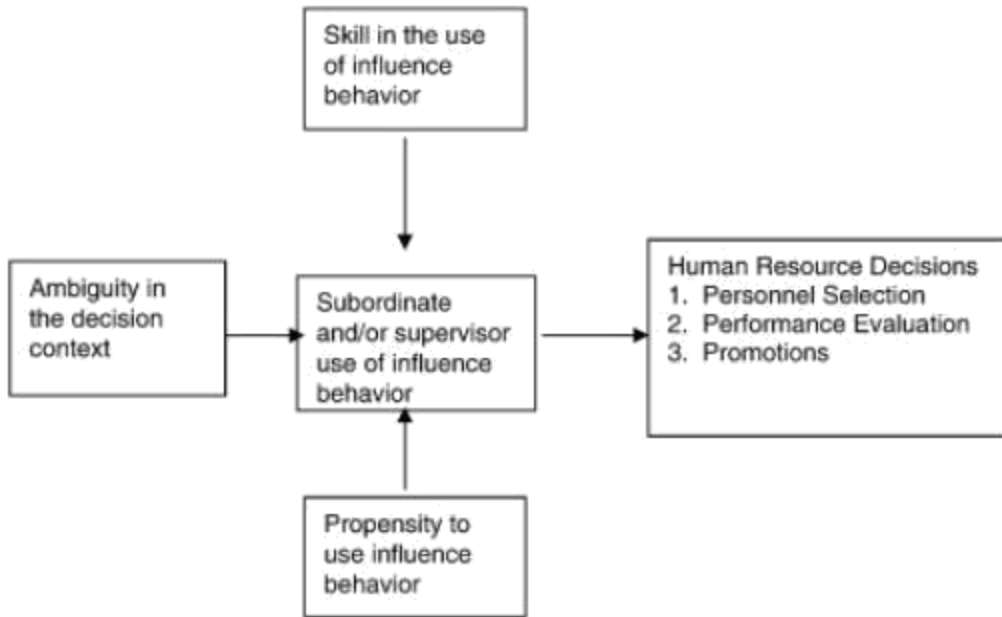
Figure1: Politics in HR decisions

Source: Adapted from Ferris and King (1991)

The key components of the above model are political skills and the use of influence behaviour. Referring to this model, Erkutlu and Chafra (2015) differentiate between two types of political skills that help members of an organisation to develop a coalition and sustain them for the long run. The facets of 'positive skills' comprise of cohesiveness, manipulations, sanctions, and the use of upward appeals (Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010). From this perspective, positive appeals emerge where individuals are aware of how to use positive, favourable influence tactics and behaviours, and tend to avert negative behaviours. In this context, Khalid and Ahmed (2016) argue that developing a range of positive political skills is vital to the generation of an effective political context and an organisational domain that is not prone to the destructive repercussions of negative political activities (such as inequity, unfairness, or injustice).

Hence it is likely that one of the key facets of a functional HRM mechanism is a high frequency of more favourable political skills at the cost of the unfavourable skills. Sun and Chen (2017)

explain that an HRM system, the members of which use legitimate political skills and acknowledged by others may be better in all respects (for instance, feeling of fairness, equity, eagerness to contribute time, knowledge and energy to members of the organisation, groups and the organisation, eagerness to exert efforts and get involved in decision-making) to other HRM systems the culture of which is subjugated by less political skills.

Ultimately, the willingness or inclination of employees to make use of political skills is yet another aspect that may influence HR decisions and HRM. Existing researches have indicated that the eagerness to make use of politics in organisations results from personal, social and situational constructs. Individuals with definite personality types are more likely to use politics in the work environment (Khalid and Ahmed, 2016). For instance, people with Machiavellian orientation, especially those hungry for power, or people who are extremely competitive or achievement-oriented are more likely to engage in organisational politics. Amid the situational variables, it was identified that hierarchical level, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and participation in decision making are associated with organisational politics. Moreover, social factors also influence the eagerness of individuals to get involved in workplace politics. Saad and Elshaer (2017) assert that such factors comprise the extent of social support and mutual trust in the organisation and the recognition of politics as a legitimate way to get things done.

The four main types of HRM linked with the political field in organisations are (i) positive/constructive HRM, (ii) negative/destructive HRM, (iii) virtual HRM, and (iv) ineffective HRM. The demarcation of HRM into these four factors is the outcome of two factors – (i) the extent of organisational politics (high or low organisational politics, as determined by the behaviour, skills, ambiguity and propensity) and the actor's form of interest (organisational interest of self-interest).

The development of 'Positive/constructive HRM' is evident when decision-makers emphasise on the major interest of the organisation and when their orientation towards organisational politics is high (Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010). Perceptions of organisational politics are generally at mid-level, as conflicts may crop-up due to lack of consensus on organisational interests. Few members may consider it a legitimate conflict, while others may acknowledge it more controversial and less legitimate. Also, HRM of this type is the outcome of the constructive use of power and its impact on the HR system. Jain (2011) argues that when the use of political skills

is 'positive', the legality of political behaviour increases even more, which consequently lead to positive or constructive HRM.

 The goals tend to be shared/collective and seen from the common good for all members of the organisation as well as other stakeholders (Rosen et al., 2014). For instance, positive HRM can be evident in strategic HRM decisions (such as in case of staffing or designing a new benefits plan) where there is a high commitment towards fulfilling the organisational goals and interests. The ultimate decision is usually the one endorsed by those who can persuade others and promote their ideas with convincing arguments. The process of positive politics depends on the aptitude to justify and to develop coalitions surrounding alternatives and ideas that work towards shared goals and the common good, rather than directed towards the personal interests of few people.
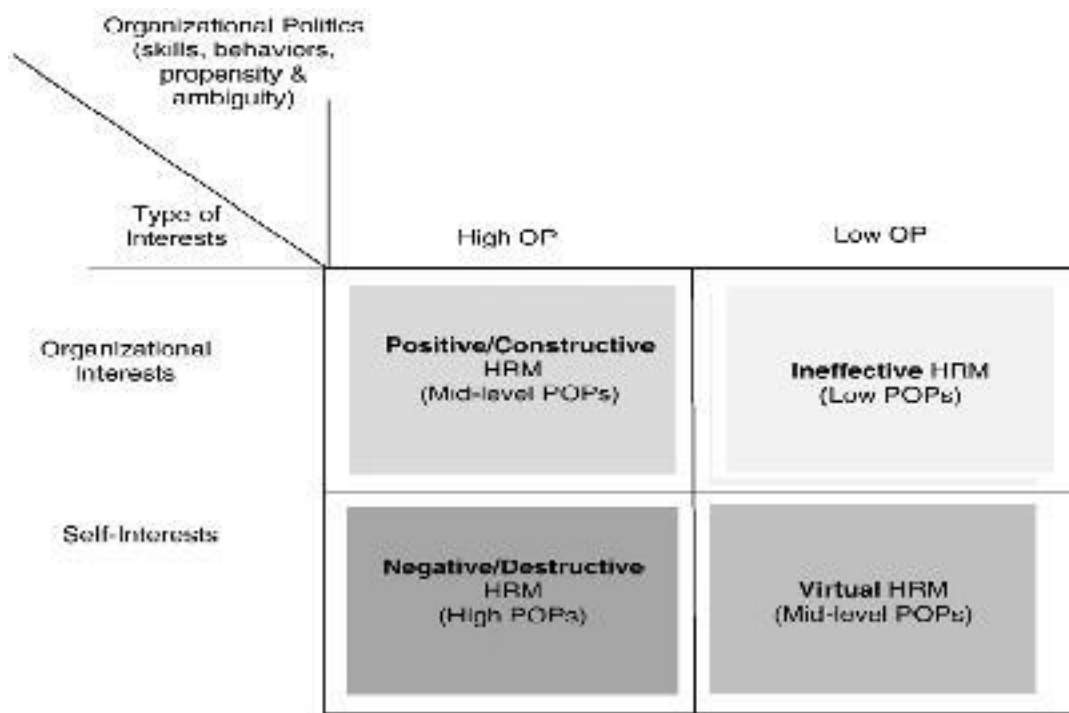


Figure 2: Organisational Politics, perception of politics, employees' interests, and HRM

(Source: Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010)

The development of negative/destructive HRM is apparent when those in decision-making positions emphasise on their own interests and when their orientation towards organisational

politics is high (Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010). Perception of politics is high as most people will recognise high workplace politics as fulfilling the interests of few while ignoring or compromising with the general organisational goals. If the use of negative political skills is made, the legality of political behaviours tends to decrease even further, which consequently leads to negative HRM. This kind of HRM is found when parties in the organisation have high political capabilities; however, use politics to fulfil narrow personal interests. Beheshtifar and Herat (2013) explain that in cases ceases there may be biased performance appraisals, favouritism, discrimination etc that are tuned towards the favour of a selected few rather than working for the interest and welfare of the entire organisation.

Meanwhile, the development of ineffective HRM is apparent when those in decision-making position emphasise on organisational interests, but their orientation towards organisational politics is low and interrupts the process of goal achievement. Perception of politics is at a low level, as interests are organisational and politics is low, and not self-directed. Kimura (2013) argues that in such cases, the relevance of positive or negative political skills is negligent because of the low level of organisational politics. For instance, when a senior human resource manager is politically incompetent, any decision taken by the manager may be irrelevant relative to the decisions taken by other organisational managers. Sarwar (2016) asserts that this kind of political powerlessness makes the complete HRM function lax with regards to the general organisational strategy. This implies that staffing, employee training and performance management systems may be given less priority and the possible influence of the human resource manager could be reduced. Nevertheless, if these managers acquire some political skills, positive HRM could be developed that endorse the overall organisation.

Finally, the development of virtual HRM is evident when those in decision-making position emphasise on self-interest and when their orientation towards organisational politics is low and it is not possible to materialise these interests (Lau et al., 2017). Perception of politics is mainly at the mid-level as self-interest is involved that may generate an idea of inequity or unfairness. Nevertheless, the actual degree of organisational politics is low, which to some extent, counterbalance these ideas. Once more, the connotation of positive or negative politics is not relevant as the extent of general organisational politics is low. A real-life example of virtual HRM is obvious in organisations when human resource managers chase personal gains in-spite

of organisational accomplishment (for instance, endorsing or indemnifying the prosperity and welfare of a selected few only). However, the managers are politically unskilful in accomplishing these goals. (Hanif et al. 2018) argue that if people in the organisation attain some political power, negative HRM can be built-up and prove to be detrimental for the entire organisation.

## 2.7 Perception of politics and Employee Motivation

According to Beeri et al. (2013) in usual terms, politics is understood as an accumulation, build-up and exercise of power to reconcile varied interests, and therefore, it is assumed that any company, irrespective of its size, is involved in everyday politics. It is a central element of organisational life and relates to variables such as power, authority and influence. Power involves the efforts to influence the behaviour and/or attitude of other individuals, or groups, and the aptitude to mobilise resources on behalf of an organisational goal or strategy (Rong and Cao, 2015).

Researchers such as Abbas et al. (2014) indicate that the perception of politics that an individual has is more important than the actual existence of organisational politics. The reason for this is because people tend to respond to what they perceive and not essentially to what is objectively real (Abbas et al., 2014). Khalid and Ahmed (2016) consider it useful for employees to analyse the concept of perceived politics to gain a deeper understanding of the work environment. An employee in a political context may have a conviction that hard work may not be constantly rewarded, as organisations with a higher degree of politics are not adequately concerned with the personal needs of the workers. The attitude of employees towards their work, for instance, organisational commitment, may also be linked to the perceived existence of organisational politics (Lau et al., 2017). Often the lower perception of politics leads to increased employee satisfaction while constant feedback environment is related to a lower perception of organisational politics. Malik et al. (2019) argue that the use of political behaviour can be made to forecast important work outcomes, as involvement in politics enhances job satisfaction, commitment towards the organisation and participation in decision making. The inverse relationship between participation in politics and work performance demonstrate that severely political involvement appears to have negative outcomes for employees' attitude and behaviour at work. Political behaviour likely has different effects in diverse cultural contexts (Boswell and

Rodrigues, 2016), and the effects of organisational politics may not essentially be unfavourable in all situations (Sambrook and Herrmann, 2018).

Perception of politics is also related to work motivation, and review of extant literature mainly identifies a negative relationship between the two constructs. According to the theory of self-determination, extrinsic motivation may be classified into autonomous extrinsic motivation and controlled extrinsic motivation (Yen, 2015). Intrinsic motivation refers to an inherent form of autonomous motivation as individuals according to their wish and derives greater interest from such behaviour.

According to Kim et al. (2016) perception of politics is likely to be detrimental to intrinsic motivation. Human behaviours that are intrinsically motivated are the ones performed for pleasure and satisfaction gained by performing them. Perception of politics is linked with employees' feelings of uncertainty about organisational decisions and ambiguity about their roles, procedures and expectations (Stern et al., 2017). This behavioural pattern stimulates them to feel hesitant while faced with the likelihood of taking any action and undermines the satisfaction obtained from carrying out a task. Perception of politics is also associated with low job autonomy and consequently reduces intrinsic motivation.

Perception of politics could moderate the extent of autonomous external motivation (Tomczyk, 2018). To be autonomously externally motivated makes it imperative that employees adopt a set of organisational values and inherit it into their personal goals. Identified regulation makes people feel highly autonomous because their behavioural tendencies are consistent with their individual goals and identities (Tomczyk, 2018). Integrated regulation helps employees to make sense of their behaviour and that their behaviour is an inherent aspect of their identity. Nevertheless, in a politically charged organisation, employees suppose that the behaviour of senior management is inclined towards the goal of fulfilling their self-interests (Sun and Chen, 2017). In such a situation, employees are less likely to adopt the values and goals of top managers. Besides, highly politicised work organisation, the existence of self-interested behaviour and resource-competitive tendencies are widespread. Mölk and Auer (2018) argue that employees' relationships with team members, peers, colleagues and supervisors are more likely to be tensed, rather than friendly and warm and this creates a climate of distrust. The

prolonged existence of this trend also inhibits employees' experiences of kinship and relatedness where low autonomous external motivation takes hold.

Extrinsic motivation takes place when human behaviour is forcibly or seductively provoked by external contingencies such as rewards or negative outcomes (Rong and Cao, 2015). Perception of politics enhances employees' discernment of ambiguity while obtaining rewards. Eldor (2017) argues that ambiguity as to whether achievements will lead to positive outcomes is detrimental to employee motivation. However, specific and clear feedback about employee performance influences their motivational extent of meeting work-related obligations. Chaudhry et al (2016) indicate that feedback about work performance is often political and uncertain in a highly politicised organisation.

From a different perspective, (Hanif et al. 2018) indicate that the perception of politics tends to enhance amotivation, which refers to the lack of self-determination. Due to amotivation, individuals often experience a lack of eventuality between their behaviours and performance outcomes. Those with a high perception of politics often feel confused as to which set of behaviours could result in anticipated outcomes. People may lose the expectations of getting a reward or the intent to change the sequence of events as they are less likely to know the acceptable actions (Wu et al., 2018). This tendency leads to the feelings of uncontrollability or incompetence. As a result, a high perception of politics is linked with a low sense of self-determination.

## 2.8 Organisational Politics and Organisational Culture

According to Fischer (2009), culture may be defined as a system that has shared meanings among all members of an organisation and that differentiates one organisation from the other. It is a collective discernment found among all members of an organisation. A strong culture provides direction and stability to an organisation and its employees (Carlström and Ekman, 2012) while a weak culture may lead to widespread chaos, misunderstanding and instability, often resulting in organisational failure (Bell et al., 2014). Culture also affects the behavioural tendencies of employees as well as their attitude, job performance and turnover rate. The impact of culture in influencing employees' behaviour is a significant area of research in the current competitive market environment, as more and more organisations are characterised with reduced formalisation, flattened organisational structure, increased span of control and empowered

employees. Cacciattolo (2014) points out that organisations are measured by their management values, honestly, accessibility, morality, and management information security and these are strongly related to consistency and organisational effectiveness. Moreover, authors such as Kathiravelu et al. (2014) pointed out that organisational culture is the most dominant decisive factor of imitation and innovation.

According to Kujala et al. (2016), the integration of culture, power, and politics have spread throughout organisations in contemporary business situations. With a consistent increase in competition, organisational members are not only concerned about completing their daily work but also think ways how to sustain. The prevailing culture, power and politics at the workplace have a strong impact on the daily operations of the organisations, how people think, and how they deal with the emerging challenges (Serpa, 2016). The values and beliefs that organisational members hold within a particular culture impact the level to which the behavioural aspects of institutions, groups, and individuals within diverse cultures are endorsed and the degree to which they are acknowledged as legitimate, acceptable, and effective (Hofstede, 2011). One of the most dominant versions of cultural understanding that explains how national cultures differ across countries is given by the Hofstede's' cultural dimensions model. The dimensions of national culture are demarcated into – (I) Power distance (PDI) (ii) Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), (iii) Femininity versus Masculinity (MAS), (iv) Uncertainty avoidance (UAI), even though two other dimensions of (v) Long term versus short term orientation, and (vi) Restraint versus indulgence was added later on. However, in the present thesis, the concept of OP will be linked to the first four core dimensions of culture.

Meanwhile, a conceptual model of OP and culture was designed by Leslie and Gelfand (2012), which was designed based on two core presumptions. Firstly, the model assumed that OP is a cultural phenomenon and an integral part of everyday human life in an organisation. This point elaborated that organisations have a tendency to build interdependencies among its members across various levels. Patyal and Koilakuntla (2016) examined that in a socially interdependent, informal workplace setting, there exist the need for socially harmonised mechanisms and actions through which individuals can embrace self-interests, regardless of the existing culture. This implies that OP is universally existent (Opoku and Arthur, 2018). Irrespective of the existence of OP across the globe, the frequency of its occurrence, nature and consequences varies from

culture to culture. This leads to the second supposition that culture has a significant influence on OP.

Likewise, Watkins et al. (2014) carried out a meta-analysis to examine the mediating role of culture on the correlation between individual attitude and behaviours on one hand and how they perceived organisational politics on the other. Watkins et al. (2014) used a sample of 290 employees and found that there exists a negative correlation between employees' perception of politics and their attitudes and behaviour (especially organisational commitment). Moreover, the findings of this study also indicated that there exists a positive correlation between employees' perception of politics and their intention for turnover. The study also found that cultural contexts with high uncertainty avoidance exhibit a strong relationship between 'fairness' and 'perceptions of politics' and weak, yet positive correlation between 'turnover' and 'perception of politics'. Meanwhile, cultures with high individualism, demonstrate a stronger correlation between perceptions of politics and employee empowerment and commitment towards the organisational (Nazarian et al., 2014). It was also found that high power distance culture demonstrate a weak association between perceptions of politics and task performance. Based on the overall findings, the researchers, consequently, concluded that although the usual response of people towards OP is negative, their responses may vary depending on the prevailing culture in the organisation.

Laforet (2016) point out that tolerance for uncertainty exhibited by a culture signifies the extent to which uncertainty or ambiguity prevails among employees in an organisation, which intensifies their views of OP. It is more likely that this behaviour of employees is found in cultures with lower levels of uncertainty avoidance because people are generally more tolerant towards deviating ideas and risks. Meanwhile, in cultures characterised with high fatalism, members tend to show greater acceptability towards uncertainty as they apply less control on their life events, which increase the level of uncertainty, lack of social affiliation, dependence on others, and pre-emptive coping (Deephouse et al., 2016).

When there exist higher acceptability and tolerance towards uncertainty within a cultural context, employees' work behaviours are less likely to be perceived as political because such behaviours are not far away from being normative and predictable. For example, in a high uncertainty avoidance culture, people may consider socially influencing behaviour as politically motivated. Munyon et al. (2015) suggest that the human resource department of an organisation should

effectively deal with certain productivity linked issues and challenges, which mainly take place as a result of OP. Advocating this view, Taştan and Davoudi (2017) assert that HR managers can easily control OP through diversified human resource strategies and ensure politics do not adversely affect employees behaviour and performance.

Previous studies carried out by Hofstede (2011), compared the influence of culture on OP in two different cultural contexts such as that of the UK and Israel, and how culture influence the way members perceive politics. The differences in peoples' perceptions were mainly due to variance in the power distance dimension between these cultures, as the UK ranks higher on power distance than Israel. Theoretically, Hofstede (1980) combined the two cultural dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance and found the existence of a cultural setting where top management held all the power and authority, dictated the formal rules, regulations, issued directives to be followed by the members without question. Decision-making is mainly undertaken by the managers without gaining employees' consensus and in most cases, the interests of employees are not considered important while executing policies. In addition, Hofstede used power distance as a key cultural dimension on which depend the extent of power and authority held by members in different countries and accordingly the perception of OP is shaped by individuals.

 The power balance in a cultural context, therefore, affects the extent to which employees view the existing behaviours as formally implied and tolerable, or as politically driven in an organisation. Venaik and Brewer (2013) assert that inequality of power is usually higher in cultural contexts where power distance between higher level and the lower level is greater, and members easily accept power differences, fixed status hierarchy, and being directed to work in a structured work environment. In addition, in case of ascription-oriented culture, people are more likely to experience higher extent of power inequality since members are largely dependent on formal, inflexible standards for acquiring or allocating status and rely less on competition, individual efforts, and sense of achievement. Bodla et al. (2014) highlighted that autonomy within an organisation comprises of two core facets- (i) managerial capabilities to work without adequate supervision and control; and (ii) the level to which empowerment is held by managers to take decisions without the need to gain consent from the top management. Another study conducted by Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) signifies that the relation between autonomy and

other variables of organisational behaviour such as competencies and performance outcomes can be complex.

Sambrook and Herrmann (2018) view this complex- natured relation from different positions, firstly, such relations may be direct or indirect in which autonomy may influence the organisational outcomes by way of mobilising key variables such as capabilities and OP. Secondly, there can be mixed outcomes of the variable 'autonomy' in an organisation that is likely to have a positive or a negative impact on the work environment (Clegg et al., 2015).Elbanna (2016) asserts that autonomy makes possible for an organisation to shift from a centralised, control-oriented, autocratic culture to a culture driven by employee participation and commitment. Therefore, organisational leaders need to be watchful in exercising autonomy and carefully examining the situations in which autonomy need to be extended (Sheehan et al., 2016). Since research on organisational behaviour and strategic management emphasises mainly on autonomy as a pre-requirement for OP, autonomy is also acknowledged as part of a culture that drives OP. For example, being empowered for autonomous decision-making without consultation with managers is one of the most dominant attributes of an employee, which can be perceived as a respite from the strict policies and structured regulations, therefore, may aggravate political thinking and acts.

Hence, Elbana (2016) asserts that if managers are granted autonomy to make decisions with reduced supervision, it is likely that political behaviour within an organisation is increased. To be more precise, this practice may result in the increased OP and political behaviours as organisational managers may take decisions that fulfil their self-interests, and personal goals. Hence, autonomy could be politicised through misuse of power and decision-making for satisfying personal egos, fulfilling self-interests, indulging in opportunistic behaviours. Okeke and Mabah (2019) conducted studies to identify the impact of management authority and strategic control on OP and how the effectiveness of strategic planning is affected by OP. The researcher concluded that increased extent of autonomy combined with lower levels of power and control tends to infringe the impact and effectiveness of strategic planning by augmenting the extent of internal tension and level of OP in an organisation.

## 2.9 Employees Reaction to OP

A strong link is found to exist between perceptions of politics and employees' political behaviour in organisations, indicating that political behaviours tend to cause increased stress, reduced confidence, and reduced performance (Abbas et al., 2015). Bodla et al. (2015) explain that these individually-distinct outcome behaviours of employees offer significant insights into the thoughts, feelings, and behavioural intentions that employees form towards their organisation. Yang (2017) argues that employees often get involved in organisational politics fearing victimisation by other group members or senior-level employees and managers.

Shafiq et al. (2014) indicate that politics plays an instrumental role in shaping employees discernment of fairness and transparency at an organisation. For instance, an employee may consider the workplace to be adequately victimised by OP. This discernment may lead to a belief that the organisation does not treat people fairly, indulges in acts of discrimination, favouritism, which may engender negative employee behaviour.

Rosen and Levy (2013) carried out studies to investigate the perceptions of OP among workers in an organisation, the circumstances they face, adaptive measures to cope with these circumstances. The findings indicated that employees mainly exhibited any of the four types of behaviour, namely, (i) perceived threat, (ii) attitude towards others (iii) intention to quit, (iii) coping strategies. The overall conclusion of this research was that OP has a negative impact on employee morale and was harmful for the overall health of the organisation. Meisler and Vigoda-Gadot (2014) conducted research to explore and examine the impact of perceived OP on job attitude, which is a major antecedent to the level of employees' commitment towards the organisation. Findings indicated that OP is not strongly linked to job attitude, although workplace politics is considered detrimental to shaping positive employee attitudes and thereby organisational commitment.

According to Jam et al. (2011), politics related perceptions are acknowledged as more vital than political behaviours as employees tend to react not based on reality, but the basis of their perceptions about OP. Research conducted by Kane-Frieder et al. (2014) indicated that when there exists any kind of political support from the supervisors, then employees are in a better equipped to deal with and sustain the politically driven situation. Moreover, it was found that in the presence of political support from the supervisor and the existence of political perceptions,

employees' work engagement, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour are at a favourable level.

Bodla and Danish (2013) asserted that OP has a significant impact on the supervisory levels, middle level and lower-level employees. Moreover, political sensitivity is one of the dominant forces that decide a trust-relationship between the management and the workers. Bekele et al. (2014) argue the employees who perceive their workplace to be politically driven are more likely to feel strained, frustrated, and experience breach of the psychological contract, and dissatisfaction with work. Chinomona and Mofokeng (2016) add that high employee turnover intention and consequently retention issues are the most expensive outcomes an organisation faces due to existence of OP. Khalid and Ahmed (2016) in their study identified that OP and perceived fairness specifically predicted whether the perceived compensation system of employees was effective enough to motivate them to achieve the organisational goals. The researchers asserted that some forms of political behaviour (such as solidity) can be perceived to be less detrimental than other types of political behaviour (such as favouritism or prejudice) in performance appraisals.

Arogundade et al. (2016) conducted an in-depth study to add value to the existing literature by identifying the extent to which workplace incivility is predicted by the perceived OP and thereby job related negative emotions. The research included examining employee perceptions of distressed commercial financial organisations and results indicated that employees perceiving higher extent of OP were more likely to be involved in workplace incivility. Moreover, the outcomes of the study also indicated that negative job-related emotions are a significant predictor of incivility at the workplace as employees having negative emotions about their jobs were more engaged in uncivil behaviours.

Kaya et al. (2016) examined the effects of rumination in the context of the relationship between perception of OP and a myriad of employee responses in an organisation. The findings indicated that rumination tends to augment the effects of OP by intervening with the problem-solving process, discouraging different sources of social support within an organisation, and augmenting effects of negative information on cognition. The overall findings of this study reinforced the hypothesised relationships, recommending that the perception of OP tends to have a negative impact on rumination; however, has an inadequate impact on the behaviour of those employees

engaged in rumination. In yet another research carried out by Balogun (2017), the correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and OP and their interplay with regards to employees' work-related behaviours and work-related outcomes were analysed. This research also intended to test the intermediating effects of perceived OP on the link between EI, negligent behaviour, intention for turnover, and job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated that perception of OP was a strong mediator in the relationship between EI, negligent behaviour, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Likewise, Sambrook and Herrmann (2018) carried out an exploratory study to identify two potential factors that played the role of key mediators in the link between OP and work outcomes. The use of the social exchange theory was made by the research to assess the mediating role of organisational justice and trust in the association between pertinent work outcomes, including affective commitment, perceived organisational support, organisational citizenship behaviour, and OP. The outcomes of the study indicated that organisational justice played a mediating role in the link between employees' trust in their supervisor and OP. It was also found that trust plays the role of a mediator in the relation between organisation citizenship behaviour and justice.

Chaudhry et al. (2016) studied the impact of employees' commitment to the organisational goals, their performances and OP across various firms in developing countries such as Pakistan. The author inferred that employee performance is crucial for the majority of the firms, however, adequate attention in this area was not given by previous scholars researching on OP. The researchers put forward that employees tend to show negative reactions towards perceived OP because workplace politics acts as a stressor in the context of the organisation. It also acts as a barrier in facilitating employees to achieve their career goals, lowering morale, arousing conflicting behaviour and weakening relationships. The findings of this study were supported by other researchers such as Parvaiz et al. (2015) who revealed that the presence of various stress-related outcomes of the perceived OP, including employees stress and burnout, and job anxiety. Meanwhile, Dello Russo et al. (2017) consented that OP also leads to employees experiencing the existence of discrimination, favouritism, and lack of transparency in performance appraisals.

## 2.10 Workplace politics influence on overall organisational performance

One area in which the political literature may be best served would be to explore mediators of the relationship between workplace politics and organisation performance. For

example, Ambrose, (2012) observed that organisational trust and organisational support mediated the relationship between organisational commitment and workplace politics. Perhaps these intervening variables play a role in the relationship between workplace politics and specific outcome variables.

## 2.11.1 Perceptions of workplace politics

Perceptions of workplace politics are individuals' evaluations of the degree to which others advance their interests by participating in illegitimate, self-serving behaviours (Colquitt et al., 2012) is generally considered to have a negative influence on work outcomes (Christian et al., 2011). Individuals' perceptions of organisational politics are informed by observing others form unofficial coalitions and inner circles, tear down those who are not members of the inner circles, always agree with powerful organisational members even if they privately disagree, and allocate resources and rewards in ways that do not align with organisational policies (Mroz, Allen, 2017). Because workplace politics are not explicitly sanctioned by the organisation, they can quickly run counter to organisational goals (Manning, 2018), having a negative impact on the organisation and employees (Hochwarter et al., 2010).

Perceptions of workplace politics have been associated with a variety of negative workplace outcomes. Meta-analytic work has found that politics are associated with high levels of psychological strain, burnout, turnover intentions, and counterproductive work behaviours and low job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational trust, organisational justice, and organisational citizenship behaviours (Podsakoff et al., 2007). These negative outcomes are associated with workplace politics because political environments typically cause an increase in the job demands employees to face at work (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015). Job demands refer to the stressors in the work environment that require employees to exert physical and psychological effort (Karatepe et al., 2012).

In an organisation where employees perceive high politics, they must not only attend to the in-role requirements of their job but must also commit energy to monitor others' behaviours and maintaining their reputation. Responding to these additional demands wears on employees and results in increased strain and poor work outcomes, such as low task persistence (Bedi & Schat, 2013).Although perceptions of politics are considered precursors to negative outcomes, politics are inevitable in organisations and some researchers have argued that non-sanctioned

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behaviours may help employees and managers secure resources, cut through the red tape, and get things done (Harris et al., 2007). Furthermore, employees who perceive the job demands of politics as a game to be played or a challenge to overcome may perceive the benefits of political behaviour and not experience the negative outcomes generally associated with such politics perceptions. Still unclear is what could lead employees to appraise workplace politics as a challenge rather than a hindrance stressor. Because POS creates a psychologically safe environment, it may be the context required to lead employees to view politics as a challenge.

## 2.11.2 Relation between workplace politics and performance

**Organisational justice**

One of the mechanisms that may explain how workplace politics is related to work outcomes is through the concept of organisational justice. Organisational justice is defined as "linking objective facets of decision making to subjective perceptions of fairness" (Chang et al., 2009). Theories of organisational justice find their roots in theories on social exchange. The social exchange relationship implies that if the organisation treats an employee fairly, the employee will continue to perform well and be satisfied with the organisation. Politics could possibly play an intervening role in perceptions of fairness. For instance, employees may perceive their work environment to be highly politicised. This perception could lead to reduced feelings that the organisation is treating them fairly and in turn, may result in negative employee behaviours directed at the company. Therefore, the present study places an emphasis on attitudes. If an employee perceives that there work environment is highly political, he or she will develop negative attitudes towards these organisations. One negative attitude that is the focus of this study is organisational justice. Through the general negative lens created by a political environment, attitudes regarding organisational justice are proposed to be lowered (Hochwarter et al., 2010). However, perceptions of justice are not the only attitude that may be impacted.

**Trust**

Trust has also been shown to be connected to justice in a variety of ways (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015) and may also be related to politics. Trust is a construct that many research studies

have explored for the past 1015 years (Hochwarter et al., 2010). In line with the social exchange framework, trust is seen as a mutual exchange between the employee and the organisation. As a mediator of justice outcome relationships, trust has been connected to several employee based outcomes including task performance, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Podsakoff et al., 2007). As stated previously, based on prior research relating workplace politics to workers' subjective evaluations of events (Rupp et al., 2014), it is believed that workplace politics will provide a lens through which organisational justice is perceived. If an employee experiences a highly politicised work environment, this will alter his or her justice perceptions. These justice perceptions will, in turn, affect work outcomes, and this relationship may be mediated trust.

**Politics, Social Exchange, and Fairness**

One possible explanation for the complex relationship between workplace politics and work outcomes is the social exchange theory (Chang et al., 2009). According to this theory and the concept of the norm of reciprocity (Byrne et al., 2016), if employees feel as though they are being treated fairly and have trust in their organisation, these employees should feel the desire to reciprocate positive feelings, thoughts, or behaviours to the organisation in exchange for this fairness and trust. This theoretical outline of the social exchange relationship has not been previously connected to workplace politics; however, research evidence suggests that a theoretical link can be made between workplace politics and a select number of work outcomes.

Mroz & Allen, (2017) suggest that not all employees may experience negative outcomes as a result of workplace politics. For example, actions taken by a supervisor may be perceived as highly political by one employee and fair by another. If one employee was positively affected by workplace politics, he or she may view the situation as fair; however, another employee who was negatively affected by those political actions will view the situation as unfair. Therefore, it has been argued that interpretations of political behaviour can be seen as a driving force behind whether a situation can be viewed as just or not (Hochwarter et al., 2010). This can be seen theoretically in the social exchange model because when political behaviour is perceived by employees to have negative effects, they no longer believe that fair treatment is being given to them. Therefore, there is no need to reciprocate any positive behaviour towards the unjust organisation.

Rupp et al. (2014) incorporated organisational justice into a social exchange model and found that organisational justice predicted organisational commitment, task performance, and OCBs. Although organisational justice has been previously looked at in a social exchange context, no empirical link has been made between workplace politics and organisational justice within this framework. In the context of the larger model, organisational justice can be seen as a mediator of the relationship between workplace politics and work outcomes.

## 2.12 Workplace politics hinder or support employee performance

Recent research has directly tested and found support for the appraisal of stressors and their differential relationships with work outcomes. For instance, in a recent study where researchers asked participants, using single-item measures in experimental conditions if they felt challenged or hindered, participants demonstrated that workload, role conflict, and ambiguity were appraised as challenge and hindrance stressors simultaneously (Bedi & Schat, 2013). Additionally, appraisal of the stressors partially mediated the relationship between stressors and work outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction, turnover intentions, and strain. Kaplan, (2008) developed and obtained validity evidence for a new scale for measuring appraisals. They showed that when controlling for the effect of perceived stressors, the appraisals of the stressors explained variance in outcomes, indicating that appraisals above and beyond the stressors influence how individuals respond. They also showed that appraisals statistically mediated the relationships between stressors and work outcomes; however, their data were cross-sectional and could not draw causal conclusions. The work conducted by researchers to test and better understand the role of appraisals in the challenge-hindrance framework opens the door for continued exploration of how stressors are experienced at work and how some stressful environments might lead to positive work outcomes. For example, politics is categorized by Bedi & Schat, (2013) as a hindrance stressor. However, there may be conditions where politics can be appraised as challenge stressors.

## 2.13 Challenge and Hindrance factors

The stressors train relationship has historically been the guiding theory for occupational stress research aimed at understanding and predicting employee wellbeing. Within this

framework, stressful events (stressors) lead to the stress process and individuals' experience of strain. Psychological strains (e.g., anxiety) and physical strains (e.g., high blood pressure) lead to low performance and poor health outcomes for employees (Kaplan, 2008). Building on the stress process, the transactional model (Byrne et al. , 2016) explains that individuals evaluate stressors and determine if they are threatening or non-threatening. The theory proposes that individuals' evaluation of the stressors, not necessarily the stressors themselves, determines how they react or respond (Harris et al., 2007). Thus, when faced with a stressor, individuals first cognitively evaluate whether the stressor represents a potential opportunity to gain rewards and experience growth or as a potential to lose or experience harm before reacting.

Extending from the transactional model, Mroz & Allen (2017) argued that individuals' appraisals are what categorize stressors as either challenge or hindrance (threatening) stressors. When stressors are perceived as challenging, they present individuals with a problem to solve, an obstacle to overcome (e.g., job demands, time pressure, workload), and have the potential to lead to personal growth, mastery, or other positive rewards (Karatepe et al., 2014). Alternatively, hindrance stressors are perceived as unnecessary barriers (e.g., organisational bureaucracy, ambiguity, role conflict) that threaten goal attainment or personal development. Appraising events as hindrances lead individuals to experience distress, which leads to strain and consequently poor performance (Albrecht, 2006). Challenge stressors are indeed demanding and may require that individuals expend significant effort to overcome them. However, because there is potential to gain from the stressors – in the form of rewards, recognition, or personal growth – they are associated with positive outcomes, such as persistence (Christian et al., 2011). Hindrance stressors are also demanding, but represent potential loss or harm and are associated with negative outcomes. Rather than assuming all stressors lead to negative outcomes, researchers have used this challenge hindrance model to take a nuanced view of how stressors impact individuals' experience in the workplace (Colquitt et al., 2012).

Challenge and hindrance stressor appraisals have been used to understand why some stressors lead to positive work outcomes when they are expected to lead to strain and poor performance (Colquitt et al., 2012). For example, to empirically test the challenge hindrance framework, Vigoda and Talmud, (2010) conducted a factor analysis on job demands for managers and demonstrated that stressors such as workload, time pressure, and level of responsibility loaded on a challenge stressor factor, whereas stressors such as politics,

ambiguity, and job insecurity loaded on a hindrance stressor factor. Hindrance stressors were positively associated with outcomes such as voluntary turnover and negatively related to job satisfaction, whereas challenge stressors had the opposite relationships with these outcomes. Frazier et al. (2010) found that challenge stressors were associated with positive work outcomes (loyalty, decreased withdrawal, lower job search behaviours and intentions to quit) and hindrance stressor with negative outcomes (work withdrawal, job search behaviours, turnover intentions, and psychological strain). Meta-analytic work has supported the challenge-hindrance framework and found that challenge stressors have positive relationships with job satisfaction and organisational commitment and negative relationships with turnover intentions (Karatepe et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Mroz & Allen, (2017) meta-analysis showed that hindrance stressors have a negative relationship with performance and motivation, while challenge stressors showed the opposite relationships. Together, this research supports the two-dimensional framework of challenge-hindrance stressors and suggests that researchers should distinguish between these types of stressors. Although research has supported the challenge-hindrance stressor framework, the difference between these stressors is based on Chang et al. (2009)'s classification of job demands, which makes assumptions about how stressors are appraised. Specifically, although stressors labelled as challenges or hindrances have differential relationships with strain and job outcomes, this does not provide evidence that the stressors are appraised as being challenging or hindering. Moreover, individuals do not necessarily agree about which stressors are challenging and which are hindering. Individuals' own life experience and contextual information from the work environment influence how sensitive or vulnerable they are to stressors (Rupp et al., 2014). Thus, categorizing all stressors as challenging does not take into account individual differences. Furthermore, stressors may also be appraised simultaneously as challenging and hindering (Karatepe et al., 2012). For example, a promotion at work presents additional responsibilities that may help an individual benefit financially and grow professionally, but may also create the potential for work overload and risk failing in the new position. This combination of risk and reward may lead some individuals to appraise a promotion as both a challenge and hindrance stressor to varying degrees (Dolan et al., 2005).

For instance, if employees believe that politics can be used to gain resources, rewards, or attain goals, they may appraise politics as a challenge stressor, or both hindrance and challenge, but at varying levels. Although perceptions of workplace politics are stressful, if employees believe they have support from their organisation to act and overcome the potential hindrances or roadblocks presented by the politics, they may be more likely to perceive politics as a challenging situation. In this case, positive outcomes could result from a seemingly stressful environment due, at least in part, to how the political environment is appraised. Because politics and POS predict outcomes in different ways and theoretically influence people differently, it is worth exploring how the constructs interact to influence employees' appraisal of work and subsequent reactions. For instance, in a work environment with high POS, employees feel the environment is psychologically safe, warrants the investment of their preferred selves into their work, and invites them to take risks to benefit the organisation (Karatepe et al., 2012). Hence, in a high POS environment, employees are more likely to appraise stressors as challenges rather than hindrances. Applied to the political scenario presented at the beginning of this manuscript, if these employees perceive a high level of organisational support, they will be prone to react positively to the political situation presented. Employees in the scenario have lost expected resources due to politics and must complete the same work within the same timeline but without the resources, they had anticipated. Because employees perceive high levels of support and believe they work in a psychologically safe environment, they will appraise the political situation as a challenge, have high levels of engagement in their work, and complete the project within the deadline despite the lack of additional resources.

Thus, in alignment with organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) the employees in this scenario would pay back the organisation for its support by rising to the political challenge and engaging in their work. In contrast, within the same political scenario but in an organisation where employees perceive low levels of support, they will appraise workplace politics as a hindrance. Because POS is low, perceived psychological safety is low – employees do not believe it is safe to engage or take risks to benefit the organisation. Furthermore, these same employees will not believe the environment is psychologically safe, will not trust the organisation to reciprocate any extra efforts to achieve the deadline with no resources, and will appraise the workplace politics as a hindrance stressor. Thus, perceptions of politics are just

another barrier that stands in the way of completing the work; consequently, employees will disengage in a political and unsupportive environment.

## 2.14 Empirical research on the impact of OP on employee behaviour and performance

Research conducted by Bond et al. (2015) was directed towards synthesising previous researches by emphasising on key factors that affect the performances of workers in projects. Their findings indicated a positive correlation between perceived OP, organisational communication, and commitment with the individual performance of the members of a project team. Nevertheless, a negative correlation was found to exist between task delegation and the individual performance of project team members.

Labrague et al. (2017) researched to understand what impact OP has on employees' job satisfaction. They intended to determine what impact workplace politics has on employees' job satisfaction. Their research comprised of 250 healthcare employees as the sample. The use of statistical analysis, especially t-test and mean average comparative studies used for hypothesis testing indicated no association between the extent of employees' job satisfaction and their level of motivation to act in a self-serving way for the achievement of organisational goals. The findings of their research also identified a negative association between the extent of employees' job satisfaction and their work-based activities to achieve personal benefits (Labrague et al., 2017). Also, the study indicated a negative relationship between OP and the extent of job satisfaction among employees influenced by workplace politics. Based on the overall findings, the researchers indicate a negative correlation between perceived organisational politics and the level of employees' job satisfaction. However, an inverse relationship was inferred between the constructs in the sense that higher perceived OP leads to a reduced level of job satisfaction among people.

Empirical studies were also conducted to examine the correlation between OP and employee commitment at the workplace. Few studies linking OP with employee commitment have identified a negative correlation between the variables, for example, Kanta and Srivalli (2017) identified that the perceptions of OP were negatively correlated to organisational commitment

and consequently employees' job satisfaction. Moreover, Balogun (2017) researched that the perception of OP among employees in public sector firms has a strong negative correlation with affective commitment and job performance. These claims are further supported by Amponsah(2015) who conducted studies to investigate the mediating effect of job insecurity as explained by the relationship between OP and employee commitment towards the organisation. The author identified that the perceptions of OP have a significant negative correlation with the two elements of organisational commitment, namely, the normative and affective commitment. The author also found a positive correlation between perceived OP and continuance employee commitment towards the organisation in the same study.

Donald et al. (2016) conducted a similar study and pointed out that even though OP may have some positive impact on employee commitment unless employees are controlled and managed to a certain extent, it can lead to organisational uneasiness, which may consequently lead to reduced employee commitment. These researchers argue that this necessitates a political skill comprising of abilities to engage actions that promote feelings of trust, confidence and diligence. Therefore, OP represents a crucial facet of human resource management (Donald et al., 2016). Nevertheless, even though the human factor is acknowledged as one of the most strategic resource Hill et al. (2016), human society, not excluding the organisational context is often typified by power, influence and politics (Sheehan et al., 2016). As a result, OP is influenced by societies in which such they tend to be embedded. As a consequence, research outcomes on OP in a particular society may not provide the answers to all the questions raised in different other societies. For example, a particular political act, such as offering gifts to convince others to get political votes and persuade them to swear a pledge can be perceived as lawful and normal in some parts of the world, while in other parts it may be perceived unlawful or unethical (Bai et al., 2016).

## 2.15 Relationship between organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and perceived organisational politics

When employees engage in OCB or voluntary behaviours that go ahead of the formal job roles and increase organisational effectiveness (Hsiung et al., 2012), it is likely to influence the process of their career development and workplace success (Gupta and Singh, 2013). Based on

previous studies, Rehan and Islam (2013) assert that organisational managers gain from employees' voluntary behaviour that is not agreed upon by the senior management. Li and Kong (2015) consider it as a supra-role behaviour of employees that cannot be imposed on them and that emerges from reciprocal feelings. OCB replicates employee behaviours that are discretionary, not specifically acknowledged by formal rewards mechanism, and that collectively endorses the effectual functioning of an organisation (Bester et al., 2015). Even though OCB lengthens employees' formal job descriptions and is not formally remunerated, it can contribute significantly to an individual as well as organisational effectiveness (Basirudin et al., 2016).

Montabon et al. (2016) consider OCB to be a critical element to the career success of employees because such behaviours are often weighted more than behaviour linked in in-role job performance. In the field of organisational behaviour (OB) research, there exist various OCB enablers ranging from proactive personalities (Emami et al., 2012), personal values and person-organisation fit (Hsiung et al., 2012), perceptions of justice (Yadav and Punia, 2013), organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Shaari et al., 2015), ethical decision making, and decision autonomy (Yadav et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the recognised drivers of OCB comprise of personal attributes, such as personal values (Kacmar et al., 2013), including leader-member exchanges, and contextual factors such a discernments of organisational justice (Naseer et al., 2016). Despite this, negative factors, such as extreme workload, or increased stress and anxiety, may divert employees away from OCB. Instead of going deeper into the conceptualisation of OCB, this literature tries to identify the relationship between OCB and perception of politics, i.e. the influence of the latter on the former.

While elaborating on the potential effects of employee perceptions of politics on OCB, Khaola and Sebotsa (2015) consider such perception as beliefs that decision making at an organisational is determined by self-serving behaviour. In this context Cilliers et al. (2016) put forward their views that if ambiguity and stress cropping up from perception of politics are strong enough, it could reduce the ability of employees or their motivation to steer their learning and efforts towards voluntary activities that may contribute to organisational welfare.

Extant research mainly considers the impact of perception of politics on OCB to be negative. In this backdrop, Ogungbamila (2013) considers the perception of OP to be a key source of employee stress at workplace, as employees believe that decision-making by senior management

is driven self-interested, selfish behaviours and meant for personal interests and not organisational interests. Perception of OP makes employees' presume that the organisation promotes "working behind the scenes" as a legitimate way for resource acquisition, albeit, such actions are undertaken at the expense of the cumulative goods (Yang et al., 2013, p.29). However, Donald et al. (2016) view that political behaviour is intrinsically imperative for organisational functions for most organisations, and even if it is regarded as a negative attribute; some studies indicate that employees perceive OP in different ways and also deem it to have some positive contributions. Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) argue that such behaviours are likely to manifest employees in several ways, such as manipulation of OP or using diplomatic or coercive tactics to gain short-term personal benefits, not considering the implications for other organisational members.

According to Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) self-serving behaviour that reinforce the perception of politics, consequently, can result in several detrimental outcomes, such as increased stress, lower commitment, and deteriorating productivity. On the other hand, studies that deem the impact of perception of OP as positive on employees' work behaviour, such as creativity and innovation, characteristically consider OP as a negative facet that shifts them away from behaviours that could otherwise be advantageous for the organisation (Cheema et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Sun and Chen (2017) indicate that studies that create a link between perception of OP and OCB explicitly are rather inadequate, and even very limited researches consider factors that may influence this adverse relationship. However, exceptions are the studies of Kartono et al. (2017) who consider the mediating roles of self-monitoring and conscientiousness, and who emphasise on the mediating role of perceived organisational support.

According to Chang et al. (2012), there generally exist a negative correlation between employees' perceptions of OP and their engagement with organisational citizenship behaviour. Employees, after being convinced that organisational decision-making is strongly influenced by managers' self-serving behaviours, experience increased levels of apprehension fearing that such behaviours might compromise their aptitude to meet their job requirements. Karatepe (2013) considers this situation as an energy-draining effect that may decrease the possibility that employees undertake activities that are not part of their formal job duties and responsibilities. This implies that if decision-making in the organisation appears prejudicial and stimulated by

unclear and hidden agendas, employees will be more concerned about fulfilling their formal job expectations, rather than serving the organisation voluntarily. Moreover, to lessen their abilities to get involved in OCB, perceptions of OP should demoralise the motivation to indulge in such behaviour. Employees who perceive that self-serving behaviours of decision-makers induce their organisational making are likely to feel sceptical, withdrawn, and isolated (Rosen and Hochwarter, 2014).This undermines their sense of belongingness to the organisation, trust and collaborative behaviour to achieve shared goals. Therefore, their inclination to engage in OCB is likely to be reduced when they are engrossed with negative feelings about the functioning of their organisation. If employees presume then self-serving decisions will destabilise their work performance, they consider may consider it as a threat to their welfare (Rosen and Hochwarter, 2014). The presence of these negative feelings is likely to lessen their enthusiasm to participate in voluntary behaviour and activities that extend beyond their formal job descriptions. Therefore, extant literature generally considers the perception of OP detrimental to the behaviour and conduct of employees and also harmful to the health of the organisation. Hence, the overall inference from the theoretical debates is that there exists a negative correlation between employees' perception of OP and their OCB.

## 2.16 Moderating Role of Leadership in mitigating the negative impact of perception of OP and OCB

Review of extant literature presents a range of factors that are linked to perceptions of OP among the members or an organisation. Demographic factors such as women, employees with a lower level of education, and less tenured employees tend to perceive their workplace as more political (Terriquez and Kwon, 2015). Likewise, pessimists and those with the low extent of the organisational obligation, and people who feel less engaged in the organisational decision-making process are more political. Other variables such as task characteristics, job position, organisational culture and climate, supervision and leadership approach are all linked to perceptions of OP (Ellen et al., 2016). Despite the presence of these factors, the present literature considers leadership as an important variable, as it is strongly related to most of the aforementioned other variables (Fashola, 2017). Therefore, the discussion narrows down to

analyse the relationship between leadership patterns that exist in organisations and OP and how leaders influence employees' perceptions of OP.

Kimura (2012) argues that transformational leader has better capabilities to lessen the extent of perception of OP in an organisation being a visionary leader with a long-term vision, having a well-defined mission with an operational plan for its achievement. A transformational leader may ease complex organisational situations such as uncertainty and ambiguity and authenticate the feeling that organisational challenges can be death with, cautiously and decently (Saleem, 2015). Moreover, the transformational leadership capabilities strengthen ethical values, in so doing, contributing optimistically to the psyche of justice and fairness, lessening emotions of inferiority that emerge from a lack of an option to political alternatives (Shah and Hamid, 2016). Managers following transformational leadership are in a better position to create a favourable climate of trust and confidence that endorses professional calibre and excellence leading to reduced perception of OP. In addition, transformational leaders are known to maintain transparency in the process of decision-making by ensuring employees' consensus in decisions, reinforcing the presumption that both, the manager and the organisation are fair and trustworthy, and diminishing the extent of perception of OP (Iqbal, 2016).

Hoxha (2015) considers transformational leaders as better communicators who educate employees about the reason for the existence of OP. Orabi (2016) explains that transformational leaders pursue open communication in educating employees about the prevailing situation and existing state of affairs, explaining the reasons for typical decisions that necessitate change and their outcomes for the entire organisation. In the process, employees are more likely to get elucidation of why an organisation got involved in politically motivated decision-making, such as to increase the pace of decision making and political skill development (Kao et al., 2015) (Orabi, 2016). Boehm et al., (2015) put forward that these acumens then help employees to interpret why and how political behaviours are noticeable in their work environment. Han et al. (2016) put forward that these acumens then help employees to interpret why and how political behaviours are noticeable in their work environment. Gulluce et al. (2016) suggest that transformational leaders also encourage innovative behaviour and share ideas about innovative ways to handle complex work situations (Gulluce et al., 2016), manage chaos (Boehm et al., 2015), and how people can maintain superior performance even though political games are

widespread and existent within an organisation (Shah et al., 2017). In such leadership environment, employees are likely to be in a better position to deal with adversity caused due to OP, maintain superior performance, and less likely to reduce their OCB (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017).

In addition, transformational leaders also highly concerned about the challenges that employees encounter in comprehending their everyday tasks (Orabi, 2016), employees need to believe that their immediate reporting authority and the organisation care about their values and well-being (Abouraia and Othman, 2017). The conviction then mitigates adverse negative reactions to unfair or bigoted political games. Likewise, the discernment that their immediate manager is concerned about their welfare can increase employees' familiarity of a shared organisational identity (Mencl et al., 2016) and commitment towards the organisation which is likely to enhance their recognition of self-serving behaviours as unavoidable facets of organisational operations (Abouraia and Othman, 2017; Dappa et al., 2019). Because transformational leaders look forward to matching the personal goals of employees with the goals of the organisation, this shared identity should lessen the adverse feelings that arise with perceived OP and inhibit employees from completely ceasing their OCB.

According to Lussier and Achua (2015), organisational managers following transformational leadership also concerned about the challenges that the employees encounter while carrying out their everyday tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, employees being led by transformational leaders also believe that their immediate reporting authority, and in general, the organisation is serious about their well-being (Bai et al., 2016). This belief helps to mitigate negative presumptions and thoughts and employee responses to bigoted political games (Reuveni and Vashdi, 2015). Likewise, employees' belief that their supervisor cares about their welfare and wellbeing is likely to their experience of a joint organisational identity and commitment towards the organisation. This may increase the extent of their acceptance of self-serving behaviours that are unavoidable facets of any organisation (Munyon et al., 2015). Because transformational leaders remain cautious to align the personal goals of employees with the organisational goals (Shah et al., 2016), this shared identity helps to lessen the unfavourable feelings that emerge with the perception of politics that prevent members from ceasing their commitment towards citizenship behaviour.

## 2.17 Leadership and Knowledge sharing as a moderator

According to Jain and Moreno (2015) employees having a belief that organisational decision making by managers is determined by self-serving behaviours, the access that they have to peer knowledge may lessen the associated stress and moderate the unfavourable influence of perception of politics on their OCB. This is because comprehensive knowledge sharing offers understanding and acumen into probable solutions for mitigating the unfavourable implications of politics- based decision-making and ensuring superior job performance. The practice of knowledge sharing is often promoted by organisational managers following superior leadership practices such as participative leadership, transformational and distributed leadership practices (Zhang et al., 2015). In each of the leadership styles, employees are encouraged to share information, share ideas and best practices, and tacit knowledge that contributes to the organisational knowledge.

Eldor (2017) points out that leaders also promote a favourable culture of open communication that consequently facilitates employees to share knowledge and information in real-time with colleagues as well as immediate supervisors to aid in the process of decision-making, therefore eliminating the likelihood of politicised behaviour where decisions are made to fulfil self-interests. Knowledge sharing ensures that decisions are not taken by managers acting as autocratic leaders and taking decisions to fulfil their self-serving behaviours, exhibiting a culture of high power distance (Ladan et al., 2017). Bavik et al. (2018) argue that access of employees to peer knowledge, therefore, enhances their self-confidence and makes them capable to protect themselves against the potential threats that may emerge due to politicised work environment. It also reduces the likelihood that employees abstain from OCB to a large extent.

Moreover, when employees in an organisation have the scope to closely share knowledge with colleagues or peers daily, the negative implications of self-serving behaviour demonstrated by the peers is likely to be weaker. The practices of knowledge sharing or information exchange help people to comprehend and acknowledge how self-serving behaviour facilitate their colleagues or co-workers to leverage their proficiency for organisational effectiveness (Abouraia and Othman, 2017). In such a situation, employees are likely to perceive the self-serving behaviour or others to be less threatening to their own performances or scope for career

development. This ensures that employees are less likely to neglect behaviours directed towards OCB. In the context of high knowledge sharing, organisational members are in a better position to learn from their colleagues or peers how to transform a politically dominated organisational climate to their best advantage (Brouer et al., 2016; Shah and Hamid, 2016). On the contrary, if their affiliation with colleagues or peers is typified by restricted sharing of knowledge, they should feel more endangered by the presence of vicious games of politics (Iqbal, 2016) and anxiety that such behaviours will demoralise their job performance (Bai et al., 2016). This conviction, in turn, is likely to exaggerate the negative impact of perception of politics on their eagerness to get deeply involved in voluntary behaviours.

### 2.17.1 Moderating role of resilience

According to Paul et al. (2016), resilience is a personal attribute that replicates an individual's tendency to recuperate and learn from unfavourable events. Irrespective of the existence of self-serving behaviour in an organisation, to engage in OCB, people should be able to gain recovery from the disruptive and unruly effects that self-serving behaviours have for their daily job performance (Paul et al., 2016). Resilience restocks the energy levels of employees and enhances their abilities to counter difficult situation that arises in the organisation. Therefore, Shoshani and Slone (2016) argue that resilient employees may not consider political games as barriers to their job performances and success, and consequently perception of politics is likely to have a negative impact on OCB.

Nguyen et al. (2016) argue that, from a leadership point of view, resilient behaviours are most likely to be exhibited by dynamic leaders having the ability to lead the organisation in turbulent times and still maintain a competitive advantage. Such leaders are also agile and inculcate behaviours of resilience and agility among employees making their behaviours more dynamic and flexible to cope up with the politicised environment. Employees may then be able to change political games into opportunities rather than getting involved in chaos, conflicts and forming destructive subcultures that may be detrimental to OCB.

According to Shah and Hamid (2016), employees who demonstrate increased levels of resilience may consider politicised decision-making as a learning opportunity in terms of sustaining their work performance and career progression amidst the existence of this source of work ambiguity. The motivation to learn comes with increased resilience could motivate individuals to build

insights into ways to safeguard their performance at work from such behaviour. As a consequence, the negative consequence of the perception of politics on their aptitude to fulfil their formal job needs to be mitigated, thereby making it less likely for employees to fully withdraw from OCB. Likewise, the likelihood of superior learning regarding ways to cope-up with political decision making may diminish resistance to OCB (Duan et al., 2017). This is due to the fact that resilient workers consider getting involved in voluntary behaviours, in-spite of the existence of workplace hardship, as a challenge and direction for career development and personal aspirations (Malik et al., 2017).

Therefore, the negative relationship of perception of politics and OCB needs to be mitigated when high resilience is there because workers tend to derive some kind of personal happiness by indulging in voluntary activities in the presence of resilient organisational politics. Ultimately the defending role of resilience has to be especially strong when individuals do not rely on knowledge sharing which is encouraged by transformational leadership. Paul et al. (2016) emphasise on a three-way relationship between resilience, perception of politics, and the circumstantial resources of transformational leadership and sharing of knowledge. These authors explain that when employees do not rely on peer support or supervisors to cope up with political games, they might suffer from a restricted understanding of the reasons or motives for such decision-making (Paul et al., 2016). On considering lack of transparency in the organisational decision-making, employees are likely to fear that they will not be able to fulfil the formal work obligations (Paul et al., 2016) which moderate the possibility that they will be eager to take supplementary, voluntary activities. The abilities of employees to draw from their resilience then ought to be especially useful for addressing the performance damages of perception of politics. When employees do not depend on the guidance or direction given by transformational leaders to deal with organisational politics, or on the acumen of peers who may experience similar challenges, the extent to which employees can retaliate and gain knowledge from the related setbacks will be especially beneficial for mitigating the negative impact of perception of politics on OCB.

On the contrary, when employees can draw from the acumen of peers or transformational leaders, they are likely to gain personal support in their endeavours to deal with adverse circumstances arising due to politicised decisions (Zhang et al., 2018). The defensive role of

resilience in the negative relationship between perception of politics and OCB consequently should have less incremental significance. High energy levels, which originate as a result of strong resilience, are less required to pawn the unfavourable performance outcomes of perception of politics when employees capitalise on leaders' mentorship or organisational peers who had already had similar experiences (Mohsin Bashir et al., 2019). Overall, when employees have increased access to pertinent circumstantial resources, their resilient behaviour should have a lesser defensive effect on the relationship between the perception of politics and OCB.

## 2.18 The moderating impact of perceived organisational politics on perceived leadership styles in an organisation

According to Abbas et al. (2014), the perceived negative or unfavourable self-serving and unscrupulous behaviours followed by dominant groups for persona gains are referred to as organisational politics. For instance, the use of illegitimate ways to acquire power, sidestepping the chain of command, and indulging in acts of lobbying senior management level to get a promotion. Sun and van Emmerik (2015) consider OP as a subjective phenomenon, and is different for different people in an organisational setting; it is referred to as perception of politics. The potential outcomes of perception of politics are generally considered to be unfavourable for organisations for decades. Chinomona and Mofokeng (2016) explain this is so because the idea of social exchange theory presumes that employees intend to serve and pay back the organisation in a positive manner if they perceive the organisation they work for has been positive to them.

On the other hand, if they perceive the organisation to be negative to them (ie when their perception of politics is high), they tend to reciprocate by demonstrating negative behaviour, acts and attitude that leads to an increased extent of negative outcomes. For example, Makhdoom (2013) researched school teachers and found that perception of politics results in increased stress at the workplace, including burnout, and counterproductive work behaviour. Not only at an individual level, but the perception of politics tends to diminish the positive effects of behaviours which is advantageous for the organisation, for example, organisational citizenship behaviour. Makhdoom (2013) observed that the perception of politics reinforces the negative relationship of organisational citizenship behaviour with burnout and CWB. Nevertheless, when consideration is

given to the effects of leadership styles, the situation tends to be different. Perception of politics plays from the leadership side and employees in the organisation become prey to the acts of politics. Hence, the effects of the interaction of the variables – perception of politics and leadership on work outcomes may take a very different form. The subsequent section analyses how perceived organisational politics influence the relationship between the perceived leadership style and behavioural outcomes.

## 2.19 Moderating role of perception of politics between perceived leadership style and organisational citizenship behaviour

Based on the postulations of the social exchange theory Bodla and Danish (2013) indicate that when employees in an organisation perceive that the organisation is favouring and positive, their reciprocal relationship is more likely to be favourable. Likewise, when they perceive that the organisation is not favourable them, their responses are likely to be unfavourable towards the organisation in terms of commitment, attitude and behaviour (Shah and Hamid, 2016). An example of this kind of transaction is the negative relationship between perception of politics and inclination of employees towards organisational citizenship behaviour (Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers, 2016). When the two constructs – the perception of politics and organisational citizenship behaviour are compared at a definitional level, Khan et al. (2019) observed that the latter entails organisational-serving behaviours that are voluntary and identified to be positive and favourable for the organisation.

Contrary to this, there exists a perception of politics that involve self-serving behaviours which may put the interests of the organisation into the stake. Therefore, there exists a negative relationship between these two variables. In addition, as the perception of politics is usually perceived by employees as a negative construct, the initial, most spontaneous response of the employees is to reduce their organisational facilitating, voluntary behaviour (Hadi and Yulianti, 2019). Employees exhibit these behaviours because it does not bring them any direct reward as acts of volunteerism are not an essential part of the formal job description (AL-Abrrow, 2018); and reduction in such behaviour does not lead to any direct negative impact on them (Zhijie et al., 2019). Therefore, employees consider it safe to reduce voluntary behaviour in responses to perceived organisational politics.

A leadership style that is transformational is linked positively with organisational citizenship behaviour and it entails encouraging employees, communicating clearly and inspiring them to go beyond their usual duties, challenge conventions, and forego their personal goals for the shared goals of the organisation (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017). It also stimulates them to change their existing behaviour and demonstrate positive work behaviour when perceiving the organisational atmosphere to be highly political. When in a highly political organisational situation, employees are led by transformational leaders are motivated to be creative, innovative included in their work-related goals through idealised influence. Employees as followers of transformational leaders are also encouraged to use their problem-solving abilities through intellectual stimulation (Dappa et al., 2019). Meanwhile, leaders show concern for the followers and their needs, respect them through individual consideration.

Contrary to the leadership behaviour as discussed above, there exist transactional leaders who generally aim at maximising employee output through reciprocal relationships based on rewards and punishment. De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia (2017) insinuate that in a highly political work environment, reward structure is often unfair, ambiguous, and politically influenced which makes a hypothetical scarcity of resources. As opposed to transformational leadership, transactional leaders, even in a highly politicised work environment, offer employees rewards to encourage them for positive acts and favourable behaviour (Dappa et al., 2019). Such leaders also take retaliatory measures against employees if they indulge in negative, unfavourable acts. Malik et al (2019) argue that in such situations employees are likely to maximise acts that are voluntarily positive and are not part of a formal reward structure to accomplish more rewards.

Likewise, when employees have a higher perception of politics at the organisation, they are likely to be less certain that they will be rewarded fairly and transparently (Zhang et al., 2018). Whereas, when employees are led by transactional leaders who establish exchange-based, give-and-take-relationships, then the good performances of employees on their assigned formal duties alone is not helpful (Chhetri et al., 2016). In a politicised work environment, employees are likely to increase their acts of voluntarism going ahead of their formal duties to get more and more rewards, which does not reflect their true organisational citizenship behaviour (Chhetri et al., 2016; Raza et al., 2018). Therefore, an increased level of OP acts as a moderator in the

relationship between leadership (transactional and transformational) with OCB by reinforcing the positive relationship between them

## 2.20 Managing workplace politics to support organisational performance

### 2.20.1 Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support (POS) refers to employees' belief that their organisation values their individual contributions and cares about their wellbeing and success (Frazier et al., 2010). Consistent with social exchange theory (Kaplan, 2008) in which organisational support theory is rooted (Rupp et al., 2014 ), actions taken by the organisation or leaders, such as discretionary rewards and acting in the benefit of the employee beyond what is legally and contractually required, increase employees' level of POS. Employees with high levels of POS "payback" the organisation with high levels of commitment and task persistence or productivity (Karatepe et al., 2014), and with low turnover, withdrawal, and strain. Positive work outcomes, such as these, provide support for the claim that employees work to return the support provided to them by the organisation and its leaders. When employees perceive high organisational support, they develop trust in the organisation and their supervisors, and the employees believe that if they make mistakes, their good intentions will be taken into account when the organisation reacts (Byrne et al., 2017).

In this way, POS creates perceptions of high psychological safety employees' belief that they can express their preferred self-engagement at work without risking negative consequences to their status or career (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Psychological safety is one of the three psychological conditions that theoretically (Manning, 2018) and empirically (Kaplan, 2008) lead to employee engagement. When employees perceive high organisational support, they also believe that because the organisation cares about their wellbeing and success, when they engage in behaviours with the intention to benefit the organisation, they will not be punished even if they fail to benefit the organisation or make a mistake that could potentially harm the organisation (Ambrose, 2012). Thus, a supportive work environment is safer and less prone to reflexive punishment without appropriate investigation. Through psychological safety, POS influences how employees appraise and react to perceptions of workplace politics.

## 2.20.2 Trust in the workplace setting

Another important mechanism that may help to drive the relationship between workplace politics and work outcomes is trust. In previous studies that examined the role of trust in organisational settings, the construct has been broken into cognition-based and affect-based trust (Byrne, Peters, Weston, 2016). This conceptualization is based on prior research on how trust is broken down into two components, one based on how a person feels and the other based on how one thinks. Trust can also be integrated into a larger theoretical framework through which workplace politics affects work outcomes. Researchers have shown that a lack of trust may be the result of the perception of a political environment within an organisation (Mroz & Allen, 2017). The role of trust in its relation to workplace politics has been conceptualized in multiple ways. Ahmed & Nawaz (2015) provided evidence showing that a trusting climate within an organisation can lead to better perceptions of workplace politics. This finding was also supported in other studies as well. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that politics can influence trust perceptions. Mroz and Allen (2017) suggested that both justice and trust may be moderators between workplace politics and work outcomes. Organisational justice and trust are also related.

## 2.20.3 Organisational Justice

As mentioned earlier, the concept of organisational justice is defined as "linking objective facets of decision making to subjective perceptions of fairness" (Karatepe et al., 2014). Meta-analytic findings have indicated that organisational justice is related to several important work outcomes. Constructs that have been empirically examined as outcomes of organisational justice within a social exchange framework include affective commitment, organisational citizenship behaviours, perceived organisational support, and trust (Colquitt et al., 2012). Connecting organisational justice to workplace politics can further our understanding of why politics is related to negative outcomes and provides a mechanism to change workplace behaviour through organisational justice perceptions. The relationship between organisational justice and workplace politics has been well established throughout the literature. One possible outcome of a politically charged work environment is a negative impact on justice perceptions in an organisation. Research has demonstrated that employees often express jealousy and resentment due to a perceived unfair distribution of the organisation's resources

Another example of a situation in which both workplace politics and justice can interact to impact an employee's view of the company is in the perceived fairness of an administrative decision. If employees believe that administrative decisions are being grounded in political actions rather than job performance, they will view these processes as unjust and unfair. This negative relationship between organisational justice and workplace politics has been demonstrated in the research literature (Hochwarter et al., 2010). Some scholars have argued that workplace politics may be too similar to organisational justice. This argument finds its roots in social exchange theory discussed earli*er* (Byrne et al., 2016). Both politics and justice have been related to the social exchange theory because politics could be seen as what happens when an organisation lacks justice and, therefore, no need to reciprocate positive behaviours is felt. However, evidence for a distinction between the two constructs was provided in a study by Bedi

& Schat, (2013). They demonstrated through a confirmatory factor analysis that the two concepts were distinct across multiple samples of individuals. The relationship between workplace politics and organisational justice is further complicated by the existence of multiple models of organisational justice.

The most common typology used in the justice literature separates organisational justice into four components (Christian et al., 2011). However, other researchers adopt three-justice typology (Hochwarter et al., 2010). The three-justice type typology includes procedural, distributive and interactional justice. Procedural justice is how fair employees view the process of how outcomes are decided. Distributive justice indicates the fairness that is perceived in how outcomes are distributed at work. Interactional justice is how fairly employees feel that they have been treated by an organisation. Much of the previous literature that integrates politics, justice, and trust uses the three-justice typology (Byrne et al., 2017). The two most common types of organisational justice that are associated with political behaviour are procedural justice and distributive justice. Both procedural and distributive justice has been shown to moderate the relationship between perceptions of workplace politics and outcomes, such as turnover intention and job satisfaction (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015). The researchers demonstrated that when justice perceptions were high, the effects of workplace politics on certain outcomes, such as turnover intention and job satisfaction, were weakened as a result. For example, if employees believe that their organisation treats them justly, they may choose to ignore the negative impact that

workplace politics has on them. However, much of the discussion on workplace politics and justice has been largely theoretical with little empirical support in applied contexts.

## 2.21 Power Struggle

Politics is considered to be a struggle to help the poor and maintain all the activities of any political system with justice. But it is actually a game of evil. It contains competitions, scandals, co-operations and uncomplicatedness. No one thinks about morality and ethics in any political system. (Political theory, 2014)

Politics is basically a game of struggle for power. There are two types of political parties. First are those who are in power and they want to maintain their power at any cost. Second are those who are not in power they want to gain power by any mean possible. Both parties don't think once about ethics and not using unfair means. They use any filthy works without considering even once. (Galbraith, 1983) The political party in power uses any filthy means to criticize and degrade the opponent and the party not in power use all means possible to degrade the opponent party to gain power. (John Kenneth, 1983)

Some people start politics with full motivation but leave at early stages complaining about its dirty works. They also try to play victim card but mostly they fail. Each political party needs and journeys for control because it is the fuel that drives legislative issues. All political parties need to administer. Hobbes really focuses out that a man looks for control which interest for control as it were ceases at passing. Each party needs to decide who gets what when and how. (Sharp, 2010) There are infinite political parties worldwide. In common words none can be excluded from dirty power struggle. They give wrong impression to create a false reputation. They dramatize about being a victim in the political game. The media which should be apart from all these filthy acts is also involved as an active member in this game and speak on the side of specific political parties. (Gene, 2010)

## 2.22 Politics in different organizational structures

Organization legislative issues are a reality in most organizations, and whereas game-playing might apparently show up to be squandered time. Everyone wants to to secure his resources, imaginations, achieve specific aims and often to improve what he has. It is impossible to avoid organizational politics. (a b Jacobides, M. G., 2007) If someone try to eliminate politics from organization, he may be appreciated for his efforts by the management, but he will face consequences by the staff.

## 2.23 Flat Organizational Structure

Organizational structure consisting of very little distance or no distance between staff and management. The level organization administers representatives less whereas advancing their expanded association within the decision-making handle. It is human psychology if someone is in decision making his working ability simply increases. Also, it eliminates distances between the staff and the management. Due to least distance between these two the decision making of

employees increases. Due to non-availability of co-ordination staff between staff and management the budget consumptions of organization are reduced. (Feldman, P.; Miller, D., 1986) That is why there is high level of politics in flat organizations.

Hierarchical Organizational Structure: A hierarchical organization is normally considered as pyramid. Every worker in the organization excluding CEO is somehow subordinate to the other worker. As pyramid is a combination of different layers the organization is also can be considered as a layer of different layers. At the end of the layer there comes the staff. Workers recognize categorized levels of authority inside the organization; professional and levels of obligation are understandable. Hierarchical structures provide a vide working platform to employees due to devotion to work. It increases creation of representatives as pros. Representatives may contract their field of centre and ended up specialists in particular functions. Employees gotten to be faithful to their divisions and look out for the leading intrigued of their area. (Lim, M., 2017) These factors ensure low or minimal politics in hierarchical or matrix level organizations.

## 2.24 Gender Inequality

Gender inequality has been a considerable matter for over the last few centuries all over the world. In spite of the fact that in the history there has been less ladies in control indeed some time recently colonialism. Occurrences are the Ruler of Daura, the Sarauniya of Zazzau in pre-jihad, the Angwu Tsi who was nearly the partner of the Ruler, with her possess Royal residence, within the center belt, Iyayun the Ruler who ruled in fifteenth century in Oyo, after the passing of her spouse (Modupe, 2001).

## 2.25 Women role in leadership

Agreeing to Ibrahim and Salihu, the marginalization of ladies within the society can be followed back to humanity's history. It isn't confined to particular culture and individuals; varieties frequently happen in its nature and sign. In any case, it is by no implies characteristic in man's nature but social marvel that uncovers itself through relationship and the developing culture values and standards frequently confirmed through existing regulation and legal structure of the society. It is within the light of the previous that Odofu and Omojuwa set that, ladies around the world are in a disadvantageous position which the over articulation as of now situates the negative situation of ladies in worldwide and authentic setting.

## 2.26 Politics during Covid

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every single life in some means. The way of living all over the globe has been changed due to pandemic. It created health and safety issues for all the working environments. Most of the worldwide big companies have been converted to work from home. Some organizations unable to run with time have fired their employees. Some organizations have earned a lot of profit in this pandemic. The politics field is also affected by some means. Most of the political activities are postponed due to this pandemic. Inflation is increased. The in power political parties have faced a lot of challenges. At one side they had to maintain social distancing and stop public place crowds. Some had to maintain critical lockdowns. At the other had they had to give working environment to low class people as most of them had been fired from works or their organizations have stopped working. (Page J, 2021) The first year in which COVID-19 was

spread all over the world was the most difficult time as the whole system of the world has fall. Most of the countries completely locked down their territories. Some had benefited from these lockdowns some had faced consequences. But at last, the worldwide activities are continuing again. Most of the political activities were on TV or social media. The ruling parties tried to give a good working environment for those who maintained covid SOPs are shifted to work from home. Due to stopping in many organizations the ruling parties were unable to start new projects. They will face its consequences in the next elections. On the other hand, opposition parties tried to ruin the government by all means possible. At the start they tried to break SOPs and, in the end, they blamed government for all the crises. (Hinshaw D, 2021)

Organizational politics are also affected seriously as most of the workplaces were closed. Some organizations divided the employees to work in different times. It increases work environment.

## 2.27 Post Covid politics workplace

Coming out of the COVID crises was much harder as every body was somehow affected. Some has lost their jobs some has lost their relatives in this pandemic. Some have faced extreme difficulties to feed their families.  The political parties have started public gathering as their activities cannot run without gatherings. In the COVID crises they tried to maintain activities keeping social distances i.e., on TV or with low gatherings. But social media have played a vital rule. It has showed all the ongoing activities during the crises and help maintain them after the crises. (Zimmer C, 2021)

Post covid workplaces become somehow different from before the crises. Now strict SOPs should be followed on the workplace. Some people are also died due to the disease in every working environment.  The national assembly meeting was not being held during the covid pandemic. Now the meetings are again being held. The covid crises are being discussed. The ruling parties are trying to show their milestones as successfully beating this crisis and developing some organizations. But the opposition parties are again blaming them for some reasons. (Islam MA 2021)

## 2.28 Summary

A review of the workplace politics literature has shown that research on the connections between perceptions of politics and work outcomes have been limited. Prior research has shown that politics can be negatively associated with organisational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, organisational citizenship behaviours, and stress. These individually focused employee outcome measures provide insight into an employee's thoughts, feelings, and behavioural intentions towards an organisation. However, more research is needed in this area to discover the mechanisms by which politics is related to work outcomes. Specifically, depending on information

from the work context, some employees will appraise politics as hindrance stressors and others will appraise politics as a challenge. However, few definitions of politics omitted components of politics, such as informal processes, non-sanctioned behaviours, self-serving behaviour, and impression management. Although perceiving politics as a shared understanding that organisational members will use power, influence, and networks to impact organisational decisions and resource allocation is a more positive view of politics, it elimimates many of the stressful components of politics.

# Chapter 3

# Research Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the science of researching to resolve a specific problem. It entails the procedures used by researchers to investigate, describe, and analyse a phenomenon. It is also considered as the study of methods that help to acquire knowledge and determine the work plan of the entire research (Knowles and Cole, 2008). The methodology to conduct the current research entails an action plan to carry out a systematic enquiry into the research problems, collect data, and find answers to the research questions. The action plan includes the selection of relevant philosophy, i.e. the worldview maintained by the researcher, the approach, i.e. to build knowledge or test theories, and the methods, i.e. whether the plan is to collect qualitative data or quantitative data, combining both methods. In addition, this chapter also justifies the selection of the most appropriate research strategy to collect data, i.e. surveys and interview, justifying the choices made among a range of data collection strategies. The sampling procedure and the sample size chosen to collect data, the data analysis technique, and the ethical considerations are also discussed.

## 3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the inherent beliefs, outlook and attitude of the researcher with regards to what exists externally, i.e. in the surroundings in which people live (Peters, 2012). Philosophies, therefore, reflects the worldview that a researcher maintains throughout the process of enquiry, collection and analysis of data until the conclusive outcomes are reached. Bridges (2010) suggests that the most suitable accepting assumptions are the assumptions relating to the fundamental epistemology which guides the research. In this context, Saunders et al. (2009) refer to epistemology as the knowledge that is acceptable in a specific field of study. It is also a presumption about knowledge and how true knowledge can be obtained.

The alternate philosophies considered suitable for the current research are positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism. After a theoretical discussion of the aforementioned philosophies, a specific philosophy is chosen along with the justification for such selection.

### 3.2.1 Positivism

Positivism presumes that enquiries about social events and phenomena should be based on scientific reasoning that helps to obtain outcomes that can be measured (Bridges, 2010). The advocates of positivism emphasise on observation, rely on scientific principles and the form of reality assumed by this philosophy is 'realism' advocating the existence of reality (Kuipers, 2013). Positivists also use predesigned and pretested scientific instruments to collect data to construe what true knowledge is (Kuipers, 2013). They mainly adopt quantitative research to collect measurable data assuming knowledge to be quantifiable and reach objective-based outcomes. Even though social researchers following positivism have greater control over the data collection and research process, they may find these studies to be inflexible and difficult to change the research direction once started (Saunders et al., 2015). Positivists may also find it difficult to understand the meanings that people attach to social events.

### 3.2.2 Interpretivism

The philosophy of interpretivism opposes the assumptions of positivism and considers social realities and facts as a subjective phenomenon formed through human perceptions. Interpretivism presumes that the elementary principles of science cannot deduce the complexities of social phenomena (Bridges, 2010). The followers of interpretivism, therefore, consider the intervention of human subjects necessary to understand their views, insights and perceptions to acquire knowledge about social realities (Bridges, 2010). Interpretive studies look into theoretical, empirical, ethnographic and public communication. The purpose of interpretive studies is to understand the present status of a phenomenon that has occurred or is undergoing, i.e. the current state of affairs. The shift from positivist to interpretivist worldview implies that the research goals change from exploring the different ways through which the researcher is influenced by and responds to the phenomena. Interpretivism gains an understanding of social

phenomena through the lens of human behaviour, and the meanings that people assign to such phenomena (Saunders et al., 2015). Interpretivism assumes that there exists no predetermined route to gather knowledge and that interaction with research subjects is the main source of data collection.

### 3.2.3 Realism

According to Bhaskar (1998), realism presumes that the existence of entities and objects in the world around is independent of human thinking and the ideas that humans have about them. The use of realism by researchers in social science takes the form of critical realism, i.e., combining the philosophy of natural science with the philosophy of social science to understand the periphery between the natural world and social world. The philosophical assumptions of realism are identical to positivism in terms of conducting a scientific enquiry. Realism affirms that reality that exists in the universe is not dependent on human thinking and the researchers' sense, in-spite of the fact that the researcher gets influenced by his/her past experiences and worldviews. Realism is categorised into two groups, the first is direct realism while the second is critical realism. In the case of direct realism, it is assumed that a precise representation may be derived from the experiences that human senses provide. On the other hand, critical realism assumes that everything that is sensed is afterwards subjectively processed by the human mind. This also implies that critical realist researchers need to recognise what is preliminarily experienced apart from the structures and relations that underpin it.

### 3.2.4 Pragmatism

The followers of pragmatism associate the research approach directly with the nature and purpose of the study, as well as questions posed (Morgan, 2007). It considers research to be multi-purpose and believes in 'what works well' technique; therefore, allowing the researcher to address questions that can be resolved by following a mixed approach to design and methodology (Rubadeau, 2015). Pragmatism is, therefore, a set of beliefs that considers

following mixed methods to data collection and analysis rather than segregating the study into a quantitative or qualitative approach to either test theory or build new knowledge respectively.

### 3.2.5 Justification for implementing pragmatism

The philosophical position or the worldview maintained by the researcher in this study is pragmatism. As a pragmatist, the researcher discards the opposing views of positivism and interpretivism and integrates these two distinct philosophical assumptions in a single study (Morgan, 2007). As a deconstructive philosophy, pragmatism endorses the use of mixed methods, i.e. combining the use of the qualitative method (informed by interpretivism) and quantitative method (informed by positivism) to explore knowledge as well as test knowledge. Pragmatists believe that it is difficult to obtain an overall picture from a single standpoint and that there should be multiple realities that every research problem should consider. The advocates of this philosophy are open to using multiple philosophies and approaches to collect data, generate findings to arrive at practical consequences.

The researcher maintained the pragmatist worldview in this study to explore the problems associated with 'workplace politics' as an integral element of 'organisational behaviour', the relationship between 'workplace politics' and 'organisational performance', and test the extent of the impact of 'workplace politics' on 'organisational performance'. Being a pragmatist, the researcher believes in the feasibility of actions and finding practical ways to resolve the research problems. This provides flexibility to approach the problems from multiple dimensions as opposed to maintaining a specific standpoint of theory testing or knowledge development.

### 3.3 Research approach

Research approach refers to the two extremes followed in social research, i.e. the inductive and deductive logic meant to develop theory using the former logic and test theory using the latter approach (Singmann&Klauer, 2011). Generally, the deductive logic aligns with the philosophical viewpoint of positivism aimed to conduct quantitative research while the inductive approach is supported by the interpretivist mindset whereby researchers mainly delve on qualitative studies to add value to existing knowledge. The applicability of each of these methods in social research are discussed below -

### 3.3.1 Deductive approach

The deductive approach includes a valid interpretation and justification by which it is not possible to accept a postulation or reject an inference. This approach entails developing a set of assumptions based on extant theories and literature reviews and devising a research design to test those assumptions. The deductive approach makes use of assumption drawn from underpinning theories. This approach mainly entails deducing the outcomes from the main premises. Researchers following the deductive approach generally maintain the positivist worldview; create a set of hypothesis to be tested using a scientific process. If the premises in case of a deductive approach are acceptable, subsequently the conclusion must also be essentially accepted. In the case of deductive reasoning, the outcomes of the research are mentioned in the premises, and this makes such an argument a non-implicative one. In case of any new premises are added, the conclusive outcomes still need to be followed.

Theoretical arguments based on the deductive approach may either be valid or invalid. There does not any choices or decision while implementing such arguments and no judgment is required to obtain the results and conclusive outcomes. The deductive approach aims to test theoretical underpinnings and assumptions that already exist in extant literature. The deductive process starts with an extensive assessment of underpinning theories, development of hypothesis/ research questions based on knowledge gaps, observation and testing of data, and finally confirmation/ rejection of theory (Singmann & Klauer, 2011).The deductive approach also helps to identify the causal relationship between key variables and carry out the enquiry using a structured process

### 3.3.2 Inductive approach

The inductive approach generally initiates with explicit observations and ends with the generalisation of conclusions. This approach initially chooses a count of observations precisely, and then generalise the inferences to the entire population of analogous situations or conditions. These generalisations are supposed to be tested, and in the process, some are accepted while others rejected. For that reason, the doctrines mainly obtained based on the inductive process are hypothetically falsifiable (Singmann &Klauer, 2011). With the use of this process, the researcher acts as an observer, and honestly, exclusive of any previous biases or judgment and

with an unprejudiced mentality, record the observations. Subsequently, the observations are developed into a basis, based on which theoretical underpinnings and new laws are built to construct scientific knowledge. The researchers following this approach also suppose that one can rationally oversimplify the observations into universal and comprehensive rules and the systematic suppositions get confirmed and approved. The inductive approach follows the opposite process to initiate the research with observation, followed by interpreting the data pattern, development of tentative hypothesis/ research questions, and finally building a new theory (Singmann &Klauer, 2011).

As per this approach, the end result of a study is the generalisation of observations and the construction of new theories. The process of induction entails looking for a prototype based on key observations followed by the development of theories for the specific patterns through hypotheses. In inductive studies, there are no theoretical assumptions or conceptual frameworks applied at the beginning of the enquiry and the researcher gets the flexibility to choose a specific course of research that suits the data collection.

The inductive approach mainly aligns with the exploratory research that is suitable for social studies were insignificant research exists and the research problems are unclear. Therefore the researcher initially attempts to investigate the research problems following a qualitative based in-depth study, followed by understanding the data patterns, and creation of the hypothesis to be tested, and finally, build a novel theory that did not exist before. One of the key advantages of this method is that it does not require any pre-designed model or framework, therefore, when the principles are generalised it is necessary to validate them using logic, i.e. the deductive approach(Myers and Klein (2011). However, the use of the inductive approach in social science research is criticised with regards to certain factors and the main issue is that researchers maybe influenced by their restricted knowledge of the link between empirical data and theories.

### 3.3.3 Abductive approach
Combining both, the inductive and the deductive approach is the abductive approach that helps to follow both approaches to test theories as well as develop new knowledge (Harwell, 2011). The abductive approach is followed by researchers following the pragmatist worldview and

implementing mixed methods to collect and analyse data. The justification for following the abductive approach in this study is discussed in the following section. It is about going forth and back between data testing to validate theory and contribution to existing knowledge by way of new theory development.

### 3.3.4 Justification for following the abductive approach

Abductive approach is considered suitable for this study because it supports the adoption of both, quantitative and qualitative methods in single research based on both, deductive and inductive logic. Using the inductive approach the underpinning theories of organisational behaviour, workplace politics, and culture will be reviewed and the research problems explored. Meanwhile, the use of the deductive approach will be made to test the theories against organisational performance. Unlike deductive or inductive approach, the abductive reasoning helps to elucidate, develop, or modify the conceptual framework, before, throughout and after the social research process (Choy, 2014).

Abductive approach is in-line with pragmatism and follows two opposing poles of theory testing and theory development at the same time. The researcher being a pragmatist followed deductive reasoning to test the validity of the underpinning theories and variables studied in the literature review, for instance, whether organisational power has a negative impact on organisational performance or it impacts performance positively. At the same time, the use of inductive approach helped to develop new knowledge about the various aspects of organisational power and how it influenced employee behaviour and performance in contemporary organisations.

### 3.4 Research Designs

The key research designs involved in social research comprise of the exploratory design, explanatory or causal research design and the descriptive design. The implementation of any design depends on the extent of complexity involved in the study, the adequacy of research already carried out, and awareness that the researcher has about the research problems.

### 3.4.1 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is a type of research undertaken to investigate a problem that is not clearly defined. It is a flexible approach to identify what is currently happening and what the current state of affairs is (Mansourian, 2008). Exploratory studies also help in determining the most appropriate research design, selection of research subjects and the methods to collect data. Exploratory studies are often undertaken as the initial step to define the research problem, set the hypothesis, and follow other types of investigation such as descriptive studies to resolve the identified problems. It is associated with the goals of describing problems more precisely, clarifying issues, explaining concepts, gaining deeper insights, eradicating unfeasible ideas, and the development of hypothesis/research questions for further investigation (Babatunde & Low, 2015). Exploratory research uses surveys, interviews, case studies and focus group to conduct enquiry and understand what the actual problems are (Babatunde & Low, 2015). Exploratory researches mainly draw upon the inductive reasoning and emphasise on 'what' questions.

### 3.4.2 Explanatory research

Explanatory research mainly emphasises on establishing the cause-effect relationship between the variables of a study (Kothari, 2012). It is linked with conducting a casual analysis of the effect of one variable on the other, i.e. how change is one variable is responsible to bring change in the other variable (Thomas, 2010). This type of research is mainly based on the grounded theory where theory is developed to find answers to why and how questions. Researchers are mainly involved in interpreting, describing, envisaging and controlling the relationship between a set of variables (Kothari, 2012).

### 3.4.3 Descriptive research

Descriptive research is formal and mainly finds application in studies where the research problems are clearly defined (Kothari, 2012). In the case of descriptive research, researchers describe the characteristic of the population being studied in terms of their profile, demographic information and behaviour. Descriptive studies provide meaning to the quality and understanding of events that are going on. For example, information about a group of people, a class of events, a set of conditions, a number of objects, or any social phenomenon or experience that a researcher intends to examine (Englander, 2012). The main intent of descriptive research is to describe the nature of a situation that exists during the time of study and understand the main

causes of the phenomena being investigated (Sloman, 2010). It seeks to explain 'what exists' about a particular issue or phenomena. It entails precise observation and evaluation that occurs from data that depict the nature and occurrence of prevailing conditions and practices or the elucidation of process, and subjects who are the objects of the study.

### 3.4.4 Justification for following exploratory research

The exploratory research was considered feasible to enquire into unknown problems associated with workplace politics and the issues linked with employee performance. The research problems were not clearly known while initiating this research and therefore it was feasible to follow an inflexible, informal approach to explore the problems based on extensive literature review. The exploratory design was considered appropriate to conduct this research because of the lack of clarification of the research problem. While the concept of workplace politics as a part of organisational behaviour is a well-researched area in academic literature, there exists insufficient research as to how workplace politics impact employee performance in the hospitality sector.

Therefore, despite the extensive review of extant literature the research problems were not clearly known, as in how the different type of workplace politics shape the behavioural aspects of employees, their conduct, their level of motivation, job satisfaction and thereby performance was unknown. Therefore it was necessary to follow an informal enquiry which gives the flexibility to explore the research problems from several dimensions. The rationale for implementing the exploratory design can be enumerated as follows (Mansourian, 2008).--

- To identify the extent of a particular problem linked to a specific phenomena or occurrences
- To generate preliminary ideas relating to the phenomena being investigated
- To conduct feasibility testing of carrying out more extensive research linked to the phenomena being investigated

## 3.5 Research Methods

According to Myers and Klein (2011), research methods refer to a process of enquiry that moves from the fundamental assumptions to research design and the collection of data. Albeit, there exist other distinctions in the types of research, the most universal classification of research is into quantitative and qualitative. At a particular level, quantitative and qualitative methods refer to the differences between the nature of knowledge; how the researcher interprets the world and the eventual purpose of research (Creswel, 2008). On yet another level of discourse, the idea of research methods refer to the manner in which data collection takes place and data analysis id done, and the type of representations and generalizations derived from data.

While quantitative methods were developed in the field of natural science to examine natural phenomena, the development of the qualitative method was made in the domain of social science to facilitate researchers examine social and cultural phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009). Allwood (2012) indicates that neither of the methods, qualitative or quantitative is better than the other; the feasibility of selection of which is supposed to be determined by the context, nature and purpose of the research in question. Often in social studies, researchers prefer to implement 'mixed-methods' to utilise the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative methods and eliminate the potential weaknesses of each (Choy, 2014).

Qualitative research entails an interpretive, naturalistic process to observe and study the day-to-day behaviour and lifestyle of the human subjects (Bryman, 2006). Researchers attempt to make sense of or analyse social phenomena in terms of the meanings that people attach to them (Saunders et al., 2009). Following the qualitative method, researchers tend to explore and ascertain issues about a particular problem, when inadequate knowledge exists about the problems.

Qualitative based exploratory studies allow an informal, inflexible enquiry into areas that are not adequately researched by previous researchers (Saunders et al., 2009). One of the fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research is the form of data collection, presentation and analysis. On one hand, while quantitative research presents objective-based statistical outcomes, qualitative research presents descriptive, elaborate narration with words and

attempts to interpret social phenomena in a natural context.The mixed-methods was implemented, i.e. combining the quantitative and qualitative methods to find the answer to the following research questions -

*RQ1: How does workplace politics influence employee performance?*

*RQ2: To what extent workplace politics hinder or support employee performance*

*RQ3: How could workplace politics be managed in order have a positive impact on employee performance?*

The following table illustrates how each of the research objectives was met by designing specific research questions against them. The data collection method, strategy and the instrument used to collect data is also illustrated. Also, the type of survey questionnaires and interview questions asked from the employees and the managers respectively to find answers to the research questions and meet the research objectives.

| Research objectives | Research questions | Survey (Closed-ended survey questionnaires to organisational employees based on five point Likert scale) | Interview (Open ended questions to organisational managers) |
|---|---|---|---|
| To understand the nature of workplace politics influencing organisation | *RQ1: What is the nature of workplace politics influencing organisation performance?* | Q)There exists an influential group in your organisation that no one tries to ever cross<br><br>QTo agree with the most powerful members/groups/superiors (or others) is the most desired | Q1)Is workplace politics present in your organisation? If, yes please elaborate on the nature of the workplace politics that is currently present. Please |

| performance | | alternative in the organisation | elaborate |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Q)When it comes to performance appraisals (salary increment, promotional decisions) organisational policies seem to be irrelevant | Q2)In your opinion how do workers/subordinates or lower level employees perceive organisational politics? Please elaborate |
| | | Q)Employees are encouraged to question the decisions undertaken by top managers if they perceive such decisions to be self-serving | Q3) Is organisational politics always negative? Please elaborate |
| To critically investigate the impact of workplace politics on organisation performance | *RQ2: To what extent workplace politics hinder or support organisational performance* | The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of commitment you had for the organisation | Q4)How does workplace politics influence employee behaviour? Please elaborate with respect to their organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)? |
| | | The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) discourages you to undertake voluntary activities as a part of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)? | Q5)How does organisational politics impact culture at the workplace? Please elaborate |
| | | The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of job satisfaction at the organisation | Q6)What impact does workplace politics have on employees' |

| | | The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced your daily work performance | work performance? Please elaborate<br><br>Q7)What impact does workplace politics have on employees' commitment towards the organisation and their intention to stay (employee retention)? Please elaborate |
|---|---|---|---|
| To provide suitable recommendations to the organisational managers to develop strategies to manage workplace politics for positive organisational performance | *RQ3: How a workplace politics could be managed in order to impact positively on organisational performance* | Do you think creating a climate of resilience (learning from events) can help to reduce the negative effects of politics?<br><br>Do you think creating a climate of fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics?<br><br>Inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards workplace politics? | Q8)Do you consider it feasible to eliminate organisational politics/politics at workplace? Please elaborate<br><br>Q9) Is it possible to shape organisational politics to make it beneficial for people and the organisation? If so how does leadership help in doing so? Please elaborate |

## 3.6 Data collection

Data collection in the current research involved quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches. The strategies to collect each type of data, instruments used, questionnaires design and the pattern for interview questions are discussed in this section. However, before justifying the choice of the most appropriate methods, a range of strategies to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively are described in each of the sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2.

### 3.6.1 Quantitative data collection

Quantitative methods involve a range of strategies to collect data such as experiments, questionnaires and surveys to collect data that can be filtered and tabulated in numbers, thereby measuring the data using mathematical/statistical analysis (Harwell, 2011). Researchers following this method measure the variables (dependent and independent) on a sample of subjects and present the correlation between variables using statistical or arithmetic interpretations. The various approaches linked with quantitative data collection are explained in the subsequent section -

### 3.6.1.1 Experiments

Experimental research involves an investigation by the researcher for the treatment of intervention into a group followed by measurement of the results of the treatment. Experimental studies comprise of pre-experimentation, quasi experimentation and true experimentation). Pre-experimentation encompasses an independent variable that is not subject to variation or a non-randomly selected control group (Waters, 2007). True experimentation helps to maintain a higher degree of control in the study and generates higher validity. It involves a systematic approach to quantitative data collection, testing, and analysis using mathematical models (Antwi& Hamza, 2015).

Quasi experimentation encompasses a selection of sample in a non-random manner, control is limited, and validity is questionable (Antwi& Hamza, 2015). The researcher in research makes efforts to observe the results of the experiment, to test the hypothesis, or reveal a fact that is already known (Antwi& Hamza, 2015). Experimental studies intend to draw inferences relating to any factor in the study group and conclude the outcomes from the sample to a larger population.

### 3.6.1.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are the core instrument to collect data in a survey especially meant for quantitative data collection. It includes a set of standardised questions, usually termed as 'items', which pursues a fixed pattern to obtain data about one or more explicit topics (Borrego et al., 2009). Often questionnaires are used interchangeably with the term 'interviews'. In fact, questionnaires entail a special type of interview, i.e. a formal contact, wherein the conversation is administered by the working and sequence of questions in the instrument (Knowles and Cole, 2008). Questionnaires are often administered in a standardised manner, i.e., in the same manner as all respondents in the survey. Questionnaires may either be designed by the researcher or based on some readymade index.

### 3.6.1.3 Survey

Survey as a data collection strategy is mainly useful for non-experimental descriptive research that intends to explore and describe reality (Bhattacherjee, 2012). For instance, survey as a strategy may be followed to establish the prevalence or frequency of a specific situation. Similarly, surveys are often used to obtain data and information on human behaviour or attitude. Bhattacherjee (2012) explains that some issues are best addressed by conventional experimental design where the subjects/participants are randomised to either a control group or an intervention group.

However there could be justifiable reasons, either practical or ethical, why survey participants may not be randomly assigned to a specific intervention. It may not also be possible to identify a control group and control over the process of randomisation may be difficult to accomplish (Creswell, 2014). Survey of an overall population is also called a census; however, surveys are usually limited to a representative sample of a possible group that the researcher is interested in, for justifications of cost-effectiveness or feasibility (Creswell, 2014).

### 3.6.1.4 Justification for the chosen strategy (survey)-

Considering the above arguments favouring survey, it was considered feasible and cost-effective to implement survey as the strategy to collect quantitative data from the employees of UK based organisations. Survey also helped to collect large volumes of data from a sample as large as 100 participants in a limited time. The survey was supported by the distribution of a questionnaire to collect data at a single point of time, known, cross-sectional research design (Bhattacherjee, 2012). This was in the form of exploratory research to provide a snapshot of what is occurring in an organisational context in a particular point of time. It was also possible to identify and explain how workplace politics and culture influence the attitudes and behaviour of employees in the organisation, and consequently their performance.

A total of 24 questions were prepared using for the survey structured design, closed-ended pattern to ensure employees shared their responses on a given set of options. The questionnaire design was formed using the variables and concepts reviewed in the literature review discussions in the second chapter. The intention was to validate the theories relating to workplace politics – controlling information, blaming and attacking, forming coalitions (groupism, rationalism), creating obligations, nurturing networks, and managing impressions and its impact on employee performance by way of influencing behaviour, level of motivation, and job satisfaction. Use of the questionnaire tool, i.e., the five-point Likert scale to design the survey questions helped to measure the extent of employees' agreeableness or disagreeableness with a particular event, occurrence, or phenomena at the workplace. The decision to collect quantitative data using the survey design was based on careful evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of a survey –

### 3.6.1.5 Advantages and disadvantages of survey

| Advantages | Disadvantages/limitations |
|---|---|
| **Flexibility-** Survey as a strategy can be combined with other approaches such as interviews, focus group, or diaries to generate rich and extensive data (Bhattacherjee, 2012). | **Largely dependent on the chosen sampling frame** – The survey representatives are completely dependent on the precision of the sampling frame used. Often it is not practicable |

| | |
|---|---|
| A survey can also be conducted offline (physical hand distribution of survey forms) or online (emails, Google forms) or a combination of both. | to identify an up-to-date or precise sampling frame. |
| **A survey can reach geographically wide samples-** Surveys help to collect data from a large sample widely dispersed that can be accessed using the online distribution of questionnaires. | **Low response rate**- There is a possibility of many participants withdrawing or failing to send back the complete survey forms even after being sampled. Therefore, the response rate is very low |
| **Efficiency** – the use of simple random sampling can be used to recruit participants, comparatively small samples can be used to arrive at conclusions about the entire population. | **A survey is not good at conveying why participants think or act as they** do- Surveys involving closed-ended questions fail to capture the emotions or experiences of people as their responses are limited to a given set of options (Borrego et al., 2009) |
| **Internal and external validity**- Surveys based on random sampling process is likely to generate a sample which is representative of the particular population being studied and generates findings that could be generalised to a wider population (Bhattacherjee, 2012). | |

### 3.6.2 Qualitative data collection

In qualitative research, different enquiry strategies, knowledge claims, and methods of data collection and analysis are employed. Qualitative data collection involves a range of strategies such as observation, participant observation, text and documentation, focus group and interviews

and action research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Data is obtained by directly observing the behaviour of people, through written opinions, interviews, or public documents. The strategies for qualitative data collection are discussed in the subsequent section.

### 3.6.2.1 Focus group

Focus group is strictly a qualitative data collection technique and comprises of a group of people as respondents with specific characteristics (Qu & Dumay, 2013). These individuals share their views and insights on a particular issue, topic or theme under discussion (Qu & Dumay, 2013). Focus group comprises of a small group of people, generally between six and eight in number, brought together by a trained moderator. The role of a moderator is generally undertaken by the researcher to explore the attitude, feelings and perceptions of the participants with regards to the topic being discussed (Qu & Dumay, 2013). The role of the moderator is crucial in terms of maintaining decorum of the focus group session, conduct balanced discussions, and manage the behavioural differences of different members.

Focus group is considered as a type of interview that provides a contextual setting for a relatively homogenous group of people to reflect on open-ended questions asked by the interviewer (Qu & Dumay, 2013). Focus group facilitates the collection of in-depth, high-quality data from participants in a social setting which mainly help to interpret a particular issue from the participants' viewpoint (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Focus group serves as a useful research instrument when the researcher does not have substantial information about the research subjects. It helps to gain rich and comprehensive information with regards to the thoughts, perceptions, feelings and impressions of individuals in their own words (Qu & Dumay, 2013). It is advantageous when the researcher aims to discover the feelings and experiences of different people about an issue and the reasons why they think in a particular pattern.

### 3.6.2.2 Case study

According to Yin (2003) case study is a type of empirical enquiry meant to investigate an existing phenomenon or event within its real-life environment, particularly when the boundaries between the context and the phenomena is not clear. Technically, case studies deal with different

situations, depends on manifold sources of substantiation, and benefits from previous development of conceptual prepositions that guide the process of data collection (Yin, 2003). This may involve a specific case or a number of cases which can be examined individually or compared to arrive at conclusive analysis.

Dul&Hak (2008) explain case study as a methodological design that helps to explore a specific phenomenon in a natural context using a range of approaches to collect data and obtain knowledge. A case study approach is one that can accommodate different types of methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore, Yin (2013) argues that data for case studies can be obtained from multiple sources such as interviews, participant observation, archival research, artefacts, published research papers, and audio-visual materials.

### 3.6.2.3 Action research

Action research starts with the diagnosis of a problem by identifying the research question, followed by action planning, i.e., verifying the course of action that can be undertaken to address the research problems, monitoring the actions, and finally evaluating whether the actions have been able to address the identified questions (Thomas, 2010).

### 3.6.2.4 Interview

An interview is a systematic way of collecting data and gaining knowledge from human participants (Qu & Dumay, 2013). It refers to the exchange of views between two or more people on a particular topic of interest, perceives the fundamentality of human interaction for the generation of knowledge, and emphasise the social situatedness of data. Interviews involve the ways for the human subjects to express their feelings, perceptions and experiences with regards to a particular situation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) consider interviews to be very productive as it allows the interviewer to pursue explicit issues of concern resulting in focused and constructive suggestion. Based on requirement and design, interviews can be structured, unstructured and semi-structured with interviewees/ participants, or interviews may be in the form of focus-group.

**Unstructured interview**- Unstructured interview facilitates the interviewer to pose open-ended questions and allow the interviewees to convey their views freely. The course of the interview is not predetermined, rather determined by both, the interviewee and the interviewer. Both parties

to the interview are ease because it takes the form of a discussion or brainstorming on a particular topic.

**Structured interview** – Structured interviews allow the researcher to utilise a set of predesigned questions that are in most cases closed-ended, and clearly worded (Qu & Dumay, 2013). Structured interviews are generally formal and applicable when the research problems are clearly identified and predetermined questions are asked to find answers to the identified problems.

**Semi-structured interviews-** Semi-structured pattern has the features of both structured and unstructured interview design and therefore both closed-ended and open-ended questions. To maintain consistency of data collection, the researcher as an interviewer maintains a set of pre-designed questions and space for asking any emerging questions to extensively cover the topic being discussed.

## 3.6.2.5 Justification for the chosen strategy (interview)

Choy (2014) suggests using the interview as a qualitative data collection approach when the sample size is low, cross-questioning and probing is required, clarifying doubts and allowing participants to express themselves freely. Considering the suggestions of Qu & Dumay (2013) that interviews are very productive and help the researcher as an interviewer to chase specific issues of concern; this study implements interview as the strategy to collect qualitative data from the managers of the chosen organisation.

Interviews were conducted from the managerial level staff of the organisation, especially the human resource managers dealing in various aspects of organisational behaviour and employee performance. The interview allowed the researcher to take part in the data collection process, as an interviewer, connect and interact with the managers to exchange information. The interview also facilitated deep probing, building rapport, and enquiring the participants about the current state of affairs and occurrence in the organisation relating to a particular issue, i.e. workplace politics, the nature and type of politics prevalent at the workplace, its alignment with the workplace culture and thereby the performance of employees. While collecting the data, the researcher immersed himself into the context of the study by gaining a thorough knowledge of what constitutes workplace politics, how employees perceive such politics.

The interview schedule included open-ended questions, and this facilitated open discussions to gain a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation. Open-ended questions allowed participants, as interviewees to share more information, including emotions, attitudes and understanding (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It provides a richness of details and provides avenues for further probing that may have gone untapped (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews allow two-way communication, i.e. the interviewees can also ask questions to the interviewer, if doubts arise, and get better clarification of the issues being probed about (Choy, 2014). It helps to prepare questions ahead of time, therefore allowing the interviewer to be prepared and remain proficient while taking the interviews (Choy, 2014). A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to ask new questions that may emerge while probing and give participants the freedom to convey their elaborate views in their own views. It not only substantiates what is already known but also helps to discover new issues, and provide opportunities for learning. However, conducting semi-structured interviews may be more resource-intensive and time-consuming. The following section outlines the advantages and disadvantages of an interview as a qualitative data collection method-

### 3.6.2.6 Advantages and disadvantages of interview

| Type of interview | Advantages | Disadvantages/limitations |
|---|---|---|
| Structured Interviews | Quick and easy to carry out | Researcher's bias inherent in the communication style used to ask questions |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Structured context helps to ease anxiety or nervousness | Participants (interviewees) get less opportunity to give response beyond the given questions/responses unless the researcher (interviewer) prompts |
| | Facilitates the researcher to prompt participants by providing them with a set of options to answer from (Qu & Dumay, 2013) | |
| Unstructured interview | Makes possible to collect in-depth information | The interviewees likely get diverted from the actual theme being discussed |
| | Interviewees can respond freely without being influenced by the given options | An interview can be very lengthy and go much longer than the time allocated |
| | The researcher (as an interviewer) can ask new questions that emerge as the interview progresses | The availability of extensive data can make it difficult to compare and contrast the different responses from interviewees |
| Semi-structured | Allows the researcher to ask further questions from the interviewees to obtain in-depth information (Choy, 2014). | Possibility of the inclusion of researchers' bias |
| | A researcher has more control over the collected data | Interview questions cannot be altered once prepared |
| | High response rate as high volumes of information can be collected from a relatively low sample size | |

### 3.7 Mixed Method

Mixed methods in research imply the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to leverage the best outcomes of each approach. Researchers not only collect and analyse figurative data but also narrative/descriptive information, in order to address the research questions formulated for a particular study (McCusker &Gunaydin, 2014). For instance, figurative data may be collected through a survey using closed-ended questions while the use of interviewing may help to collect narrative data using open-ended questions. Therefore, mixed methods are an extension, rather than replacement of qualitative and quantitative methods, and the integration of both helps in increased research validity.

Researchers using mixed methods intend to capitalise upon the strength of each of the approaches and eradicate the weaknesses inherent in each method (Neuman, 2014). However, the strengths and weaknesses linked with each of the methods are not absolute rather relative to the milieu and how a researcher seeks to investigate a phenomenon. For instance, if a researcher intends to provide an exhaustive insight into an event/phenomenon, the researcher may choose a small yet informative sample, i.e. drawing upon qualitative methods.

Using the mixed methods provides researchers with the ability to design a single study to answer questions with regards to both, the nature of phenomena from the viewpoint of the subjects and the correlation between research variables that can be measured (Antwi& Hamza, 2015). The advocates of mixed methods in research support doing 'what works' in the principles of research to the enquiry, to assume, to explore, to explain, and to interpret phenomena. Therefore in the case of mixed methods, the pragmatist worldview administers claims with regards to what is knowledge.

### 3.7.1 Justification for following mixed methods in this study
**The current research follows the mixed methods to avail the following benefits –**

Mixed method was followed to overcome the weaknesses of each method, i.e. qualitative and quantitative. An obvious weakness of quantitative methods is that it is often considered to be

weak in understanding the setting or context in which individuals or groups interact, and their voices consequently not listened to (Allwood, 2012). On the other hand, qualitative research is perceived as scarce, due to the personal understanding and in-depth involvement of the researcher that may result in bias (Borrego et al., 2009). The mixed-method provides more extensive substantiation for inquiring into a research problem than either of the methods used singly.

In addition, mixed-method provides a stronger platform for triangulation. For instance, the quantitative data obtained from the employee survey could be cross-examined and validated against the elaborate, narrative information collected though managerial interview. Therefore, employees' views about workplace politics and its impact on performance could be compared and contrasted with the managerial views about the same. It helps to enquire into the research problems from multiple dimensions, i.e. enquire the research problems using an exploratory based extensive literature review, and find the answer to the research questions by identifying the relationship between variables [i.e. the impact of 'workplace culture'(dependent variable) on 'organisational performance' (independent variable)]. A mixed method is more practical and allows the flexibility to implement relevant methods, approaches and skills to address a research problem (Antwi& Hamza, 2015).

## 3.8 Sampling

Probability sampling is a scientific process of drawing samples from a specific population based on pre-defined laws of chance wherein a particular unit has some distinct previously assigned possibility of being chosen as sample (Kothari, 2012). It allows equal opportunity to each unit in the population and the chance to be chosen as a sample without any biased selection. The various techniques of probability sampling are simple random, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, multi-stage sampling, and cluster sampling.

Non-probability sampling involves a process where the preferred number of sampling units is chosen based on the object of enquiry (Kothari, 2012). This ensures that the key items reflecting

the true characteristics of a specific population are included in the sample (Kothari, 2012). The different types of non-probability sampling are convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. Sampling in the current research was undertaken in two phases – phase 1 and phase II for selecting participants to take part in the survey and interview respectively.

**Phase I**

In the first phase, the selection of around 100 employees working in UK based companies to participate in the survey involved probability sampling, simple random process. The sample size for participants in the survey included 100 employees**.** This sampling technique is also called representative sampling and is suitable for choosing relatively large samples in quantitative research such as survey wherein the researcher concludes a specific sample to answer the research questions. Simple random sampling made it easier to choose a large sample eliminating the likelihood of any personal bias (Kothari, 2012). It was also simple, inexpensive and helped to conduct the sampling in a limited period.

**Phase II**

In the second phase, the use of non-probability, purposive sampling was made to select around 8 managers to participate in an open-ended interview. Purposive sampling helped to intentionally certain units from the population-based on specific criteria (Kothari, 2012). Therefore, it was ensured that managers with at least five years of experience in organisational behaviour were selected to take part in the interview.

## 3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations include certain codes of ethics and principles that mandate the researcher to protect human rights, respect the dignity of the research subjects, ensure privacy and anonymity, maintain the confidentiality of data, prevent harm and injury, and seek informed consent (James and Busher, 2007). There are strict ethical considerations to be followed mainly in primary research and the initial step is to seek informed consent. Informed consent implies that the research participants knowingly and voluntary give their agreement to participate in

research without any compulsion, coercion or persuasion. It is a mechanism using which the researcher seeks their rights to autonomously and voluntarily participate in research without any external pressure or incentive. In this research, the researcher took informed consent from the gatekeepers of the chosen companies by explaining them the purpose of the enquiry.

The anonymity of the research subjects/respondents is protected when their personal identity such as name is not linked with their personal responses (James and Busher, 2007). Confidentiality of data implies that the data/information released by respondents is not shared by anyone unauthorised. Therefore, respondents should feel free to share information and do not hold back by the information that adds value to the research questions. In this research, the anonymity of participants' names was maintained by using pseudo names while confidentiality was maintained by storing their responses in a password-protected computer. Ethics also make it imperative to inform participants about their rights for withdrawal. The participants in this research were educated about their rights to withdraw from the research at any point of time, or refuse to answer any question they intended to.

<div align="center">

**Chapter 4**

**Data Analysis**

</div>

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the survey carried out by distributing questionnaires to 100 employees working with different companies in the UK. The distribution of the questionnaires was through Google forms and responses were accordingly obtained. The overall findings obtained from the survey are presented with the help of tables and graphs to make an easy demonstration of the cumulative data.

## 4.2 Findings and data analysis (Quantitative research)
**1)Please indicate your gender?**

Table 1: Gender wise distribution of respondents

| Gender | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 64% | 64 |
| Female | 36% | 36 |
| Transgender | - | 0 |
| Total | | 100 |
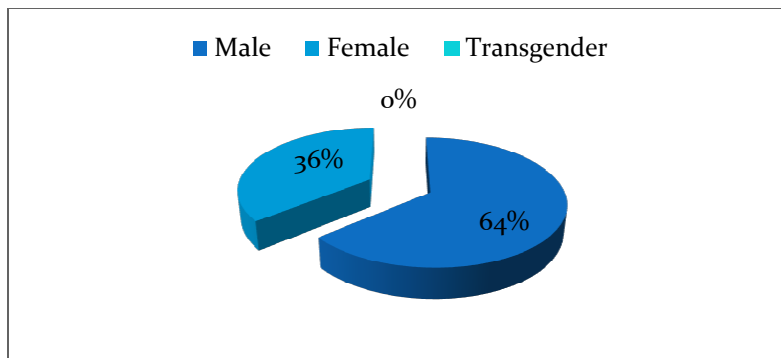
## Chart1: Gender wise distribution of respondents

The overall response obtained from the above indicates that most of the participants (64%) taking part in the survey were males while the rest were females. The number of male employees is likelyto be more than the female employees in organisations where the survey was conducted.

## 2)Please indicate your age-group?

Table 2: Age-wise distribution of respondents

| Age-group | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Below 20 | 8% | 8 |
| Between 20-25 | 14% | 14 |
| Between 26-35 | 41% | 41 |
| Between 26-45 | 23% | 23 |
| Between 45-55 | 14% | 14 |
| Above 55 | - | 0 |
| Total |  | 100 |
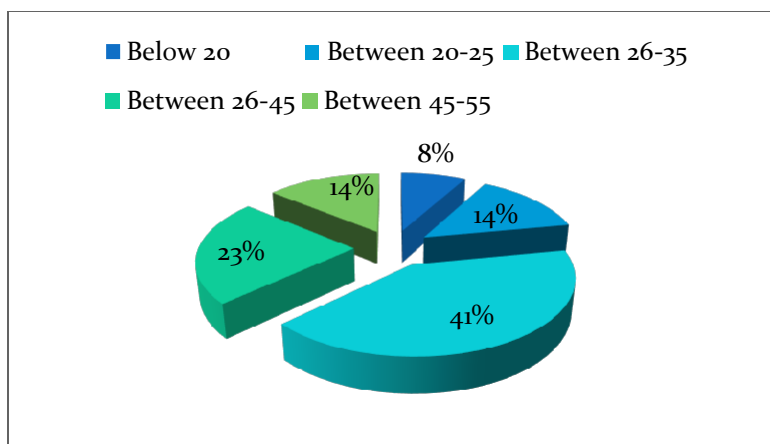
**Chart 2: Age-wise distribution of respondents**

As regards to the age-wise distribution, most of the employees belong to the age-group between 26-35(41%), followed by 26-45 (23%). Employees below 20 years of age are negligible while none of the employees are above the age of 55. The surveyed organisations maintain a diverse mix of employees with regards to demographic factors such as age.

**3)For how long have you been working in the organisation you work for?**

Table 3: Tenure in the organisations

| Tenure | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 1 year | - | 0 |
| Between 1-3 years | 17% | 17 |
| Between 3-5years | 19% | 19 |
| Between 5-7 years | 37% | 37 |
| Between 7-10 years | 16% | 16 |
| More than 10 years | 11% | 11 |
| Total | | 100 |
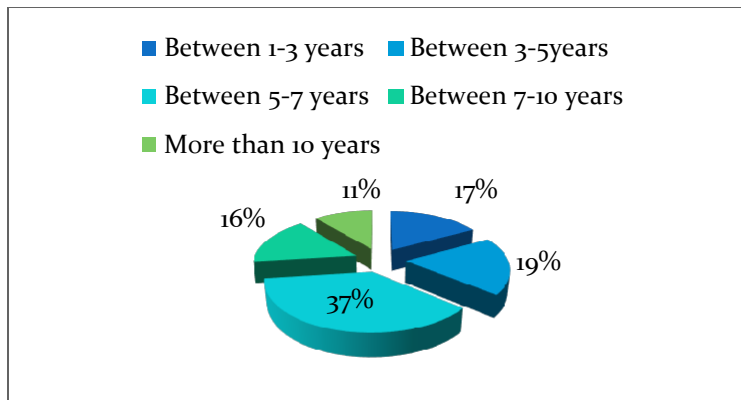
**Chart3: Tenure in the organisations**

Similar to the responses obtained in the previous question, mixed results were obtained with regards to the tenure of the employees taking part in the survey. The tenure of most of the employees (37%) was between 5 and 7 years, while 19% had been working between 3 and 5 years. Only 11% were tenured for more than 10 years. Based on the overall data it can be inferred that employees taking part in the survey were tenured and likely to have a fair knowledge of organisational politics.

**4)There exists an influential group in your organisation that no one tries to ever cross**

Table 4: Whether there exists an influential group that no one tries to ever cross

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 26% | 26 |
| Agree | 38% | 38 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 13% | 13 |
| Disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Strongly disagree | 9% | 9 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 26% | 38% | 13% | 14% | 9% |
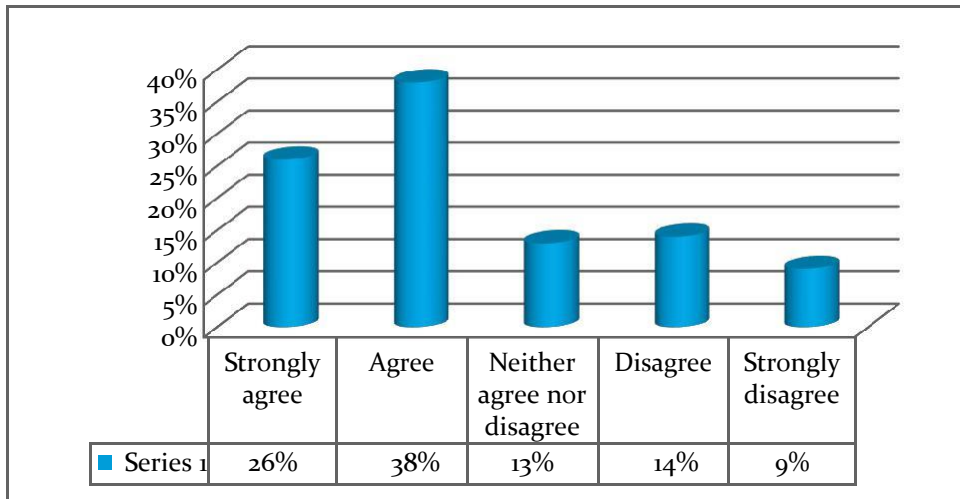
**Chart4: Whether there exists an influential group that no one tries to ever cross**

Majority 64% (26% strongly agree + 38% agree) shared a positive response that there exists an influential group in their organisation that no one tries to ever cross. Comparatively, only 23% (14% disagree + 9% strongly disagree) did not accept the idea.

The above findings corroborate with the theoretical claims made by Kapoutsis and Thanos (2016) who emphasised on the presence of dominant groups in a politicised work environment that employees feared to cross. Employees usually consider it safe to agree with the views of these influential groups perceiving that any disagreement with them could make their job insecure.

**5) People in this organisation make unsolicited attempts to build themselves by letting others down**

Table 5: Whether people make unsolicited attempts to build themselves by letting others down

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 31% | 31 |
| Agree | 29% | 29 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 14% | 14 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Strongly disagree | 15% | 15 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series 1 | 31% | 29% | 14% | 11% | 15% |
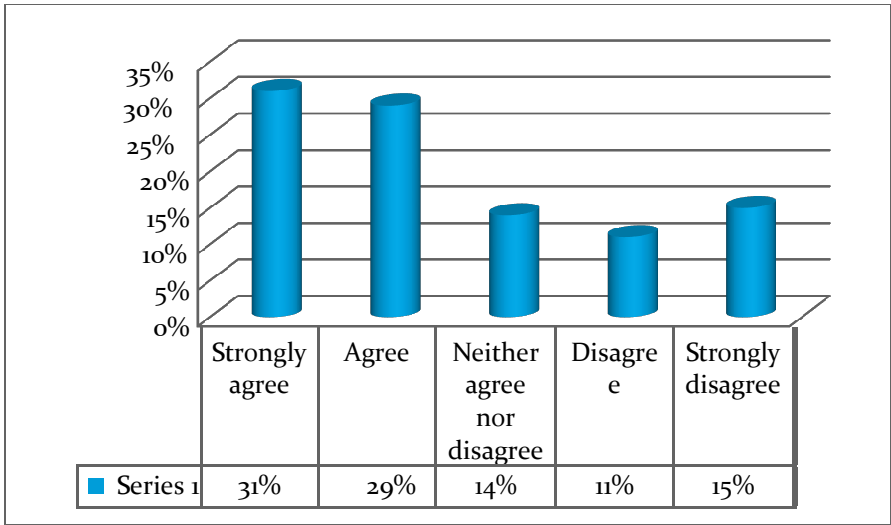
**Chart 5: Whether people make unsolicited attempts to build themselves by letting others down**

A major section, 60% (31% strongly agree + 29% agree) shared an affirmative response about the fact that people in the organisation they work for makes unsolicited attempts to develop themselves by letting others down. Contrary to this, only 26% (11% disagree + 15% strongly disagree) shared a negative response.

Based on the overall findings it can be insinuated that there exist people exhibiting 'Machiavellian', personality traits whose main intentions are to fulfil their self-centred goals by way of deception, manipulation and exploitation of others. This gives rise to political behaviour in the organisation which is perceived to be negative. As discussed in the literature review, researchers such as Zettler and Solga, 2013 consider Machiavellianism as a personality trait of people who take unfair advantage of others to gain success, and this is through interpersonal tactics that stimulate them to be deceptive, manipulative and exploitative (Femia, 2013).

Theoretically, it is explained as an aspect of human behaviour directed towards accomplishing their self-satisfying interests (Abubakar et al., 2014), and optimisation of self-interests at minimum efforts or hardships (Olorunleke, 2015).Such people also demonstrate power-seeking behaviour at work and this kind of behaviour is politically–motivated wherein employees pursue self-interest through integration and cooperation.

**6)To agree with the most powerful members/groups/superiors (or others) is the most desired alternative in the organisation**

Table 6: Agreeing with the most powerful is the most desired alternative in the organisation

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 18% | 18 |
| Agree | 26% | 26 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Disagree | 24% | 24 |
| Strongly disagree | 15% | 15 |
| Total | - | 100 |

| Series 1 | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18% | 26% | 17% | 24% | 15% |
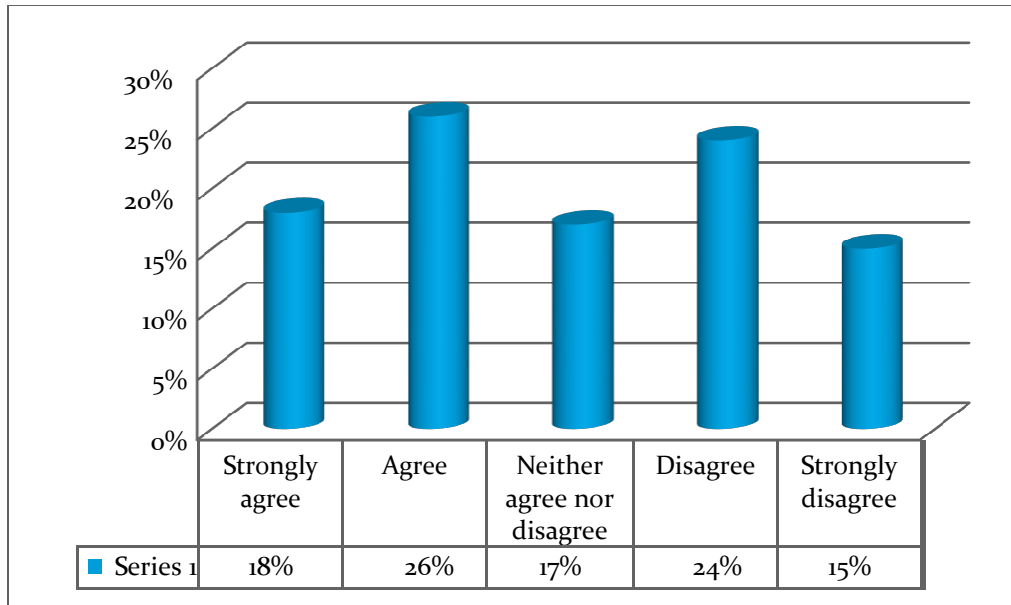
**Chart 6: Agreeing with the most powerful is the most desired alternative in the organisation**

In response to whether agreeing the most powerful members/groups/superiors (or others) is the most desired alternative in the organisation 44% (18% strongly agree + 26% agree) confirm to the idea while 39 %( 24% disagree + 15% strongly disagree) do not believe it is so.

The findings obtained from this question corroborate with the claims made by Mroz Allen (2017) as studied in academic literature. Often, employees observe others in the organisation form unofficial coalitions and inner circles, opposing those who are not part of these coalitions and show agreement with the dominant, powerful members to derive benefits (Mroz Allen, 2017). Seeking support from dominant members or those holding authoritative position is a political move exhibited by those trying to fulfil their goals through influence, favouritism, or unethical means. Forming alliance or coalitions with influential people or groups makes it easier to achieve the desired goal without hardships, in an effortless way and these are signs of political behaviour. This is further verified by researchers such as Manning (2018) who indicate that the formation of separate coalitions is a political behaviour that is not sanctioned by the organisational policies either norms and therefore, Hochwarter et al., (2010) insinuate that it increases the extent of perception of politics among employees and negative behaviour.

**7) Employees are encouraged to question the decisions undertaken by top managers if they perceive such decisions to be self-serving**

Table 7: Whether employees are encouraged to question the decisions of top managers

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 14% | 14 |
| Agree | 24% | 24 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 23% | 23 |
| Disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Strongly disagree | 22% | 22 |
| Total | | 100 |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series 1 | 14% | 24% | 23% | 17% | 22% |
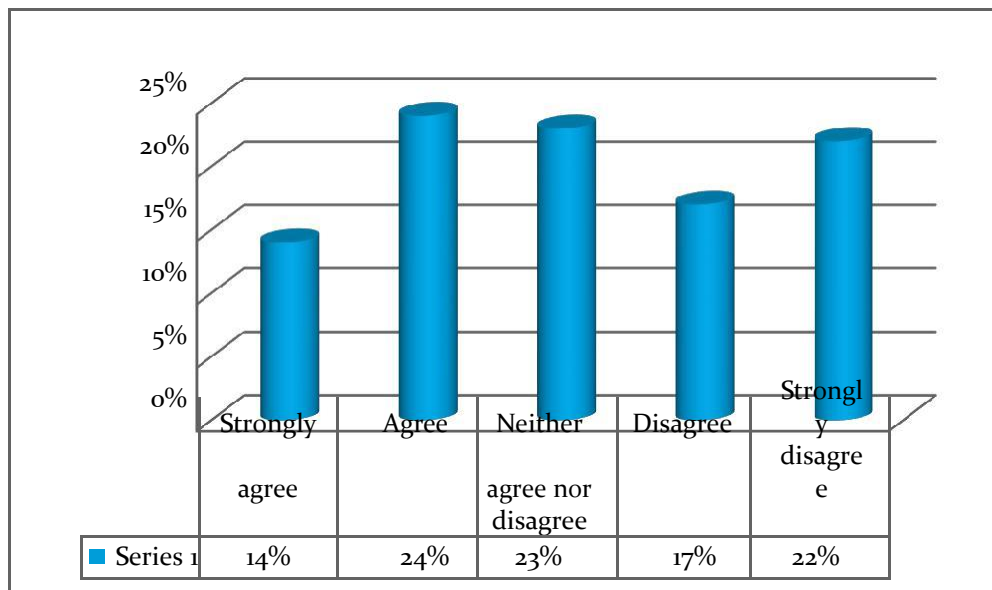
**Chart7: Whether employees are encouraged to question the decisions of top managers**

A mixed response was obtained from the participants with regards to whether employees are encouraged to question the decisions undertaken by top managers if they perceive such decisions

to be self-serving. Results indicate that 38% (14% strongly agree + 24% agree) confirmed to the statement in the survey while a close 39% (17% disagree + 22% strongly disagree) did not corroborate with the idea.

Findings obtained from the survey align with the theoretical debate carried out in the literature review. Khaola and Sebotsa (2015) indicate that employees often consider organisational decision making to be backed by self-serving behaviour whereby decision-makers aim at maximising their own interests rather than organisational welfare. Other researchers such as Ogungbamila (2013) also verify the fact that decision-making by senior management is often driven by selfish goals, self-interest and meant for personal interests which demonstrate political behaviour. Employees not allowed to question the authenticity of decisions taken by managers, as identified in the survey, enhances the level of perception of politics as employees perceive the decisions to be unjustified, biased and politically motivated. This situation is described as highly political leading to a high perception of politics and linked to employees' feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity about the decisions taken (Stern et al., 2017).

**8)I have observed/ experienced that employees delivering the best performances are not fairly rewarded or promoted**

Table 8: Whether employees delivering the best performances are not fairly rewarded or promoted

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 24% | 24 |
| Agree | 33% | 33 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 12% | 12 |
| Disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Strongly disagree | 14% | 14 |

| Total | | 100 |
| --- | --- | --- |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ■ Series 1 | 24% | 33% | 12% | 17% | 14% |
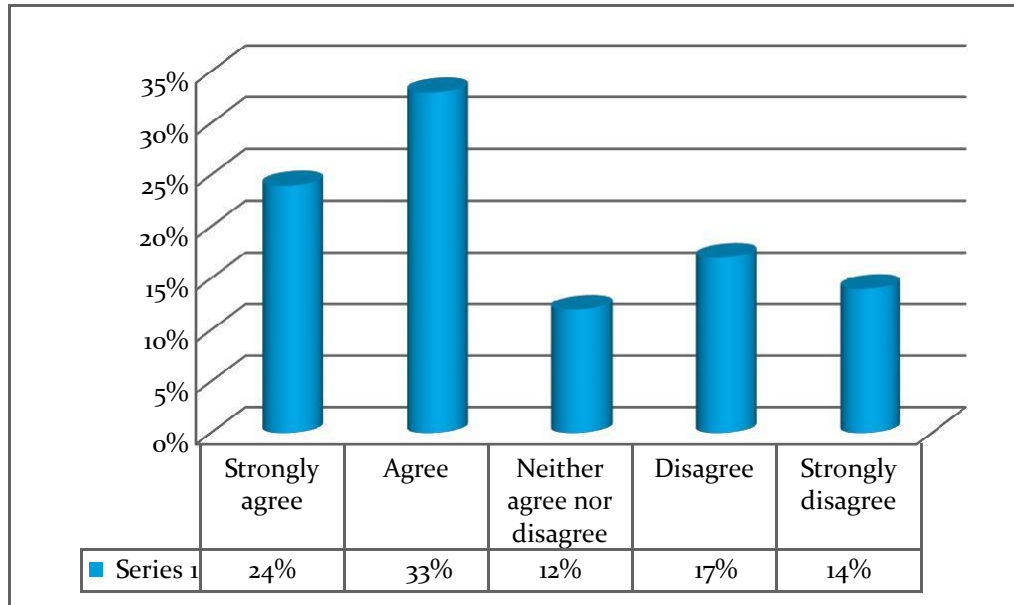
**Chart 8: Whether employees delivering the best performances are not fairly rewarded or promoted**

As indicated in the above visuals, 57% (24% strongly agree + 33% agree) affirm to the fact that employees delivering the best performances are not fairly rewarded or promoted in the organisation. Meanwhile, 31% (17% disagree + 14 % strongly disagree) do not believe that the organisational policies are so.

Rewards are fundamental aspects of organisational and an essential function of human resource management. However, organisational politics can influence rewards systems by developing a workplace where rewards are based on favouritism, nepotism and discrimination. This viewpoint is supported by De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia (2017) who link a highly political work environment with rewards stating that rewards tend to be unfair and politically influenced thereby making a hypothetical resource scarcity. Kapoutsis and Thanos (2016) also consider rewards in a political organisation as acts of political behaviour that decide monetary increment, job promotion, career progress, however, in the most manipulative way.

**9)When it comes to performance appraisals (salary increment, promotional decisions) organisational policies seem to be irrelevant**

Table 9: Whether organisational policies seem to be irrelevant with regards to performance appraisals

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly agree | 29% | 29 |
| Agree | 22% | 22 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16% | 16 |
| Disagree | 25% | 25 |
| Strongly disagree | 8% | 8 |
| Total | | 100 |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ■ Series 1 | 29% | 22% | 16% | 25% | 8% |
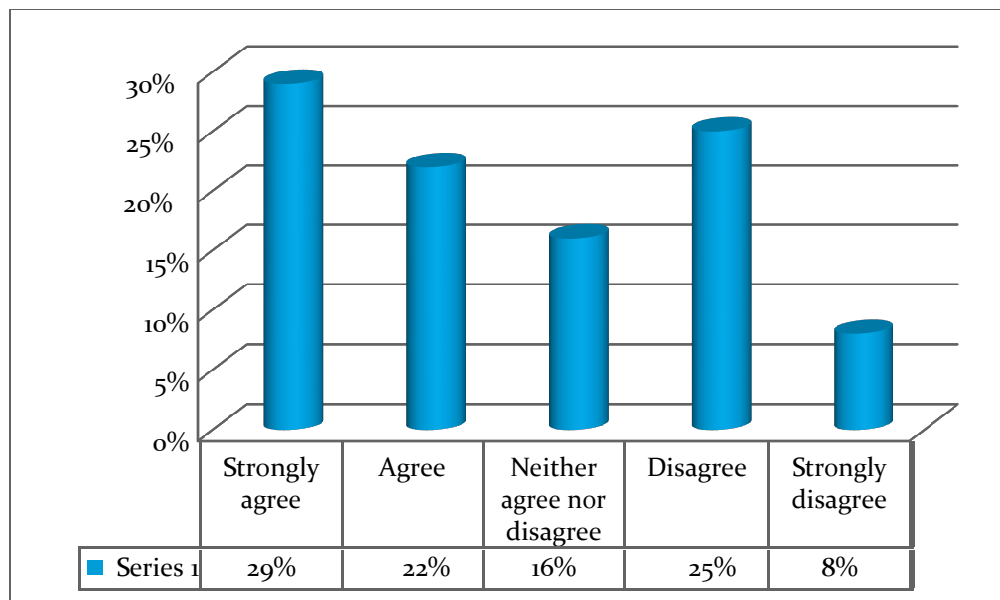
**Chart 9: Whether organisational policies seem to be irrelevant with regards to performance appraisals**

Majority 51% (29% strongly agree + 22% agree) feel that organisational policies seem to be irrelevant when it comes to performance appraisals indicating the existence of politics at the decision-making level. However, contrary to this 32% ((25% disagree + 8 % strongly disagree) contradict to the idea.

Employees have a perception that performance appraisals are not fair, transparent and bias exists when it comes to giving job promotions of increment in salary or benefits. This implies a higher perception of politics where employees do not have adequate trust in the organisational policies designed for employee welfare and career growth.

Review of the extant literature undertaken in the second chapter indicates that performance appraisal, as a function of human resource management is linked to organisation politics. Researchers such as Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) consider this as a destructive HRM as the interests of specific few is fulfilling while the interests of others are ignored. Beheshtifar and Herat (2013) indicate that performance appraisals may be biased, discriminated, unfair and lack transparency and designed to benefit the favourite ones. This is a persistent gap in the performance management system mainly evident in a politically driven organisation that makes organisational policies, values and norms irrelevant when it comes to performance appraisal.

**10)Telling others what they want to hear is often better than speaking out the truth**

Table 10: Whether telling others what they want to hear is often better than speaking out the truth

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 21% | 21 |
| Agree | 26% | 26 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16% | 16 |
| Disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Strongly disagree | 23% | 23 |
| Total | | 100 |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 21% | 26% | 16% | 14% | 23% |
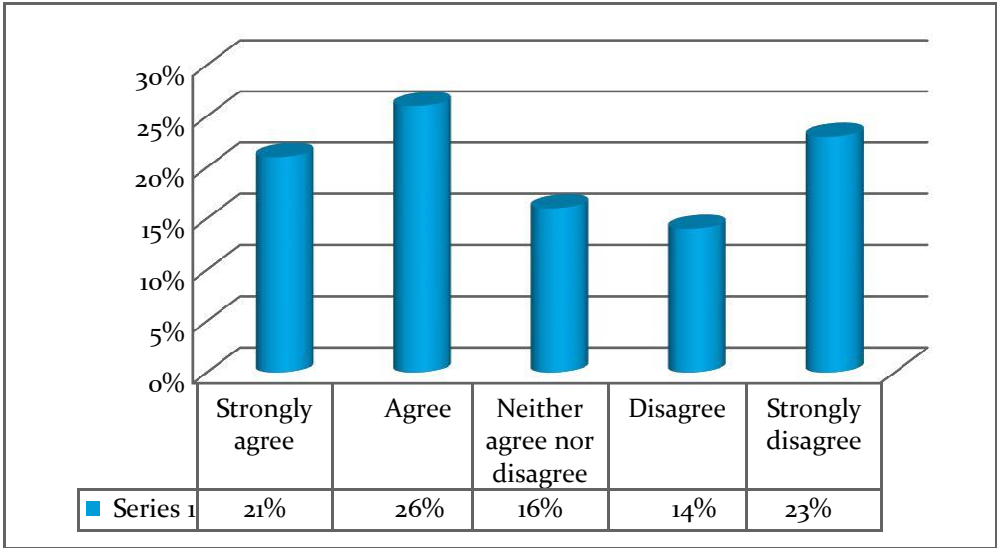
**Chart10: Whether telling others what they want to hear is often better than speaking out the truth**

Overall responses with regards to whether it is better to tell others what they want to hear are often better than speaking out the truth was varying as 47% (21% strongly agree + 26% agree) supported the fact. However, contradictory responses were obtained from 37% (14% disagree + 23 % strongly disagree) in the survey.

**11)I perceive there exist high political behaviour in the organisation due to the existence of coalition groups**

Table 11: Whether there exists high political behaviour in the organisation due to the existence of coalition group

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 21% | 21 |
| Agree | 28% | 28 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Strongly disagree | 23% | 23 |
| Total | | 100 |



|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 21% | 28% | 11% | 17% | 23% |
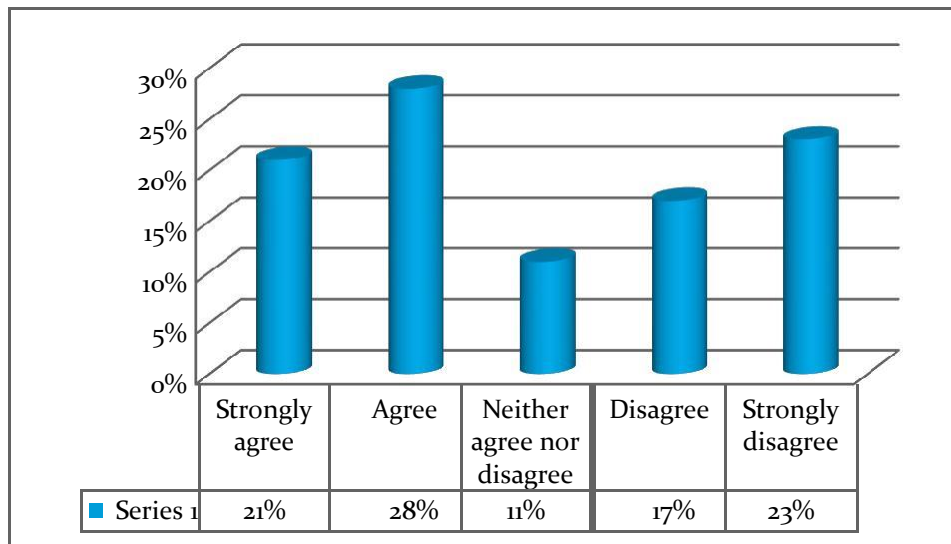
**Chart 11: Whether there exists high political behaviour in the organisation due to the existence of a coalition group**

As regards to the perception that there exists high political behaviour in the organisation due to the existence of coalition groups, varying responses were received wherein 49% (21% strongly agree + 28% agree) while 40% (17% disagree + 14 % strongly disagree) did not conform to the question.

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As discussed in the literature review, the formation of coalition groups is a characteristic feature of a political organisation. Coalition groups formed by members of an organisation influence decision-making by making unfair use of power or being an active part of those taking part in negotiations, misrepresenting data, manipulating information as indicated by Geiger and Pecoud (2014). Members of dominant groups forming coalitions diverge from the collective organisational goals forming their own likes and preferences to ensure that their personal goals reign in the organisation. Findings obtained from the survey also align with the claims made by Cacciattolo (2015) who indicates that such acts of coalition groups directed towards negative or destructive use of power also leads to the violation of the core organisational policies, norms and stakeholders' interests. Employees consider these coalition groups as highly political and this leads to a negative perception of politics.

*Objective 2- Critically investigate and analyse the impact of workplace politics on organisation performance*

**12)The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of stress at work**

Table 12: Whether the existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of stress at work

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 41% | 41 |
| Agree | 27% | 27 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 7% | 7 |
| Disagree | 16% | 16 |
| Strongly disagree | 9% | 9 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 41% | 27% | 7% | 16% | 9% |
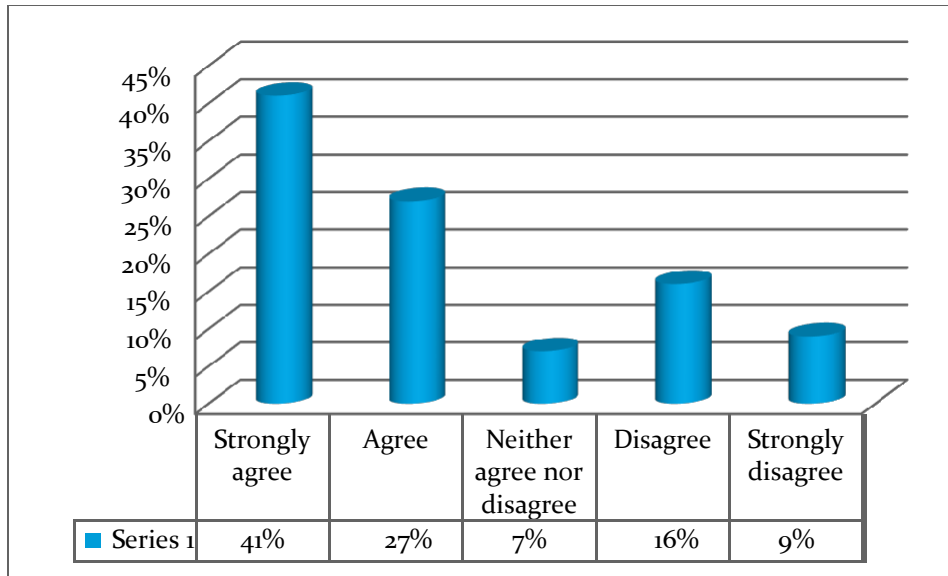
**Chart 12: Whether the existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of stress at work**

Majority of the participants 68% (41% strongly agree + 27% agree) affirm to the fact that the existence of workplace politics has been a cause of stress at work. Meanwhile, 25% (16% disagree + 9 % strongly disagree) contracted to the statement as they did not consider the perception of politics as stress creating factor.

An extensive review of the underpinning literature indicates a direct relationship between organisational politics and stress at the workplace. This is mainly established through an empirical study conducted by researchers' worldwide researching organisational behaviour. For instance, conductedresearch and found that perception of politics was stress creating factor among employees.

The arguments of Lee and Change (2013) also establish a direct relationship between perception of politics and stress and resulting job dissatisfaction and reduced commitment. These views are also supported by Abbas et al. (2015) and Parvaiz et al. (2015) who indicated that political behaviours by individuals or groups in an organisation resulted in stress among employees who perceived the existence of high politics in the organisation. Studies conducted by Wiltshire et al. (2014) also inferred that negative perception of politics at the workplace led to counterproductive work behaviour which was as a result of stress at work.

**13)The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of fear and anxiety at work**

Table 13: Whether the existence of workplace politics has been a cause of fear and anxiety at work

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 23% | 23 |
| Agree | 33% | 33 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Strongly disagree | 19% | 19 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 23% | 33% | 14% | 11% | 19% |
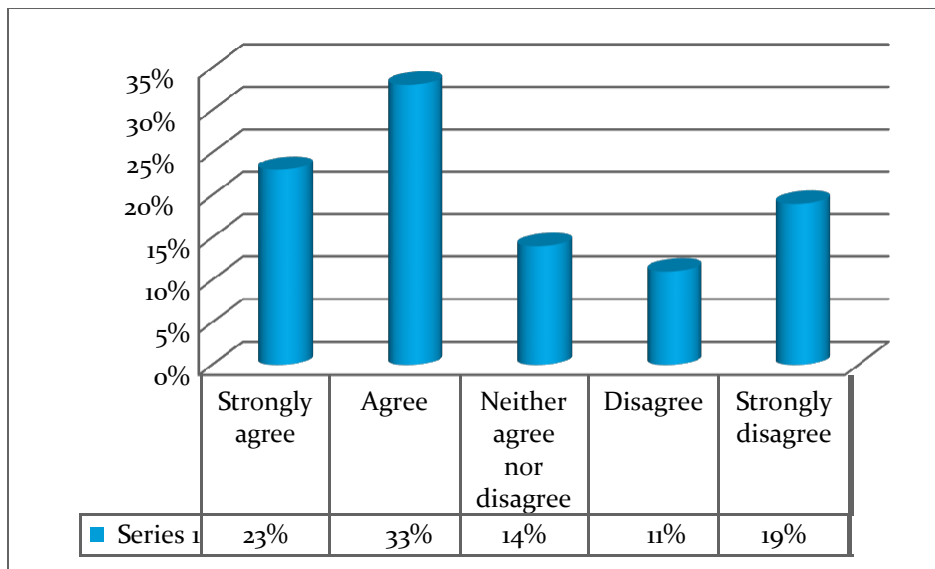
**Chart 13: Whether the existence of workplace politics has been a cause of fear and anxiety at work**

The participants' response with regards to whether the existence of workplace politics has been a cause of fear and anxiety at work is supported by 56% (23% strongly agree + 33% agree). On the other hand, a comparatively lower, 30% (11% disagree + 19 % strongly disagree) do not corroborate to the statement.

The findings obtained from the above question also confirms with the findings obtained by the review of underpinning literature. The fact that high perception of politics leads to negative behavioural outcomes such as fear and anxiety among employees is supported by researchers such as Iqbal (2016) and Bai et al. (2016) who are affected by the vicious games of politics resulting in anxiety and demoralisation. Anxiety is mainly due to insecurity about the job which is apparent in a politically induced organisation. The perception of politics leads to negative employee behaviour such as stress, fear and anxiety and such behaviour is detrimental for organisational behaviour.

**14) The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of commitment you had for the organisation**

Table 14: Whether existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of commitment

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 42% | 42 |
| Agree | 29% | 29 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 10% | 10 |
| Disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Strongly disagree | 5% | 5 |
| Total | | 100 |
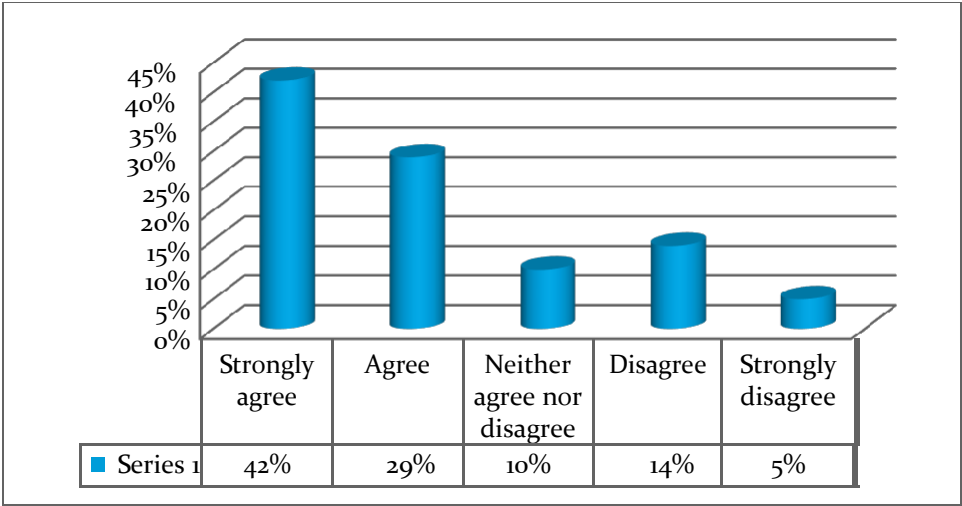


**Chart14: Whether the existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of commitment**

A major section of the participants in the survey, 71% (42% strongly agree + 29% agree) affirm to the question that the existence of workplace politics has reduced the extent of commitment towards the organisation. However, a significantly lower 19% (14% disagree + 5% strongly disagree) did not conform to the question.

Findings obtained from the above survey align with the theoretical arguments put forward by Cacciattolo (2015) who emphasised on the negative outcomes of organisational politics in the form of reduced commitment towards the organisational goals. Other researchers such as Naseer et al. (2016) also identified a negative correlation between employees' perception of politics and the extent of intrinsic motivation demonstrated through lack of affective commitment towards the organisation. However, earlier researchers such as Ambrose (2012) clarified that organisational trust and organisational support mediated the relationship between workplace politics and organisational commitment.

Studies conducted by Balogun (2017) on the perception of politics among employees in public sector firms and found a negative correlation between organisational politics and affective commitment. However, these claims, to some extent, are contradicted by Donald et al. (2016) who insinuated that perception of politics may have a positive impact on employee commitment towards the organisation if employees are managed and controlled effectively by the management. Meanwhile, Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) support the idea that self-serving behaviour of politically-driven people enhance the perception of politics and subsequently lead to detrimental outcomes such as reduced commitment towards the organisational goals.

**15) The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced your daily work performance**

Table 15: Whether the existence of workplace politics has reduced your daily work performance

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 34% | 34 |
| Agree | 24% | 24 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Neither agree nor disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Strongly disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 34% | 24% | 11% | 14% | 17% |
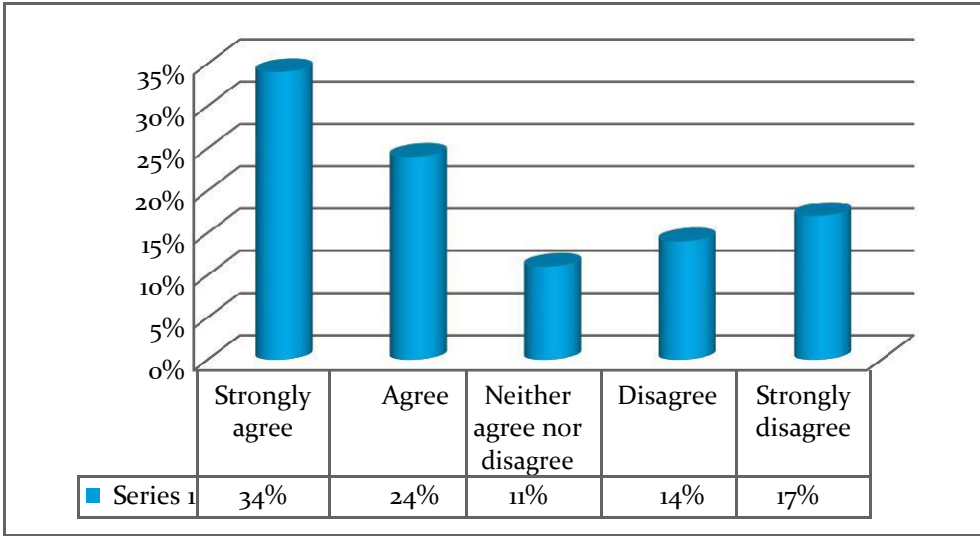
**Chart 15: Whether the existence of workplace politics has reduced your daily work performance**

As regards to whether the perception of politics has reduced the daily work performance of the employees, 58% (34% strongly agree + 24% agree) clearly affirm to the statement. On the other hand, a lower, 31% (14% strongly agree + 14% agree) do not believe that perception of politics has led to a reduction in their work performance.

Researchers such as Malik et al. (2019) indicate that political behaviour can be used by individuals to anticipate work outcome s as involvement in politics may enhance their likelihood of participation in decision-making. However, an indirect correlation between organisational politics and work performance is observed when.

**16)The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of job satisfaction at the organisation**

Table 16: Whether the existence of workplace politics has reduced the extent of job satisfaction at the organisation

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 29% | 29 |
| Agree | 35% | 35 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 8% | 8 |
| Disagree | 16% | 16 |
| Strongly disagree | 12% | 12 |
| Total | | 100 |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 29% | 35% | 8% | 16% | 12% |
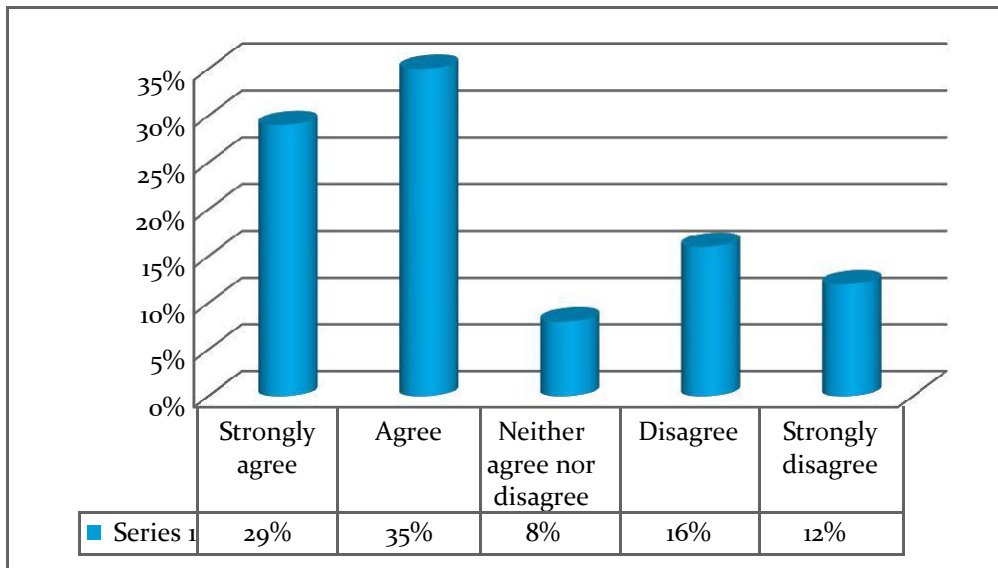
**Chart16: Whether existence of workplace politics has reduced the extent of job satisfaction at the organisation**

Majority of the participants 64% (29% strongly agree + 35% agree) consider that the existence of politics at the workplace has reduced the extent of job satisfaction at the organisation. As opposed to this, a lower, 28% (16% disagree + 12 % strongly disagree) did not believe that workplace politics reduced their satisfaction with the job.

The above piece of finding conforms to the theoretical claims made by Wiltshire et al. (2014) who indicate that negative perception of politics can lead to negative employee behaviour reflected in the form of increased absenteeism, poor attendance, increased idle time, reduced job satisfaction which subsequently leads to poor performance. Empirical research conducted by Labrague et al. (2017) also conducted research relating to organisational politics in the healthcare sector and found that there exista negative relationship between politics and the extent of employees' job satisfaction. Other researchers such as Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) found that self-serving behaviour that fortified high perception of politics resulted in outcomes detrimental in nature, such as, increased level of stress, reduced commitment and consistently declining work productivity. Stern et al. (2017) validate these claims indicating that the perception of politics relates to feelings of ambiguity about organisational decisions and also about their job roles and expectations. This behavioural pattern leads to hesitation while undertaking any job roles, low job satisfaction, decreased work efficiency and decline in performance.

**17) The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) discourages you to undertake voluntary activities as a part of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)?**

Table 17: Whether the existence of workplace politics discourages organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 46% | 46 |
| Agree | 28% | 28 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9% | 9 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Strongly disagree | 6% | 6 |
| Total | | 100 |
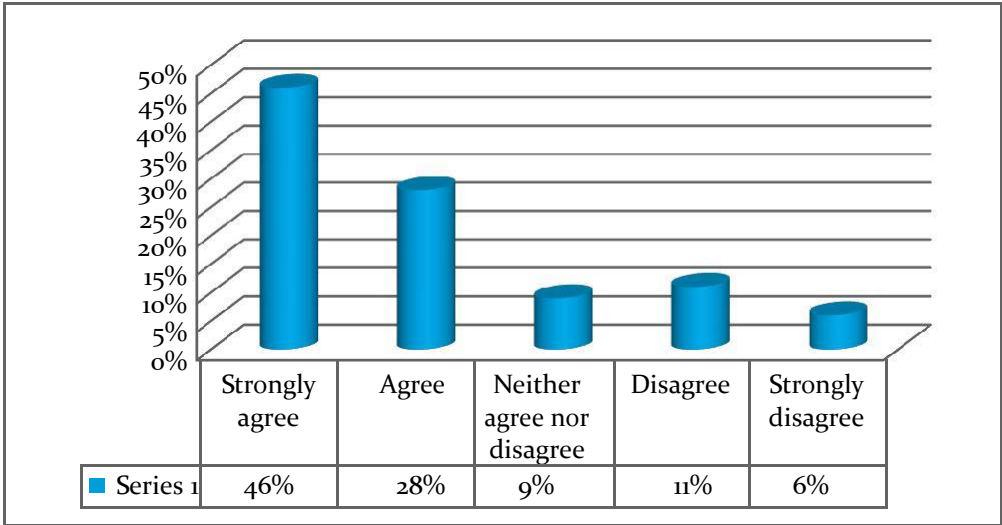


**Chart 17: Whether the existence of workplace politics discourages organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)**

Majority of the participants, 74% (46% strongly agree + 28% agree) affirm to the idea that the existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) discourages them to undertake voluntary activities as a part of organisational citizenship behaviour. Contrary to this, 17% (11% disagree +6 % strongly disagree) did not conform to this idea.

The above findings indicate that a higher perception of politics among employees reduces the desire to engage in voluntary activities directed towards citizenship behaviour. Employees in a political work environment are more likely to remain concerned about their core work roles and responsibilities rather going beyond their core duties. This is justified by Ogungbamila (2013) who indicates the perception of politics to be a source of employee stress that reduces their inclination towards discretionary work behaviour. Sun and Chen (2017) studied the relationship between organisational politics and citizenship behaviour and found an adverse relationship

between the constructs. Other studies such as those conducted by Chang et al. (2012) and Kartono et al. (2017) also indicate that the correlation between perception of politics and employees' involvement in voluntary activities, especially citizenship behaviour to be negative. However, the intervention of appropriate leadership reduces the extent of perception of politics among employees and enhances the likelihood of employees feeling committed towards citizenship tasks and organisational welfare.

**18)The perception of politics at the workplace you prefer to remain isolated from others (peers/colleagues/superiors)**

Table 18: Whether perception of politics at the workplace you prefer to remain isolated from others

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 24% | 24 |
| Agree | 25% | 25 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Strongly disagree | 20% | 20 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 24% | 25% | 14% | 17% | 20% |
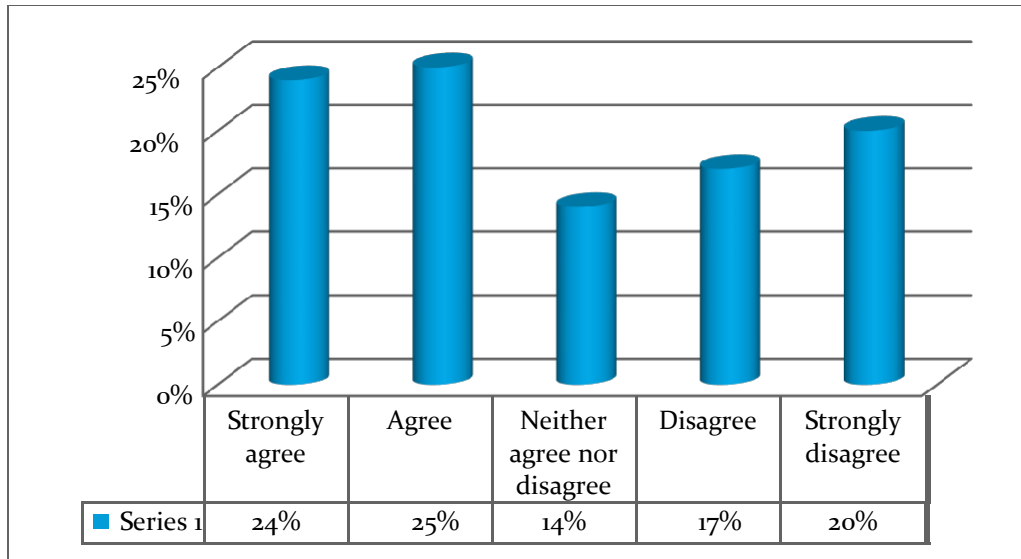
**Chart 18: Whether the perception of politics in the workplace you prefer to remain isolated from others**

Close to majority, 49% (24% strongly agree +25% agree) shared an optimistic response about the fact that perception of politics at the workplace you prefer to remain isolated from others such as peers, colleagues or supervisors. As opposed to this, 37% (17% disagree + 20 % strongly disagree) did not affirm that the perception of politics at the workplace induced their behaviour to remain isolated from others at the workplace.

**19)The perception of politics at the workplace makes you feel that your job is insecure and/or career is uncertain in this organisation**

Table 19: Whether the perception of politics makes employees feel insecurity about the job and career

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 28% | 28 |
| Agree | 31% | 31 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9% | 9 |
| Disagree | 15% | 15 |
| Strongly disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Total | | 100 |



| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series 1 | 28% | 31% | 9% | 15% | 17% |
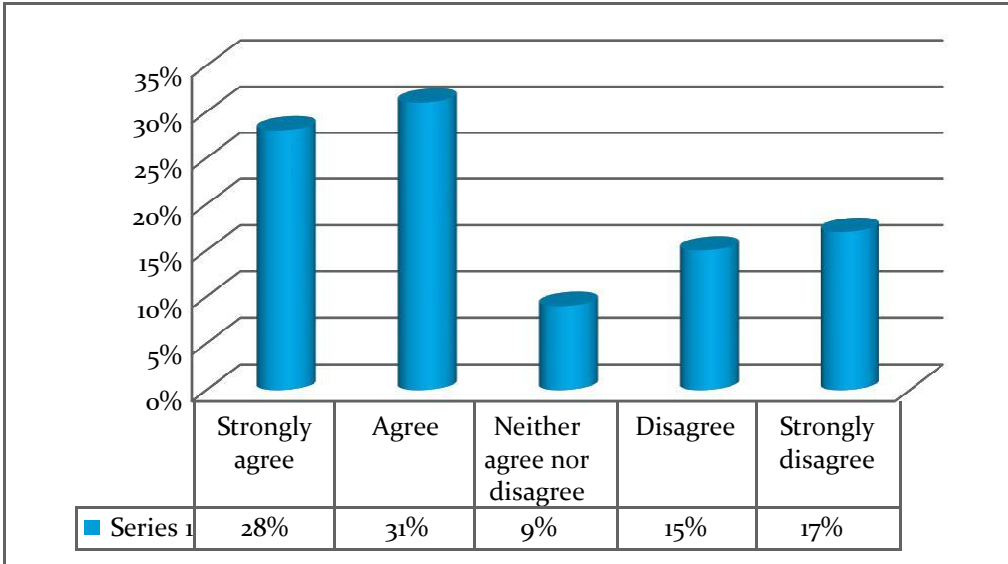
**Chart19: Whether the perception of politics makes employees feel insecurity about the job and career**

Similar to the previous response, majority, 59% (28% strongly agree + 31% agree) shared a positive response that the perception of politics at the workplace made them feel that their job is insecure and/or career is uncertain in this organisation. As opposed to this idea, a significantly lower 32% (15% disagree + 17 % strongly disagree) did not conform to this implying that they do not consider the existence of politics as a threat to their job or a hindrance to their career development.

*Objective 3- Develop strategies to manage workplace politics for positive organisational performance*

**20)In your opinion, organisational politics (or perception of politics) is not always negative?**

Table 20: Whether organisational politics (or perception of politics) is not always negative

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 23% | 23 |
| Agree | 19% | 19 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 8% | 8 |
| Disagree | 29% | 29 |
| Strongly disagree | 21% | 21 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 23% | 19% | 8% | 29% | 21% |
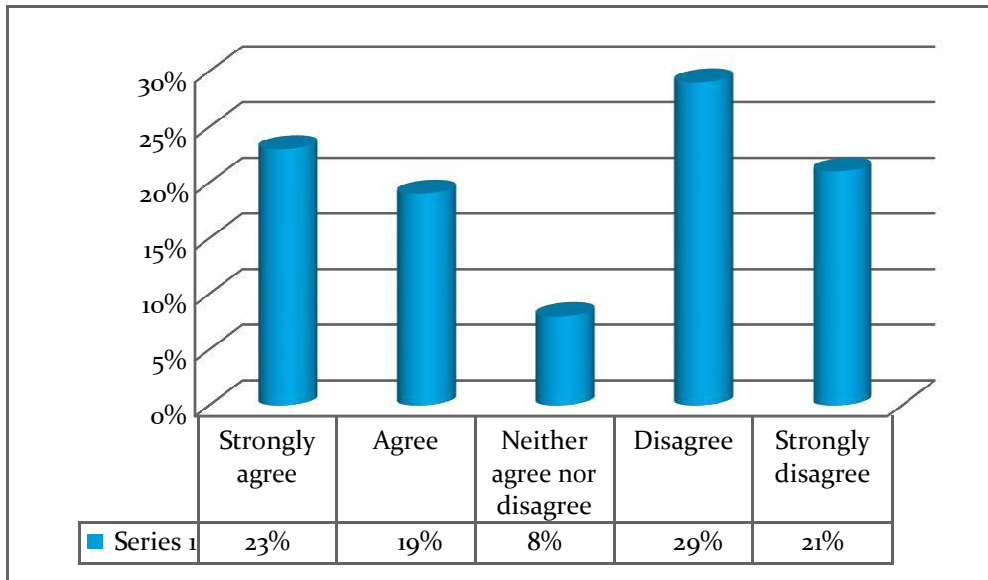
**Chart 20: Whether organisational politics (or perception of politics) is not always negative**

According to the overall responses obtained against this question, 51% (15% disagree + 17 % strongly disagree) do not go with the idea that organisational politics is not always negative. This implies that they perceive organisational politics to be negative and have a negative perception of this. On the other hand, a lower, 42% (29% strongly agree + 21% agree) support the idea that organisational politics is not always negative.

While a significant part of existing literature and theoretical debate undertaken by researchers consider organisational politics to be a negative construct and its existence leading to a range of unfavourable outcomes such stress, burnout, absenteeism, increased idle time and turnover intention, lack of commitment towards organisational goals and formation of separate coalition groups, reduced work efficiency and decline in performance. However, contemporary researchers such as Opoku and Arthur (2018) challenge the negative outcomes of perception of politics and consider the positive relationship between the two constructs. They do not consider organisational politics to be always toxic or destructive and stated that organisational politics increases the extent of competitive behaviour of the organisation and employees with high political skills are likely to consider politics as positive. Considering organisational politics to be positive, Maslyn et al. (2017) consider it to be an inevitable part of an organisation and that the organisation instead of making attempts to eliminate political behaviour should use politics in the most favourable way to align personal goals with organisational goals.

Supporting the idea about organisational politics to be positive, Zibenberg (2017) links it with its favourable facets of inclusivity, sense of belongingness, connectedness, communication and empowerment, provided the use of politics is made in a positive sense. Besides, as studied in the literature review, Varshney (2019)supports the views of Zibenberg (2017) stating that organisational politics can lead to dynamism, long-term vision, compliance and integrity, and fairness if used constructively.

**21)Do you think creating a climate of resilience (learning from events) can help to reduce the negative effects of politics?**

Table 21: Whether resilience helps to reduce the negative effects of politics

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 25% | 25 |
| Agree | 31% | 31 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 23% | 23 |
| Disagree | 14% | 14 |
| Strongly disagree | 7% | 7 |
| Total | | 100 |
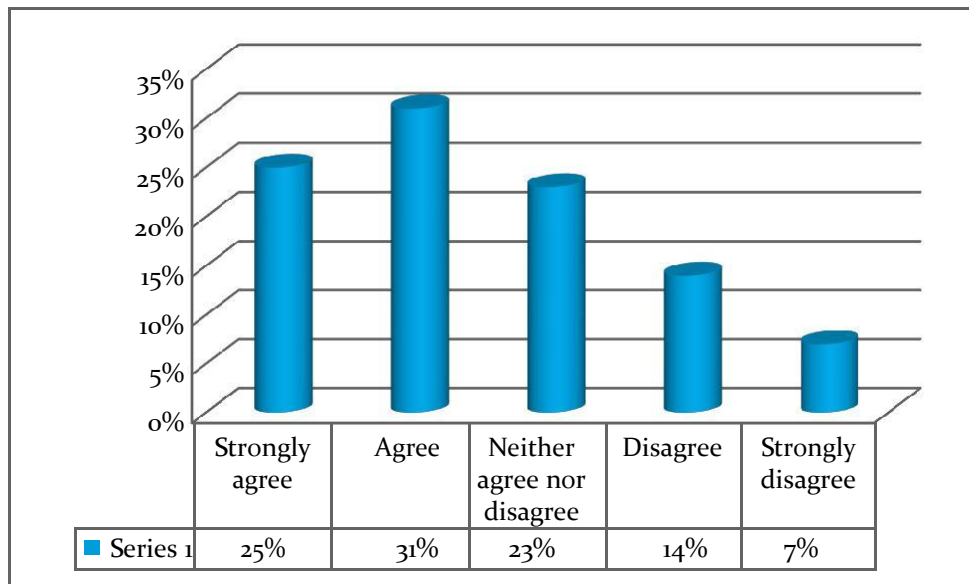


**Table 21: Whether resilience helps to reduce the negative effects of politics**

As regards to whether you think creating a climate of resilience (learning from events) can help to reduce the negative effects of politics, majority of the employees taking part in the survey, 56% ((25% strongly agree + 31% agree) shared a positive response. However, as opposed to the idea, 21% (14% disagree + 7 % strongly disagree) do not affirm to the fact that creating a climate of resilience can help to reduce the negative effects of politics in the organisation.

Resilience is a leadership characteristic and personal trait (Paul et al., 2016) of a person that helps to maintain flexibility and acquire learning from unfavourable events and context such as a politically driven workplace situation. This view is also supported by Shoshani and Slone (2016) who emphasise on the importance of being resilient when the high perception of politics is experienced wherein employees do not regard politics to be unfavourable.

As discussed in the literature review, Nguyen et al. (2016) emphasise on the importance of resilient leadership as such leaders promote a culture of agility, dynamism, and transform their behaviour to flexibly cope up with a politicised work environment. Resilience helps them to convert politically driven events into opportunities, develop problem-solving capabilities and form positive perception. The findings obtained from this survey also align with the claims made by Shah and Hamid (2016), who clarified that resilience helps employees to embrace politically driven decisions as an opportunity to learn, flexibly adapt to any changed situation, and consider politics as a positive, inherent aspect of the organisation.

**22)Do you think creating a climate of fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics?**

Table 22: Whether fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 47% | 47 |
| Agree | 36% | 36 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 3% | 3 |
| Disagree | 10% | 10 |
| Strongly disagree | 4% | 4 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series 1 | 47% | 36% | 3% | 10% | 4% |
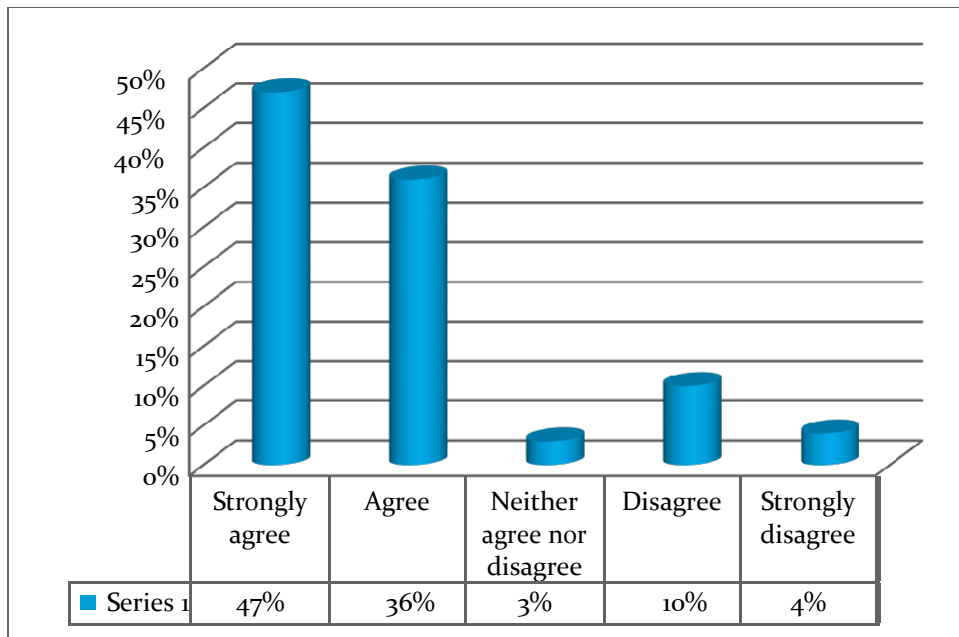
**Chart22: Whether fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics**

A significantly large percentage of 83% (28% strongly agree + 31% agree) shared an affirmative response that creating a climate of fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics. Meanwhile, a very small percentage, 14% (10% disagree + 4 % strongly disagree) do not believe that creating a climate of fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics.

Lack of fairness and transparency is usually evident in a politicised work environment and affects various HR functions such as performance appraisals, decisions about a job promotion, career progression and employee welfare programs. The use of unfair means implies biased performance management, prejudice and discrimination in human resource management and such a work environment is perceived as highly political by employees (Kane-Frieder et al.,

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2014). The elimination of such unfair practices and promoting a culture of transparency, integrity and compliance helps to reduce the negative influence of politics and its detrimental impact on employee behaviour.

**23)Inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards workplace politics?**

Table 23: Whether the inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards politics

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 28% | 28 |
| Agree | 31% | 31 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9% | 9 |
| Disagree | 15% | 15 |
| Strongly disagree | 17% | 17 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 28% | 31% | 9% | 15% | 17% |
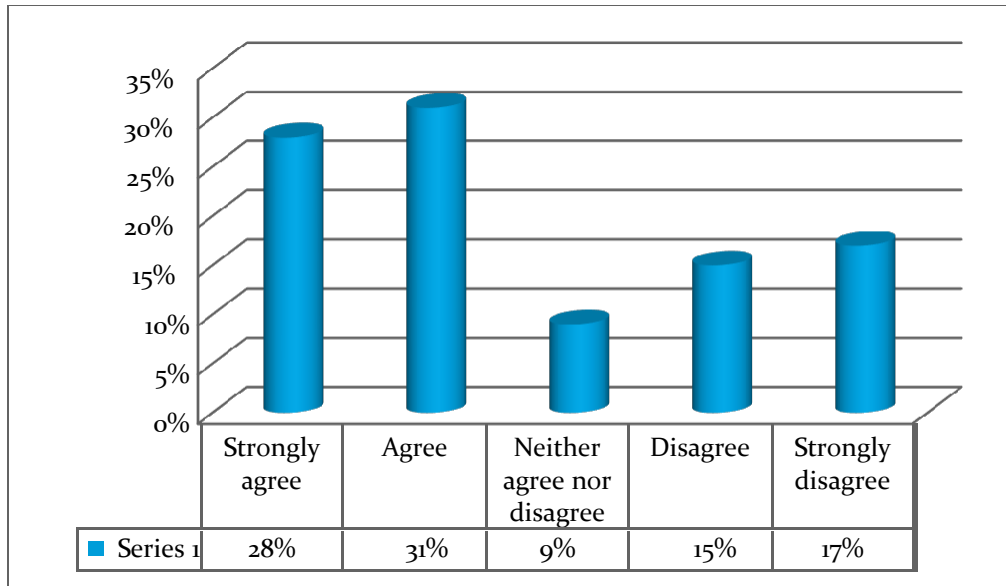
**Chart 23: Whether the inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards politics**

As regards to the inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards workplace politics, 59% (28% strongly agree + 31% agree) of the participants in the survey shared a positive response giving their consensus. On the contrary, 32%(15% disagree + 17 % strongly disagree) did not share an affirmative response to the fact that inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making reduces the negative perception towards workplace politics.

In-depth review of underpinning literature on the antecedents of organisational politics indicates that lack of employee inclusion in the decision-making increases the likelihood of the high perception of politics among members of the organisation. Managerial decision-making is often influenced by unfair means such as misuse of power, control of agenda, manipulation of key information, and influence of dominant coalition groups (Geiger and Pécoud, 2014). Organisational decision-making is a process-based outcome where employees may have divergent views and interests. The absence of employees' voice in the key decision implies that their interests and welfare may not be considered and they may perceive the existence of high political climate in the organisation. These views are also supported by Kreutzer et al. (2015) who believe that political behaviour can be unfavourably used for decision-making meant for the fulfilment of self –interest and personal goals. Therefore, the inclusion of employees' ideas,

their participation and seeking their consensus in the organisational decisions reduce the negative perception they have towards the organisation.

**24)When you are engaged your feel motivated to perform better despite the presence of organisational politics**

Table 24: Whether engagement motivates to perform better despite the presence of organisational politics

| Options | Response (%) | Response (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 46% | 46 |
| Agree | 28% | 28 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9% | 9 |
| Disagree | 11% | 11 |
| Strongly disagree | 6% | 6 |
| Total | | 100 |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series 1 | 46% | 28% | 9% | 11% | 6% |
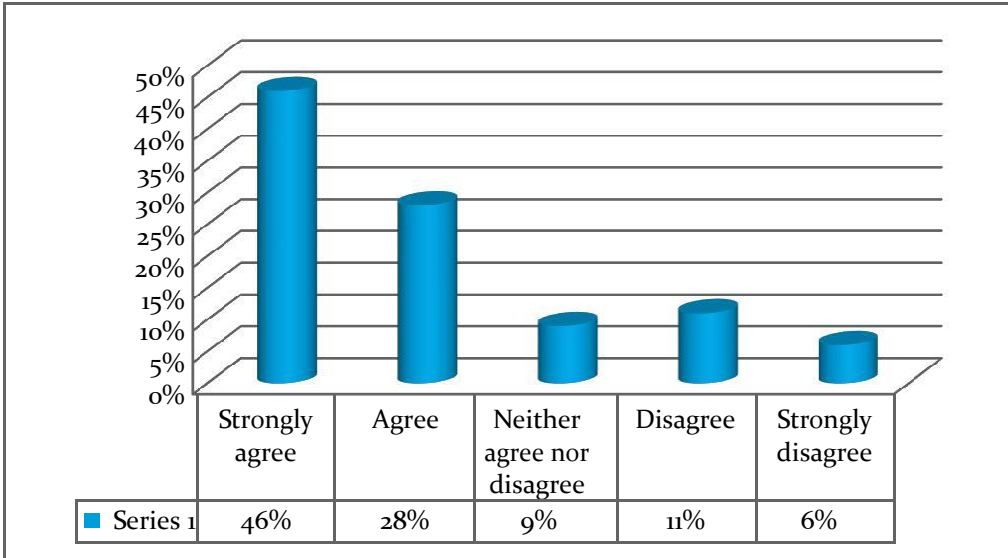
**Chart 24: Whether engagement motivates to perform better despite the presence of organisational politics**


Engaged employees are more likely to feel motivated to perform better despite the presence of organisational politics as confirmed by 74% (46% strongly agree + 28% agree) of the participants in the survey. As opposed to this, a significantly lesser number of participants, 17% (11% disagree + 6 % strongly disagree) did not support this idea. Meanwhile, 9% preferred to remain neutral.

## 4.3 Findings and data analysis (Qualitative research)

This section of the data analysis and findings presents the expressive, in-depth, and elaborate information shared by the management level employees during the interview. Rigorous analysis of the data obtained through qualitative research, i.e. the interviews is supported by different views, opinion, ideas and experiences shared by the respondents. These views, comments and expressions are included in this presentation to ensure the data analysis is real, practical and close links with the research problems, aims, objectives and research questions. Similar and varying responses obtained from the interviews is categorically presented and compared and contrasted with the theoretical debates undertaken in the literature review. Therefore the analysis of the textual, subjective, qualitative data obtained empirically is also aligned with the critical discussions carried out in the review of extant, underpinning literature review.

**Nature of workplace politics present in organisations**

Findings obtained from the managerial interview indicate that almost all organisations have some form of politics present as an inherent element of organisational behaviour and its occurrence is natural. It is considered to emerge naturally in organisations as organisations are characterised with social togetherness, group cohesion, as well as incoherency, and the clash of personalities. The social context within a work environment is complex as the interaction between different people takes place and often it is difficult to identify the nature of workplace politics that exist. This is identified by the claims made by one of the managers R1 being interviewed who stated "*it's difficult to define the nature of politics as politically motivated activities are of various forms ranging from protests by workers, creating chaos, or disruption of workflow....its fuelled through rumour and spread of negative gossips and takes the form of negative politics... I don't consider it a healthy practice*" The views of R1 coincide with the views of R6 who considers the occurrence of organisational politics to be natural and an inherent, in-built part of any organisation irrespective of its structure, culture, and managerial behaviour. R6 affirmed the presence of organisational politics and commented "***Yes it is! Politics is present in almost every organisation and its presence in our organisation is obvious... certain activities are carried out to acquire, develop and making use of power to achieve one's desired outcomes*** *...*" . The respondent elaborated that the use of political behaviour is usually displayed by those holding

hierarchical power and authority and take undue advantage of complex situations which require quick decision-making and implementation of a policy.

The views of R2 were different from other participants who linked employees' perception of politics with any emergent change that was adopted by the managers. Any kind of change adopted by the managers in response to the changes taking place in the external environment is considered by employees as political and that the decision to change is taken to fulfil personal interests. This is the nature of employees' perception of politics which may be due to disbelief and distrust in the management. This is evident in the following statement by R2 "*Look! the behaviour and actions of one person characterised as politics can be perceived as effective management by others and the other way round is also true... to a large extent it depends on the personality, thinking and mindset of a person to perceive something 'political', let's suppose any form of 'change' led by a change-manager can be perceived to be politically motivated by some while those who are politically skilled will consider it effective management.....or an effective leadership strategy .....*". Therefore, workplace politics is linked to any form of organisational change that is perceived by employees as politically-motivated which describes the nature of politics in the organisation.

The opinion of R7 matched to some extent with that of R1 and R6 who considers the existence of organisational politics to be natural. However, the views of R7 were contradictory with regards to its perception as always negative. R7 considers organisational politics to be a positive and emphasises on the importance of leadership to shape the perception of politics positively. R7 considers politics as an inherent part of the organisation, and politics is characterised with both negative and positive attributes. However, the mangers yet divert it in a positive direction. *R7 stated "now see work organisations today require skills in dealing with shifting power bases and conflicting agendas and this is true for our organisation also. ......I'd say that the political orientation of our people (employees) is directed towards building constructive relationships, pursuing collective goals, and forming coalitions to divide responsibilities. We train people to develop political skills, i.e. competitive behaviour with no hidden agendas and undertake efforts to minimise the destructive aspects of negative politics".*The opinion of R5 with regards to the nature of organisational politics aligned with the views of R7 as both consider organisational politics to be positive. However, R5 considers it from a global perspective stating that "Ours *is a*

*global organisation and therefore we come across various cultures, encounter people from diverse background and with different political mindset..... what kind of politics breeds in an organisation (referring to the nature of organisational politics) depends on the leadership style of the decision-makers which significantly affect political climate...*"

R8 also confirmed the presence of politics in the organisation and linked politics with 'Machiavellianism' while describing the nature of politics. The respondent indicated that *the* actions of few employees demonstrate self-interest at the expense of others and they remain cool and manipulative even when others in the same team get emotional. Politically driven members often form alliances with powerful others to get their goals fulfilled and these people are high machs. The manager indicated that machs do not hesitate to deceive others, pretend to be honest, and use unethical ways to manipulate others to fulfil their personal goals which deviate from the mainstream organisational goals.

**Employees' perception of politics**

The perception of employees working at a lower level was identified by probing the managers.

Findings indicate that employees with a low level of emotional intelligence usually perceive organisational politics to be negative and unfavourable. They are most affected by rumours being spread by similar others about decisions taken by the management without consulting them, or performance appraisals not done according to their expectations, or any change adopted in the organisation without prior communication with them. Employees with a higher perception of politics tend to exhibit counterproductive behaviour suspecting their co-workers, colleagues or other team members to be politically minded and get involved in conflicts. These views were shared by R1 who stated *members at the lower level of the organisation they perceive that someone in their own team or a co-worker is politically obsessed and this creates internal conflicts and spoils team spirit......people with low EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE are the ones who perceive politics to be unfavourable.."*The views of R2 was quite similar to that of R1, however, the latter added that employees with low political skills always perceive politics in the wrong sense, considering it negative, and trying to resist most of the core decisions undertaken by the management. The manager remarked, "Their behaviour reflects what they think and the

way they perceive politics at the workplace    ....they resist almost every decision we (managers) take, every action undertaken by us even if it is for their welfare and prosperity".


**Influence of organisational politics on employee behaviour [emphasis on the extent of their citizenship behaviour]**

The views and insights of R1, R4 and R6 were similar to a large extent as they described the influence of organisational politics on employee behaviour to be unfavourable and unproductive. It led to conflicts between employees and between employees and the superiors and gave rise to chaos. Those who perceived the workplace to be highly political demonstrated counterproductive behaviour and hardly contributed their time for voluntary activities meant for organisational growth and welfare. The employees failed to think beyond their core job role and responsibilities and their inclination towards any form of citizenship behaviour was negligible. R1 described this form of behaviour to be counterproductive which was not useful for the health and welfare of the organisation and stated: "See what counterproductive behaviour is (takes a deep breath) …as opposed to voluntary citizenship behaviour it is a behavioural tendency that violates important norms and values of the organisation and thereby threatens the organisational wellbeing ……employees indulge into acts such as taking excessive breaks, increasing idle

time, showing disinterest at work, feeling demoralised, speaking rudely to the supervisor and knocking the human resource managers with some type of issues or complaints ……they seem to be always complaining….". These views were supported by R4 who disclosed that people at the workplace misunderstood the management decisions and looked at everything with suspicion which led to negative behavioural outcomes.

R2 and R4 shared their consensus on how any emergent situation and decisions such as 'change decisions' were perceived as political and a threat to their job security. Employees have feelings that change decisions implemented by managers are to make them redundant and layoffs. These respondents observed the behavioural tendencies of the employees in a political environment to be negative that resulted in elongated breaks, irresponsible behaviour, coming late to work, passing sarcastic comments and violated the basic organisational norms and work protocols. R4 commented "Now See ! the very thought of the term politics raises suspicions that something is

going wrong and lower level staffs are the ones very quick to react unfavourably to anything that is perceived as political.' ….(pause) …..even the most well-performing members start demonstrating irresponsible behaviours, elongated breaks, coming late to the office regularly, being delinquent and hostile, and passing sarcastic comments……. ..forget about citizenship behaviour …it is counterproductive behaviour that they show ….it is very difficult to handle such situation as things become very unruly ……"

R5 had a different perspective and clarified that it could lead to favourable behaviour provided employees are politically skilful. The respondent mentioned that organisational politics was necessary to maintain competitive behaviour for the organisation and politically skilled employees were likely to understand this. These employees consider politics to be constructive and exhibit behaviours directed towards teamwork, commitment, and inclination towards citizenship behaviour. However, when probed whether employees took part in citizenship behaviour, the response was as follows "*most of the lower-level workers perceived politics to be harmful and acts related to favouritism, prejudice, and discrimination, therefore, their behaviour towards the organisation was unfair......and NAH! they would never take part in citizenship behaviour..*" The manager R6 pointed out that the employees who perceive the organisational climate to be highly political exhibit behaviour as if they are very insecure and threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty, not about the organisation but their personal goals and aspirations. Meanwhile, those who perceive politics to be negative, feel inherently distressed and this, in turn, breeds violent behaviour causing more and more anguish among co-workers.

The views of R5 corroborated with R8 who indicated that organisational politics leads to both, constructive as well as unfavourable behaviour, however, most of the behaviours are likely to be unacceptable. R8 conveyed ' *Look! Politics is an essential part of every organisation, where social or commercial, for-profit or a ngo, it is not intended, it originates, develops and spreads on its own.* The respondent explained that the politically skilled employees respond positively towards organisational politics and become more communicative, balanced, and ethically driven. They perceive that the competition is healthy, work towards their own career progress, strive towards the achievement of personal goals as well as organisational goals.

**Impact of organisational politics on culture at the workplace/ Relating politics with culture**

To understand the impact of organisational politics on culture the question asked was "*how does organisational politics impact culture at the workplace?".*

One of the respondents R6 explained how power and politics shaped the culture of a particular work environment. Cross-cultural integration is common in global firms, particularly firms that send expatriates to different locations to work on overseas projects within different political environment that shapes their cultural outlook. For instance, organisations with high 'power distance' are characterised with unequal distribution of power wherein power and authority is usually held by dominant groups. Decisions taken by those holding power may be politically-driven and meant to fulfil self-interests and the organisation is perceived to be highly political. Therefore, the culture exhibits a lack of employee participation in decision-making, formal and top-down communication, and increased likelihood of conflict. R6 stated "*global firms possess different types of the political climate and diverse forms of culture as well .......we send*

*employees to different geographical locations to work on expatriate projects and in doing so they encounter different power status and political dominance in different organisational contexts which affects their communication level, thought-process, relationship building and attitude towards work. Now, in overseas locations if senior management holds all the power and power is unevenly distributed, an employee who has worked under participative leadership feels alienated.....he may perceive that the new work environment is politically dominant and may not feel free to share information, build relationships, or participate in activities other than work.*

The above views of R6 matched with that of R8 with regards to how politically-motivated people striving to fulfil their personal goals and own-interests promoted an 'individualistic' culture where collective goals were ignored. People using power and politics in the wrong way (misusing) are characterised as self-centred, achievement-oriented, ego-centric and indulge in acts such as manipulation and deception to take undue advantage of others. Their behavioural tendencies and acts promote a culture of distrust and disbelief. Their cultural mindset is that of an individualist striving to fulfil self-centred goals, manoeuvring others to attain better performance ratings, trying to get rewarded with better perks and incentives, superior job positions to gain self-esteem and more power that can be further misused.

Another manager R2 narrated how sub-groups are formed having distinct agendas and set of norms and they operated in the form of sub-cultural groups. The goals of these groups are different from the common goals and objectives of the organisation and the continuance of these sub-cultural groups is harmful as they have their cultural values, mindset, and norms'. The mindsets of these groups are highly political and they indulge in activities meant to fulfil their own interests and self-serving behaviour. Others in the organisations (those who are not part of these subgroups) obviously perceive everything in the organisation to be politically driven and therefore get involved in activities such as gossip, spreading rumours, expressing their feelings exaggeratedly, spreading negative word of mouth comments about the management and the organisation and thereby promoting negative culture.

From a different perspective, the manager R3 disclosed and their organisation followed a policy of enhancing competence and managing change was essential. However, perception of politics disrupted the extent of competitive behaviour and change orientation that the executors of change, that is the employees were supposed to possess. The respondent disclosed that they operated in a very competitive environment and accordingly their culture is shaped. Moreover, the cultural outlook of their organisation was built upon the necessity for change, the necessity to be creative, and embrace innovation and risk-taking was promoted because without risks competitiveness comes to a standstill. However, politics often disrupted the process of change and innovation as employees raised suspicions, feel threatened and resisted change. People perceived that the emergence of change is to fulfil the self-interests of top management responsible to take 'change decisions' and the outcome would be employee layoffs.

R4 initially explained the existence of organisational politics to be pervasive and omnipresent throughout the organisational levels. The manager shared an experience that when resources are constrained, widespread ambiguity prevails, and forecasting the future becomes difficult such as in vuca (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous). In such a situation, when it is difficult to take decisions, specific groups emerge to create trouble for the organisation and increase the complexity rather than extending their support to the organisation. R4 explained that when resource constraints were evident, job promotions were difficult, appraisals were weak, salary increment was negligent, benefits and allowances were curbed and it was necessary to cut down costs; in such situation, certain groups emerged to demonstrate political behaviours by

negotiating terms and conditions with the management, asking for increased compensation or else they would resign or demanding immediate job promotions so that they can acquire power and decision-making authority. Their political behaviour was apparent and this kind of politics spoils the cultural set-up of the organisation. R4 stated, "*politics used in a wrong way destroys the collaborative work environment that is built upon mutual trust, involvement, human values and respect for diversity ........... the most tenured employees are the ones who exhibit political behaviour, surprisingly, instead of being loyal to the firm...seek recognition even in difficult times ....*"

The views of R7 did not align with the views of the above respondents as R7 had a different perception. R7 indicated that organisational politics managed in the right way helped to shape a positive culture of trust and collaboration. *R7 stated " It (Politics) favours! Look! I believe that organisational politics is natural, it's a part of the culture and therefore promotes a collaborative environment of trust, confidence, autonomy and empowerment. In our organisation decision-making is shared and employee inclusion, including their consensus in final decisions, is a norm. Organisational decisions where employees' interests are affected is not taken autonomously by managers or else it would be considered politically motivated.... since*

*managers may take autonomous decisions without consulting anyone to fulfil their interests.....and hence employees perceive the presence of positive politics which influences their behaviour as in communication, peer-relationships, and thinking positively'.*

These views conformed with the opinion of R5 who stated that politics influences culture in the same way as culture influence politics, therefore on the variable is dependent on the other. The respondent explained that their organisation largely followed the 'people' culture and considers staff as the most important form of social assets. R5 commented "***we make our employees feel important and belonged, their voice is always listened to and their issues are attended in real-time no matter how politically driven their intentions, we don't allow workplace politics to harm employees, either emotionally or physically .....I feel that engaged employees rarely***

***indulge in politics that is harmful to the organisation ...*"**

R5 also clarified that the direct impact of politics on culture was not easily identifiable, even though, the managers can understand how organisational politics impact human behaviour at the workplace, and therefore, few aspects of culture such as communication. At length, the manager

emphasised on providing coaching or training to make employees politically-skilled so that they healthily use politics and cultivate a favourable cultural environment that links the 3Cs of collaboration, cultivation and competence.


**Impact of organisational politics on job performance**

Findings obtained from most of the participants indicate a negative impact of OP on employees' job performance as OP is mainly perceived as a negative construct. It mainly deteriorates the performance level of employees with lack of political skills and those who are easily influenced by Machiavellians.

The first interview conducted with R1 provided a response that indicated a negative impact of politics on job performance, i.e. counterproductive. **R1** *commented ' Ah! I have come across several issues of employees feeling unhappy, stressed, or frustrated for no reason, rather disbelief that there is some kind of injustice going on ...... it's just a belief and this ruins their performance levels....(pause).... their performance level goes does which deteriorates team performance and bit by bit affects the overall performance of the organisation...*' The manager further insinuated that people with a pessimist mindset and negative thinkers, at all times, felt that some kind of political game or similar events are occurring without their notice and thereby felt stressed out and de-motivated. This led to poor work performance. Quite similar was the response of **R2** who disclosed that employees were affected by rumours and gossips undertaken by those who perceive the existence of a negative political climate. **R2** remarked *"....it comes like a rumour, Oh! Something fishy going on... politics! hmmm..now everything is politicised and we will be the victims. ...this is how employees feel like and then they spread the word, form groups, and then subgroups thereby destroying their performance capabilities and that of the others ......".*

**R6** *pointed out that the employees respond negatively towards the very thought of politics and this affects their performance levels adversely. People develop a feeling of uncertainty and lost confidence in their jobs and the organisation. Employees exhibit low trust towards their superiors, supervisor and managers and get involved in behaviours that do not yield meaningful results...* R6 *stated "The employees, even the best performers seem to get lost and compromise*

*with their quality of work despite knowing the consequences ....even after several pieces of training, provision for holidays and leaves, and extra benefits they do not feel motivated to improve performance and cling to the same behaviour that affects performance .....".*

R3 shared an understanding that employees influenced by politics, across different teams and departments developed negative attitude this was harmful to their performance. The respondent stated *'employees behaved like laggards, low performers showing no interest in improving their performance at work, they were reluctant to take part in training that were designed to help them acquire better skills and competencies to improve job performance .... ... they are negligent towards any kind of behavioural training or counselling meant to create a positive work environment and direct their behaviour towards constructive thoughts that could lead to better performances.....''* R3 described this as a very difficult situation as even after being counselled or incentivised their performances could not be improved.

**R8** indicated that employees get distracted and preoccupied with negativity assuming politics could harm their career progress and therefore show lack of interest at work. When employees observe the unfair distribution of power and their voices not being listened to, they assume that high political environment is present at the top-most managerial level and that their decisions are guided by self-interests. This is a foremost cause of employee demotivation, stress and frustration that affects their performance level. R8 also disclosed that high perception of politics at the workplace leads to anxiety and the result is mental stress and severe trauma causing performance defects. R8 also commented," *what hinders their performance is the wrong belief that their efforts will not be rewarded fairly ... they seem to make their own judgements about others and feel discriminated in their own way ....".*

The participants **R5** and **R7** shared an optimistic viewpoint about the prevalence of organisational politics how it affected job performance. **R5** indicated that employees who have sufficient understanding of what politics is, what it originates, and its need for the competitive advantage of the company will work hard to develop their own career as well as facilitate overall progress of the organisation by delivering superior performance. The respondent R5 clarified that communication gaps and lack of information exchange between the managers and the operational level employees is the main cause of staff members perceiving the prevalence of politics that is harmful and this led to the deterioration of performance. Therefore, educating

them about the possible benefits of politics to enhance their competitive behaviour and feel motivated to enhance their performance.

**R4** put forward a contradictory response indicating that people with low emotional intelligence (EI) were the ones having a negative attitude towards workplace politics and had a very bad effect on their day to day work performance. R4 specified that employees often experienced higher stress and burnout at the workplace, remained regularly absent, took prolonged breaks and frequent leave and avoided coming at the work, the collective effect of which was a poor performance. **R4** conveyed "*Look !perception of politics is fatal! but organisational politics can't be avoided.....what I have come across is the general feeling among workers that*

*managerial decisions are biased.....their (employees) consciousness says that performance appraisals carried out by the line manager including HR managers is unfair and lacks transparency......they feel that organisational managers have favourites who get better*

*appraisals through increment in pay, benefits, and job promotions ......' Conclusively the manager said that employees who perceive the existence of politics.."*

**R7** was on a similar platform and stressed on the importance of remaining vigilant about changes in employee behaviour and probing them if it led to a decline in performance levels. Any unsolicited behaviour such as rudeness, despair, or anxiety was observed and the reasons for showing such behaviour was identified to find out whether it was due to politics and how it affected work performance. R7 conveyed "*the perception of politics is usually detrimental to performance to such as extent that employees show negligence and not even perform their basic duties carefully however probing them, providing counselling and bringing behavioural change helps to modify their behaviour and this has to be done at an early stage (smiles) .......I will stick*

*to my point that politics is not always negative rather it is perceived to be a negative and managerial intervention at the right time helps to transform employee behaviour and motivate them to deliver better performance ......"*


**Impact of workplace politics on employees' commitment towards the organisation/employee retention**

R1,R2, R4 and R6 mentioned that the existence of organisational politics reduced the level of employees' affective commitment towards the organisation. R1 commented "*people seem to be disillusioned and less emotionally attached to the organisation.... it's strange that they feel so worried about the workplace environment being political and this affects their behaviour, attitude, and therefore the level of commitment towards the organisational goals and objectives....*".Reduced commitment and intention to stay in the organisation was shown by deviating from the common organisational goals and forming their own goals and perceptions. The opinion of R4 coincided with R1 who felt the same and stated "I *completely agree that the presence of politics as perceived by employees beings negative outcomes and low commitment is a major setback that the organisation suffers'........' employees perceiving the presence of politics at the workplace lose their commitment levels and show less concern towards meeting the organisational goals ...they get involved in unnecessary gossips, hang around with similar others at kiosks ore restrooms, increase idle time, commit more mistakes and seem not to bother about organisational sustenance...(pause) .....Despite our efforts to reform their behaviour through feedback sessions, or similar other initiatives they do not seem to emotionally connect with the organisation.....at times we revise the organisational policies, invest in training, job rotation, and include better terms in the psychological contract to ensure employees feel that we are conscious of meeting their expectations, yet to no avail....*" Politics made them suspicious that the organisation is reluctant to take care of their bests interests, decisions are meant to serve managerial interests as opposed to the collective interest of all and as result employees develop high turnover intention.

Meanwhile, R2 remarked," *have come across a situation where the number of monetary incentives was cut down due to financial constraints that the company was facing .. we were going through hard times and hence we decided to limit the extent of incentives and bonuses provided to employees rather than make anyone redundant ...... also job promotions were limited as any internal job postings (IJPs) were not coming up .......even though some promotions were made......let me also add that the financial crunch made it difficult to give handsome appraisals to employees and meet their expectations.....(takes a deep breath)....this situation was considered as politically driven by most employees and they complained ....many developed high turnover intentions and quit their jobs .......*"

**R6** indicated that the extent of affective commitment is reduced and people demonstrate less interest in remaining committed towards the organisational goals. The behaviour of employees makes the managers' feel that they do not deem the organisation to be their own even, i.e. a sense of belongingness is lost, even though they are treated as members of a common family ...' **R6** revealed that the managers noticed frequent incidents of disorder, anxiety, stress at work, low job satisfaction, withdrawal tendencies. This showed that employees were less committed towards the job. R6 also pointed out that the employees who previously showed a willingness to serve the clients, or help junior colleagues, were not even committed towards their performances. The consequential outcome of politics was low employee morale and commitment and their desire to switch to some other company.

According to R5, job ambiguity and lack of managerial intervention into career development programs raised the perception of politics among people and they lost direction. Similar to **R1 and R2, R5** straightaway admitted that politics reduces the extent of commitment that employees have towards the organisation and this was displayed by showing low interest in the daily work and responsibilities, lack of excitement and happiness while participating in any organisational event and isolation from others. The manager had observed how employees' commitment level deteriorated when they discovered things not going their way or when they had to report to, and work under some other manager with whom they did not have a good rapport. Politically unskilled employees were the ones exhibiting low commitment, however, human resource managers' intervention and engagement helped to ease the situation.

Expressing on similar lines, R7 revealed that "*when staff members perceive that things are not going their way their initial reaction is that there is some kind of political game going on .... they seem to be highly unconvinced with the decisions taken, policies implemented or any change adopted to sustain the competitive pressures ......(sigh),.. not all employees are politically skilled to understand the importance of politics in maintaining a competitive position .......anyhow, most employees fail to pursue shared goals and formulate their own goals to be chased'*. R7 narrated that the situation became quite complex and it was not easy to convince employees that urgent decisions are taken during pressing times for organisational welfare. Employees often demonstrate low commitment by failing to show seriousness at work, neglect the work protocols and KPIs, and get involved in conflicts which indicate their high intention to leave.

R8 shared an experience narrating that employees who sensed that decision-making by top management waspolitically-enthused lost their dedication and showed betrayal, extreme disloyalty. They took part in involved in useless gossips, long hours of chit-chat, stretched breaks, violated schedule adherence and showed no interest to participate in training or knowledge sharing. R8 stated that politics was associated with feelings of insecurity and many of them were often caught searching for jobs in some other companies using the office internet available at their workstation.

**Feasibility/necessity of eliminating organisational politics**

R1, R3, R5 were in consensus that organisational politics could not be eliminated as it is an inherent part of organisational behaviour and occurs naturally. It is deep-rooted in any form of social togetherness where human societies are created and interaction takes place. This is evident from the views of **R1** who remarked "Listen, there's no need to eliminate organisational politics, rather it can't be ... it occurs naturally and will always be there... I don't consider it feasible to eliminate politics because it is inherent in any social form of togetherness.. .so my answer is NO!". On similar lines, **R5** stated "*why do we need to eradicate politics? it's an inherent feature of an organisation similar to culture, communication and so on, and I don't consider it destructive to be removed ...however there should be the elimination of discriminative behaviour, bullying and harassment, biased appraisals, misuse of power and autonomy, and similar other amoral standards that many organisations have*". R5 believed it was rational to reduce the negative effects of politics rather than trying to remove politics which is not always unhealthy.

Having quite a similar opinion **R3** conveyed "Look! *People need to be proactive. now that doesn't mean kicking co-workers or colleagues out of competition, doing so implies negative politics ......to be proactive implies developing and leveraging a strong network of others in the organisation who support you.....be authentic in your approach ..don't crib or complain, rather come up with a creative solution to problems ...... ..people should learn how to create a favourable climate of trust and co-operation .....*". **R3** also clarified that politics needs to be handled tactfully by organisational members and its damaging effects need to be controlled. The above views coincided with the insights of **R2** who felt that organisational politics could not be eliminated from the organisation rather employees across the various organisational levels and throughout the hierarchy need to be politically skilled to understand what constitutes good

politics and what comprises of unfavourable political climate.R2 also indicated that political skills could possible by acquired through continuous learning in a self-driven manner and through experience.

The participant R4 pointed out that from laymen's perspective most employees assume that politics is disastrous and they would rather prefer to work in a workplace setting where no politics exist. Similar to R2 and R5, R4 stressed on the importance of curbing negative aspects of politics and embracing the positive aspects which could be infiltrated through open communication, sharing best practices to encourage healthy competition and reduce the destructive effects of a political mindset, teamwork and collaborative behaviour. R4 also insinuated that organisational culture, values and norms, not excluding HR politics have to be transparent fair and ethical and this should be visible. The respondent also suggested that leadership that encourages employee participation also helps to do away with the harmful effects of politics. Human resource aspects such as rewards policy, performance management and appraisal decisions, job design and promotions have to be fair so that employees have deeper trust.

An optimistic view similar to**R5** was shared by **R7** who pointed out that the question of eradicating politics should not arise because it is an abstract concept and not detached from the organisation norms and values. It is essential to eradicate the negative vibrations that it could produce if used in the wrong way and thereby it is necessary to bring transformation in the way individuals perceive politics.

Finally, R8 commented *"Absolutely ! if you are talking about the elimination of negative politics that you need to frame your question right and ask whether negative politics can be eliminated if that's so then my answer is YES*" ..... R8 further stressed on building a constructive culture of trust, equality through equal distribution of power, indiscrimination and fairness. R8 also considered it necessary to eliminate the principles of autocratic management or bureaucratic control where it was likely that employees develop higher suspicions politics that could be negative.

**Shaping organisational politics for the benefit of people and organisation/ impact of leadership**

R2 provided a quick response stating "*YES! I have experienced destructive political behaviour of employees during emergent situations such as 'change' therefore I would focus on 'people management' and leadership approaches that help to overcome the evil effects of politics...... it is important to transform human behaviour, the behaviour of employees by following the soft approach to human resource management rather than believing in rewards and exchange relationships.......soft HR practices should be supported with dynamic change leadership to promote planned or emergent change in an effective manner despite the presence of politics........I would also suggest the use of participative leadership to promote involvement and transformational leadership to stimulate employees to change their political behaviour to do something constructive*". R2 pointed out that transformational leaders are better equipped to maintain an encouraging climate of trust and confidence that endorse professional competence and superiority leading to reduced perception of OP. Also, transformational leaders are better equipped to maintain transparency in the decision-making process by seeking employees' agreement in decisions, reinforce the belief that the organisational managers as decision-makers are trustworthy. R2 concluded that transformational leaders are in a better position to transform the behavioural tendencies of those who are politically-driven and steer their attention towards productive activities.

According to the views *of R4 utilising politics for organisational benefit was challenging but not impossible. R4 stated," it could be a herculean task (smiles) yet we have had instances where people with a political mindset were motivated to change their behaviour and use politics most positively"* ... The respondent further elaborated that human motivation was the key to behavioural change and diversion of negative energy towards the positive side. People get involved in politics when their needs are not fulfilled which could range from the most basic one to higher-order needs such as esteem needs. Identification of the unmet needs of employees shows that needs differ according to human personality, tenure and age, and levels. People working at the lowermost levels are more induced by monetary needs and benefits and expect higher pay increment during appraisals which are external motivational needs while those at a mid-level or managerial level seek higher responsibilities, job promotion and autonomy. It is vital to identify the different needs, usually latent needs that are not met which is one of the major causes why people indulge in politics. The manager commented, " Leadership is an essence across all levels to engage employees, identify what needs are unfilled and then create

action plans to fulfil the needs ...so what is important is participation, i.e. participative leadership, and it can't be denied that transformational leadership has the greatest potential to change peoples' behaviour".

**R5** commented" *very good question, I believe this is possible and I myself formulate strategies that favour the organisation and its members ..as I had explained in the previous sessions that employees need to be engaged, involved in decision making, made to feel that they are cared for so that they feel belonged to the organisation... this is people-centric management"* ........" *yes dynamism in leadership is necessary and my personal opinion is the adoption of distributed leadership to ensure equality prevails throughout the organisation and everyone is treated like a partner, and like a leader (smiles), this has worked for our organisation, it breaks the strict hierarchical mindset and everyone feels free to express, share information, raise concerns and think creatively*". The manager explained that there is no unequal power distribution and hence the perception of politics is minimal.

**R6** was very optimistic about the idea of using politics for the benefit of individuals and stressed on the importance of employee counselling, behavioural based training to make them politically skilled...train employees to make them politically intelligent .......train them to be a team player, understand the power map and learn how to remain connected to politically driven people, create partnerships with them yet remain strongly committed to the organisation. The manager explained that most organisations are power hierarchies and power is likely to shift from time to time, therefore, it is essential to know where power leverage exist that is who are the most influencing people and the extent of influencing abilities one has. To be politically skilled means understanding the equation of leverage and identify when it is changing. The manager stressed that there were specific or one single leadership approach that could facilitate the use of politics for positive means. It is developing the right mindset, the right attitude, chasing the right set of goals, personal goals (career aspirations) and organisational goals and the like. The drive to sense politics, understand politics and use it most favourably is a lesson that cannot be taught, albeit leaders can show the right path to practice perseverance, foresightedness, resilience and vision.

# Chapter 5

## Discussions

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss whether and how the results/findings of the thesis relate to the knowledge that already exists in the area under investigation. Discussions also emphasise on what was expected to found and what the actual findings, i.e. the extent to which the findings conform to, contradict or deviate from the theoretical postulations and empirical claims that already exist. Therefore, the findings obtained from the survey and managerial interviews as presented in the previous chapter are discussed in alignment with the key theoretical assumptions and claims made by previous authors and researchers who have contributed in the same field. The results of the surveys are also compared and contrasted with the in-depth, descriptive and elaborate information shared by the managers in the open-ended interviews. This helps to discover the extent to which the perceptions of lower-level employees of various organisations match with the views and experiences of managers, i.e. decision-makers of the same organisations, with regards to the perception of politics and its various effects on the organisation.

As regards to the demographic characteristics the employees, most of the participants belonged to age-group between 26-35 (41%), and 36-45 (23%) with majority males (64%) and females (36%) taking part in the survey. Most of the employees were tenured and working in their respective organisations between 5-7 years (37%), 3-5 years (19%), with a mere 11% tenured for more than 10 years.

Findings with regards to the presence of politics in the organisations being surveyed were confirmed by a significantly higher percentage of the sample backed with a major consensus about the existence of an influential group. The presence of an influential group or groups in an organisation resembles the presence of politics as verified by academic researchers such as Kapoutsis and Thanos (2016) as reviewed in extant literature.

The existence of politics is also confirmed by the fact that individuals make unsolicited attempts to build themselves, i.e. gain recognition or appraisals by letting others down. Individuals in an organisational context trying to derive unfair advantage of others by manipulating others and

fulfilling self-serving interests are identified as 'Machs' as conceptualised by researchers such as Zettler and Solga, 2013; Abubakar et al., 2014).

Findings from the survey are verified by the managerial responses obtained from the interviews. According to managerial views, politics emerged in organisations as a natural process within social groups that frequently interact with each other. It is inherent in every organisation. Employees perceive higher perception of politics when their interests are not met, employees face role ambiguity which causes confusion, high-performance pressure, lack of opportunities for promotion, and at times when people are not convinced with the performance appraisals.

Politics also prevails when there are widespread rumour and gossips that influence people and results in various unsolicited activities such as chaos, workflow disruption. An interesting piece of finding was also obtained from the interviews which revealed that any kind of change, when implemented in the organisation, was perceived by workers to be politically driven. The employees perceived that change was politically led and meant to make them redundant, felt threatened and in-secured about their job.

Findings from the managerial interview also signify that workers, usually at the stratum level recognise that a co-worker or a colleague is politically preoccupied and this often leads to internal conflicts and plunders team spirit. Managerial views also reveal that people with low IQ or lower level of emotional intelligence are most likely to perceive politics as negative phenomena. It was also revealed that people who failed to get decent appraisals as a part of annual performance management reward assumed that it was due to negative politics. These employees also get influenced by the spread of rumour and gossips and their behavioural tendencies and indulgence in work activities is counterproductive.

Findings from the managerial interview indicate the presence of people with Machiavellianism behaviour, who exhibit self-interest at the cost of others, manipulate others in alliance with influential groups who are powerful. The machs do not hesitate to deceive others, pretend to be honest, and use unethical ways to manipulate others to fulfil their personal goals which deviate from the mainstream organisational goals

Machiavellianism exists in the organisations surveyed in this research. This implies that organisational members as 'Machs' use interpersonal tactics in the form of deception,

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exploitation and manipulating others (Femia, 2013) to fulfil their self-centred goals and objectives. The organisations being surveyed likely comprise of members in coalitions groups, or individuals who demonstrate cynic, cunningness, aloofness, expediency and indifference towards others and act like opportunists.

People with high 'Machiavellianism' as identified to be present in the organisations being surveyed tend to manipulate things as explained by (Nilsonn, 2015) based on the neo-classification theory and rational choice theory. They have a low ideological commitment towards the organisation and a high tendency to manipulate things with lack of interest in interpersonal relationships. The organisations surveyed in this study sought to gain the best of every situation (Abubakar et al., 2014; Chinomona and Mofokeng, 2016). They tend to deviate from the ethical norms and easily follow deception while chasing superior power. The use of relationships is made as social instruments to fulfil their personal ego and self-satisfying goals at the cost of other members in the organisation (Kessler et al., 2010) and even do not feel the guilt of taking unfair advantage of others (Sowmya and Panchanatham, 2011).

Findings from the survey indicate that it is necessary to maintain consensus with the most dominant groups or powerful members of the organisation. This is a characteristic feature of an organisation with the presence of a political climate where politically dominant groups or superiors create situations to ensure others in the organisation act in conformity with their directions. The powerful members at the organisation form coalition groups to maintain their dominant position in the organisation creating an environment of increased political behaviour.

 The existence of coalition groups also increases the perception of politics among the employees who perceive high political behaviour among members of the coalition groups. The formation or existence of coalition groups is often the characteristics of organisations with a high political climate. Members of coalition groups come together to exhibit greater power and dominance in the organisation and seek greater control of others. The existence of coalition groups in the politicised work environment is validated by researchers such as Geiger and Pecoud (2014) and Cacciattolo (2015) who consider the presence of these groups to be detrimental to the organisational goals and behaviour.

Employees perception of politics increases after observing a group of members forming unofficial coalitions and inner circles (Christain et al., 2011). These inner circles tear down anyone those who oppose these coalition groups and ensure the allocation of rewards and other resources are directed towards their favour. These groups may also find nothing wrong in violating the core organisational goals, values and norms and policies.

In addition to agreeing to the views of the most powerful groups, findings also indicate that employees prefer to say what others want to hear, rather than speaking the truth. This could be due to fear of facing the repercussions if employees opposed anything that was not transparent and the behaviour of others that are politically motivated.

Politics is also inherent in organisational decision-making, especially the decisions undertaken by senior managers or those holding top hierarchical positions in the organisation. As identified in the findings obtained from the survey decision-making is centralised in most of the organisations and employees are not allowed to question if they perceive any decision to be unfair. Participants in the survey indicate that they often sense the core decision undertaken by top managers to be self-serving, ie decisions taken to fulfil their personal agenda or goals rather than for the overall interest and welfare of the organisation and the employees. Decisions affected by the use of power, having unfair control over any agenda, manipulating information, and introducing external consultants to affect the decisions are often the signs of unfair decisions taken to fulfil self-serving behaviour.

The prevalence of self-serving decision making in organisations, as disclosed by the participants in the survey confirm to the theoretical claims made by Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) who proposed the framework of negative/destructive HRM. Decision-makers in a politicised work environment take decisions that focus on their personal agenda and interests and ignore the common interests of human resources. Alternatively, positive/constructive HRM is apparent when those in the decision making position are concerned about shared interests and collective goals of the organisation rather than meeting their own political motives (Rosen et al., 2014). This is the constructive use of power (Jain, 2011) and absent in most of the organisations surveyed in this research. In positive/constructive HRM practices, perception of politics generally rests at the mid-level, rather at the lower level and conflicts may arise between

managerial level employees. Few members at the mid-level may deem it to be a legitimate conflict while others may consider it to be less legitimate and more controversial.

From a cultural perspective, centralised decision making implies the existence of high power distance, i.e. employees easily accept the unequal distribution of power (Hofstede,2011). Organisations with high power–distance (PDI) are considered to be highly political as decisions made by the management is imposed upon members of the organisation and required to be followed without questioning. The perception of politics is high as lack of employee participation in core organisational decisions raise suspicions about the credibility of decisions and the extent to which it is fair and transparent.

 Findings also indicate that human resource functions such as performance management systems, performance appraisals and rewards are also affected by the presence of organisational politics. This is evident from the survey as most of the employees confirm that organisational policies appear to be irrelevant when it comes to giving appraisals in the form of an increase in remuneration, benefits, job promotion and thereby increase in self-esteem. Therefore the scope of pay for performance is absent, favouritism persists and those backed by politically dominant members or groups such as coalition groups receive superior appraisals.

Findings also indicate that hard work, sincerity and commitment do not necessarily add to appraisals. This is clearly evident as participants' response in the survey clearly indicates that the best performers are not fairly rewarded in the organisation. The overall findings with regards to performance appraisals as an HR function linked to organisational politics (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014). Findings also align with the claims made by other researchers such as Beheshtifar and Herat (2013) who insinuates that in highly politicised work environment performance appraisals are often biased, preset, and discriminatory and influenced by acts of favouritism. Recent studies by researchers such as Dello Russo et al. (2017) also insinuated that the existence of politics in an organisation reduces the extent of fairness and transparency in the appraisal mechanisms

Findings with respect to 'rewards' as affected by organisational politics is also verified by theoretical claims made by Kapoutsis and Thanos (2016) who link rewards with politics that determine the extent of increment, promotions, job enhancement and higher responsibilities. Findings is also confirmed by the claims made by Rong and Cao (2015) who argue that

perceptions of politics in a highly politicised work environment increase the extent of ambiguity in the rewards system.

The impact of organisational politics is examined from a range of dimensions such as employee stress, anxiety, insecurity, the extent of organisational citizenship behaviour, and commitment towards the organisational goals and objectives. In addition, the impacts of politics are also analysed with regards to job satisfaction and employee performance at the organisation.

Findings obtained from the survey indicate that the existence of politics at the workplace is a cause of employee stress and frustration. This is associated with fear and anxiety and insecurity about the job and stability in the organisation. Organisational politics leads to stress and burnout followed by an increase in idle time and absenteeism is also confirmed by the subjective views of the managers as obtained from the interviews. The managerial interview also revealed that politics at the workplace was the main cause of anxiety resulting in mental stress and agony which subsequently led to performance errors in the long run.

This piece of findings obtained from the survey is validated by the theoretical claims made by researchers such as Ogungbamila (2013) deem that perception of politics is a source of employee stress at work which arises when employees experience "*working behind the scenes*" (Yang et al., 2013, p.29) as a politically induced strategy to acquire resources manipulatively to satisfy self-centred requirements. Makhdoom (2013) conducted similar research in a school setting and found that the existence of politics led to increased stress among school teachers, burnout and counterproductive work behaviour. Adding to the fact, Boswell and Rodrigues (2016) link organisational politics with self-serving behaviour that leads to higher employee stress and mental fatigue at work and consequently reduced performance.

Findings also indicate that the presence of political behaviour at the workplace reduces the extent of employee commitment. This fact is also supported by managerial interviews as findings indicate that employees feel disillusioned by the presence of politics, get distracted and this reduces the level of affective commitment that they have towards the organisation. Findings from the managerial interviews indicate that in times of financial crisis when an organisation does not have sufficient funds and finds it difficult to disburse salaries, bonuses or incentives on time, it is

perceived as a politically driven strategy. These perceptions are self-created and prove fatal to the level of commitment that employees have towards the organisation.

Findings from the managerial interview also focus on the behavioural tendencies of people who are Machiavellians with hidden agendas and goals taking unfair advantage of others as opposed to remaining honestly committed towards team goals and the organisational goals at large. These employees are largely present in a politicised work environment yet it is difficult to trace them as their behaviour and activities are similar to other employees however they are opportunists and their intentions become apparent once their actual intentions materialise. Employees falling prey to the Machs or being manipulated or deceived by Machs lose faith in the organisation and this leads to a decline in their commitment level.

Findings from the elaborate managerial interviews also signify that staff members working in different departments and different levels have different expectations and mismatch between their personal goals and that of the organisational goals creates a situation of ambiguity and characterised as a politicised environment. Organisations with high political orientation usually have managers following lack of participative management thereby failing to include employees' voice in the decision-making. This associated with lack of clarity about the job roles and responsibilities and prevailing ambiguity with lack of their agreement in the decision making deteriorates the level of affective commitment that employees are expected to have towards the organisation.

The ones who are not politically skilled and those with a low level of conscientiousness and foresight are very easily influenced by the perception of politics. They usually chase short term goals and view every decision, every event, and any activities undertaken by the management to be politically manipulative and deceitful. These employees get very easily deviated from the work protocols and the key performance indicators designed by the organisations which show a lack of seriousness and commitment towards the organisational goals. Findings indicate that lack of commitment as an outcome of high perception of politics in an organisation is associated with increased disputes between the trade unions and the employees/managers wherein the former demand for reconciliation in the employee-employer agreements. In addition, there arises continuous petition for reformation and modifications in the psychological contract.

Most of the findings obtained from the survey and managerial interviews corroborate with the theoretical claims made by scholars such as Byrne et al. (2016) who indicate the negative impact of politics in the form of stress, demotivation and lack of affective commitment. Cacciattolo (2015) also link politics with reduced commitment and affirmed by Khalid and Ahmed (2016) that highly politicised work environment have Machiavellians who are hungry for power, achievement-oriented, extremely competitive eager to rise in the hierarchical ladder and less committed to meeting the organisational goals. Others authors such as Amponsah(2015) and Kanta and Srivalli (2017) also identified a negative correlation between organisational politics and two elements of commitment, i.e., affective and normative commitment towards the organisation.

Few studies conducted in the literature review contradict with the above findings as politics is linked to increased employee commitment. For instance, studies conducted by Bond et al. (2015) indicate a positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and employee commitment towards organisational projects. Donald et al. (2016) also indicated a positive influence of organisational politics on the level of employee level, provided employees are carefully managed by the superiors. This implies their immediate supervisor needs to show concern towards the subordinates in a politically driven organisation and increase their familiarity about the shared goals of the organisation (Mencl et al., 2016). However, very few studies have indicated a positive relationship between organisational politics and the level of employee commitment.

Findings from the survey indicate that organisational politics has on employee citizenshipbehaviour is negative. Findings from employees' surveys are in line with the in-depth information obtained from the managerial interviews which indicate that the existence of organisational politics opposes the possibility of citizenship behaviour. In a highly politicised work environment employees mainly concentrate on their basic, day-to-day work activities and in most cases, there are gaps in their basic performances. In such a situation there are minimal possibilities that employees would take part in voluntary activities that resemble citizenship behaviour. As opposed to citizenship behaviour, employees get involved in unsolicited acts such as spreading rumours, increasing idle time, excessive breaks, showing disinterest at work, feeling

demoralised, rude behaviour and a habit of always complaining to their immediate superior of the human resource managers.

Findings also indicated that individuals and groups in organisations behave in a manner that shows disrespect towards the management and a getting alienated. They behave in a manner that shows that the organisation they work for is not theirs. Employees view the management with cynicism and being very inquisitive about every decision, action and every move the management takes. Even those who are willing to take extra initiative demonstrate a lack of interest and hesitance to reluctant to participate in any kind of voluntary activities that was equal to citizenship behaviour.

Findings from the interviews also revealed that those at the mid and senior level, ie the management level are most likely to be politically skilled and get involved in citizenship behaviour that goes beyond their usual roles and responsibilities. This encourages feelings of trust, empathy, confidentiality and sincerity. The politically skilled and those at the management level perceive politics to be constructive and their behavioural tendencies are directed towards productive activities such as teamwork, commitment, and preference towards citizenship behaviour. It was rather surprising to know that the lower-level employees are the ones who perceive politics to be damaging as they link politics with discrimination, favouritism, bigotry, and hence did not contribute towards organisational citizenship behaviour.

Findings indicated that when organisations go through difficult times or complex situations such as 'change', it is perceived by certain individuals and groups as political and even those engaged with citizenship activities withdraw themselves from such acts. Getting aloof from citizenship behaviour they deviate towards unfavourable activities such as forming separate groups in the form of sub-cultural groups deviating from the age-old organisational culture, norms goals and values. They not only demonstrate negative behaviour but aggravate others to demonstrate resistance to change, get involved in collective bargaining, negotiations as opposed to any activities counted as organisational citizenship behaviour.

Findings obtained from the survey and managerial interviews corroborate with the arguments put forwards by most of the authors in the literature review. As examined by Chang et al. (2012) indicated a negative relationship between workplace politics and their inclination towards taking

part in voluntary activities, and thereby citizenship behaviour. Meanwhile, Zhonghua and Chen (2014) also reported a significant negative relationship between perceived organisational politics and employees' commitment to citizenship behaviour. Findings above are also advocated by Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers (2016) who indicated a negative correlation between perception of politics and citizenship behaviour as demonstrated by the employees.

Contradictory to the above claims, researchers such as Chhetri et al. (2016) and Raza et al. (2018) insinuate that in a politicised work environment, employees with superior political skills are more likely to go beyond their daily formal duties and responsibilities to participate in voluntary acts and contribute towards citizenship behaviour. Besides, leadership as a mediator tends to enhance the citizenship behaviour of employees even in a politicised work environment by inspiring followers to forego personal goals and interests (De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia, 2017).

Similar to the above responses, findings obtained from the survey also signify that the prevalence of organisation politics has a negative influence on the extent of employees' job satisfaction. Views of the managers as shared in the interview coincide to a large extent with the fact that the perception of politics reduces the level of job satisfaction that employees have.

 This piece of finding confirms with the arguments made by Wiltshire et al. (2014) who indicate a negative relationship between organisational politics and other constructs of employee behaviour such as 'job satisfaction' leading to reduced performance. Lee and Chang (2013) support the claims of Wiltshire et al. (2014) indicating that higher perception of politics among staff members deteriorates their extent of satisfaction with the job and increased intention for turnover. On similar lines, Kanta and Srivalli (2017) identified a negative correlation between perceptions of organisational politics leading to reduced job satisfaction among individuals and groups. Balogun (2017) conducted empirical research in public sector firms to find a significant negative relationship between the perception of politics and affective commitment.

Contrary to the above claims, researchers such as Kane-Frieder et al. (2014) signify that in a politically supportive work environment where employees receive political support from the supervisors, the influence of organisational politics with regards to job satisfaction is favourable.

Findings from the empirical research also indicate that higher perception of politics leads to deterioration in work performance of the employees. The negative impact of organisational politics on employee performance is verified by the elaborate responses as obtained from the interviews. High perception of politics makes employees feel that the managerial decisions are not justified and ignores employees' welfare which ruins their performance level consistently. Employees sensing the presence of politics in the organisation feel discouraged, lose faith, exhibit lack of trust and fail to contribute to the best of their abilities. Employees also indulge in unconstructive activities such as spreading negative word of mouth buzz about the management, forming sub-groups with different ideologies and beliefs which deteriorate their own performance and the performance of others in the organisation.

Managerial interviews also reveal that employees in a politicised workplace often behave as laggards, show disinterest in attending pieces of training meant for performance improvement and remain negligent towards compliance. Further views of the managers indicate that employees do not consider the rewards to be fair and remain sceptical about the transparency involved in performance appraisals. This leads to a decline in the level of work motivation and consequently affects their performance. Employees' beliefs that their performances will not be rewarded fairly in a politically led workplace context leads to a decline in their performance capabilities.

Contradicting the above views, few responses in the managerial interviews indicate that the existence of organisational politics and employees perceptions about it may lead to better work performances provided the right leadership and culture prevails in the organisation. Employees who possess a better understanding of organisational politics, its essence, and as the means to gain competitive advantage, tend to deliver superior performance to fulfil their own career goals as well as enhance the overall organisational performance. To use organisational politics positively was possible when communications between the lower-level employees and higher-level management were eliminated and there was better scope for exchange of ideas and feedback sharing. Through continuous interaction and minimisation of the communication gaps, the managers could minimise any misunderstanding that arose due to misinformation, miscommunication or misinterpretation of facts and pieces of evidence spread mainly due to fake rumours. In addition, promoting a culture of continuous learning changed the behaviour of those

getting adversely influenced by politics and drives their capabilities towards better performance. From a different perspective, the perception of politics may not have a negative impact on employee performance if they are regularly probed, counselled or mentored by those holding leadership positions. Findings from the managerial viewpoint reveal that politics is not always negative rather perceived to be always negative as a conventional mindset, yet managerial intervention at the right time to reshape employees' mindset and behaviour helps to derive the much-needed performance from them.

This piece of finding is verified by the theoretical claims made by Colquitt et al. (2012) and Wiltshire et al. (2014) who found a significant negative correlation between organisational politics and job performance. As opposed to the above finding, Bond et al. (2015) examined the positive correlation between perceived organisational politics and project teams' performance with superior organisational communication as the moderator.

A major piece of finding obtained from the survey was with regards to whether the existence of organisational politics is always negative. A significant percentage did not affirm to the idea and considered that the existence of politics at the workplace was not always harmful and there were positive sides of this construct. Findings from the managerial interviews also endorse the presence of positive politics in organisations and developing a positive perception of politics by training employees on a range of political skills. Findings indicate that in most cases it is negative as it leads to divisiveness and distraction, misunderstanding and chaos, and loss of workplace productivity. However, those people who can detach their political beliefs and views from their lives can transform it for constructive purposes. Also, people having the right attitude and attributes such as astuteness, foresight, networking capabilities and deep concern for the organisation usually perceive politics in the right sense. Employees in an organisational context possess their own personal goals, aspirations, egos, agendas and motivation and they make every effort to attain what they want, and therefore a level of compromise, negotiation, bargaining and politicking will always be there. When the personal motivation and agendas of individuals are linked with the organisational goals and objectives of the organisation and people chase collective goals, negative perceptions of politics are countered. Findings from the managerial interview also indicate that positive and negative politics are the two sides of the same coin.

Positive political behaviour is obvious when employees relate themselves with the main influencers in the organisation with the primary aim of leveraging their influence for meeting the career goals and aspirations. These employees do not compromise with their values and ambitions neither they compromise with the organisational values and norms. They usually have dynamic personalities backed by strong political skills and make every effort to fulfil their personal goals as the collective organisational goals. Despite this negative politics is widespread in most of the organisations and it is about playing dirty games manipulatively at the expense of others. Managerial views from the interview also indicated that politics is negative when an organisational structure is largely bureaucratic characterised with downward communication and a culture of exclusion and non-participation prevails in the organisation which leads to a negative perception of politics in the organisation.

The above findings obtained from the surveys and managerial interview align with the theoretical claims made by Opoku and Arthur (2018) indicate that politics is not always toxic, even though, it is perceived as self-serving. Supporting this view, Zibenberg (2017) linked organisational politics with positive aspects of connectedness and belongingness of employees towards the organisation, inclusiveness and communication. In addition, Varshney (2019) also considers the presence of organisational politics to be favourable if steered in the right direction to encourage long-term vision, compliance and integrity, and accountability.

Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) emphasised on the development of political skills such as cohesiveness, social astuteness and networking capabilities. Khalid and Ahmed (2016) stress on building political skills and eliminate the harmful repercussions of political activities. The managerial views coincide with the theoretical claims made by Maslyn et al. (2017) who consider organisational politics to be an unavoidable element of an organisation which cannot be eradicated but directed towards favourable aspects to meet the organisational goals.

Findings also corroborate with the theoretical views of Hamilakis (2016) who indicate that even though organisational politics is considered to be negative, its outcomes could be favourable from an ethical point of view. The author also suggested treating organisational politics as a constructive, participative, and interactive factor that needs to be capitalised upon.

Findings with regards to whether various aspects of organisational behaviour and leadership could help to reduce, if not eliminate the negative elements of organisational politics, indicate interesting facts in this area. It was found from the empirical survey that resilience (learning from events) help to reduce the negative effects of politics. This requires employees to be proactive and flexible at the same time to learn from historical events and experiences.

Findings from the managerial interview reveal that the elimination of organisational politics is not possible, even though the emergence and perpetuation of the negative perception of politics can be reduced. Organisational managers in the interview emphasise on the importance of developing resilient behaviour, being proactive, building a strong network to leverage the support of others to reduce the negative implications of politics. To reduce the negative perceptions of politics it was also important to promote a culture of continuous learning, agility, and creativity. Findings from the managerial interview signify that the managers stressed on the importance of providing employees with a platform to learn various skills such as problem-solving, creative thinking, interpersonal skills, and positive thinking that could negate the adverse implications of politics.

Findings obtained from the managerial interviews stress the importance of reducing negative perceptions of politics and infuse favourable beliefs about it. This was possible through leadership interventions meant for promoting open communication, knowledge sharing, sharing tacit knowledge, team-work and collaboration. It was also necessary to ensure that the organisational culture, ethics, norms and values, along with the human resource policies and practices that need to be fair and maintain transparency. Findings from the interview also emphasise the importance of effective leadership that advocates employee participation and engagement in various organisational affairs to reduce the negative perceptions of politics. In addition, performance management systems, job design, rewards, pay for performance, decisions and promotions should be free from bias, discrimination and bias to regain employee confidence and minimise the negative effects of politics.

Findings from the managerial interview also stressed on cautiously observing the behaviour of employees and probing them if their behavioural tendencies were unusual. At the same time, close vigilance on the behaviour and activities of Machiavellians need to be maintained to ensure

that they do not take undue advantage of others through manipulation, deception, framing or misinterpreting information.

This piece of finding confirms with the theoretical arguments presented by researchers such as Paul et al. (2016) who consider resilience to be a strong leadership trait which helps leaders to restock the energy level of employees and increase their ability to cope with complexities of organisational politics. Other researchers such as Nguyen et al. (2016) also consider resilient to be a significant aspect of employee behaviour demonstrated by vibrant leaders possessing the ability to lead the organisation in chaotic period and sustain competitive advantage.

Resilient leaders are also agile and instil a positive attitude of agility and resilience among employees so that they are more active and flexible to handle a highly politicised environment. A comprehensive review of the existing literature indicates the presence of politics in almost every organisation which could be either negative or positive depending on the nature of the organisation, its structure, culture and leadership. Organisational politics is omnipresent as it emerges naturally in various forms where social interactions and cohesiveness prevails and therefore the likelihood of conflicts, ego-clashes, differences in opinion and perceptions, chaos and disorder. Organisational politics being an abstract concept is an inherent facet of organisational behaviour which is often used or misused by those holding various forms of power such as coercive power, referent power, legitimate power and reward power.

Findings also from the survey also emphasise on a range of other leadership attributes such as creating a climate of fairness and transparency may help to reduce the negative effects of politics and inclusion of employees' voice in the organisational decision-making, and knowledge sharing reduces the negative perception towards workplace politics. Most of the above aspects are supported by the theoretical reviews carried out in the literature-based studies. For instance,

Findings align with the arguments put forward by Jain and Moreno (2015) according to whom individuals perceiving that organisational decisions taken by managers are based on self-serving behaviours, the access that individuals have to knowledge and information may minimise the related stress and mediate the inauspicious influence of politics. This is because inclusive knowledge sharing provides understanding and astuteness into feasible solutions for extenuating the adverse implications of politics- baseddecision-making.

Findings concerningpositively shaping organisational politics to make it beneficial for the employees was considered to be a challenging task but not impossible. Findings from the managerial interviews focused on the necessity of transforming minds by following dynamic leadership practices such as transformational leadership. The importance of authentic leadership was also emphasised to ensure that managers as leaders act genuinely and sincerely to set examples for the followers. To ensure that politics led to fruitful results it was necessary to develop leaders' legitimacy which ensured an honest relationship with followers rather than relationships meant to fulfil political motives. By following authentic leadership practices leaders instil similar traits such as a positive mindset, inspire trust and loyalty, sacrifice personal ego and get driven by the organisational mission and goals, and improve self-awareness. Authentic leaders also possess the right balance of emotional intelligence and the right temperament to lead people in a highly politicised work environment.

Findings also stressed on the necessity of identifying that the various needs of the employees were starting from the most basic ones to the higher-level needs to fulfil the esteem needs. Leaders needed to identify the latent needs of individuals and groups and map the organisational policies accordingly. The fulfilment of the various needs and expectations of employees was necessary to minimize the negative perception of politics.

Overall, the importance of various leadership styles such as participative leadership, change leadership, distributed leadership and change leadership was emphasised upon by the managers, the adoption of transformational leadership was considered to be most effective to reduce the harmful effects of politics in a politicised work environment.

Zhang et al. (2015) assert on the importance of knowledge sharing to be encouraged by managers following leadership practices such as participative, resilient and transformational leadership practices in which information sharing, sharing ideas and tacit knowledge contribute to the enhancement of employees' knowledge and skills. Others such as Eldor (2017) indicate that leaders who encourage an approving culture of open communication that subsequently assist knowledge sharing at the right time with peers as well as superiors to facilitate the process of decision-making, and eradicating the possibility of politically driven behaviour where decisions can be taken to accomplish self-interests. Bavik et al. (2018) support this by suggesting that

sharing of information with peers' enhances their self-confidence and makes them capable of defending themselves against the probable threats that may crop up in a politicised work context.

Transformational leadership is found to have a positive influence on organisational citizenship behaviour as it involves the transformation of existing employee behaviours and attitude which may be highly political and view workplace politics in the right sense. De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia (2017) support transformational leaders to ease the negative influence of politics as it inspires individuals to go beyond their accustomed duties, challenge conventions and sacrifice their personal goals for the collective goals of the organisation

It also inspires them to transform their present behavioural tendencies and shows positive work behaviour even if the organisational atmosphere is perceived to be highly political. In an increasingly political climate, when employees are led by transformational leaders they tend to be more creative, and innovative which become usual aspects of their work-related goals through idealised influence. Dappa et al. (2019) indicate that transformational leaders also encourage followers to use problem-solving abilities through intellectual stimulation. Besides leaders exhibit greater concern for the followers, respect them through individual consideration which eases their political behaviour and directs it towards the positive side.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

The last chapter of the study concludes the entire thesis by summarising the main findings of the research as obtained from the empirical investigation carried out by surveying the employees and interviewing the managers of few selected organisations in the UK. In doing so the research aims, objectives and the main research questions are revisited and answers to these questions are summarised. The study aimed to analyse the extent to which workplace politics impacts organisational performance in UK based organisations. The objectives of the research were to explore the nature of workplace politics in organisations followed by investigating and critically evaluating the impact of workplace politics on organisational performance. Finally, the last objective of the research was to provide recommendations to the organisational managers to develop appropriate strategies to manage workplace politics that leads to positive organisational performance.

Based on each of the objectives the first question of this study was 'what is the nature of organisational politics that exist in contemporary organisations in the UK?'. The answer to this question was obtained by carrying out a comprehensive review of extant literature to understand the theoretical concept of power and politics, forms of politics identified as negative and positive politics, and perception of politics by the organisational members. The nature of organisational politics that exist in various organisations was also investigated and identified by conducting survey and interviews in the chosen organisations.

The research question designed to fulfil the second objective was 'how does workplace politics impact organisational performance?'. The answer to this question was obtained by investigating how organisational politics impacts various aspects of employee behaviour such as commitment towards the organisation, the inclination towards organisational citizenship behaviour, the extent of job satisfaction and the level of performance in the organisation.

The research question formulated to meet the third objective was 'what could be the most effective strategies to manage workplace politics in a way that it leads to positive organisational

performance?'. The answer to this question was obtained by investigating whether politics could be eliminated from the organisation and the most appropriate leadership styles and strategies that could be adopted to utilise organisational politics for the benefit and welfare of the organisation.

The answers obtained through empirical surveys and interview against each of the research questions formulated in the first chapter are linked with the objectives in the subsequent section.

## 6.2 Linking objectives with the conclusions based on findings
### Objective 1- Explore the nature of workplace politics that exists in organisations

From a conceptual perspective, organisational politics refer to deliberate actions that individuals take to increase or safeguard self-interest. It replicates self-serving behaviour that individuals, or groups in organisations trying to seek unfair advantage of others, demonstrate. It is often linked with vicious use of power to fulfil self-centred goals and may contravene organisational values, mission, goals and objectives, policies and stakeholders' interests.

Politics as an inherent element emerges naturally in any form of social setting where continuous interaction, group cohesion and differences in views and perceptions exist. Social togetherness is a key characteristic of any organisation and therefore the emergence of politics is natural. It is omnipresent and present across various levels of the organisation, different departments and functional units that shape the perceptions of individuals and groups working in various capacities.

The conventional understanding of organisational politics has been negative as conceptualised by theorists and researchers and its implications considered to be detrimental for the health of an organisation. However, contemporary scholars and practitioners of organisational behaviour have categorised the concept of workplace politics to be neutral and even positive that favours organisational performance and growth. Therefore, workplace politics can be both positive and negative depending on the organisational context, the organisational structure, culture and the type of leadership that prevails in the organisation. Review of the underpinning literature indicates that researchers, especially, since the last decade made efforts to describe organisational politics as a positive phenomenon, even though, there exist insignificant empirical

studies to validate these postulations. For instance, researchers such as Lampaki and Papadakis (2018) and Opoku and Arthur (2018) viewed the concept of workplace politics from a positive perspective asserting that it may not be necessarily toxic and damaging, rather with the help of politics skills it can be used for constructive purposes. In similar lines, researchers such as Landells and Albrecht (2017) view organisational politics from one of the following dimensions, as (i) strategic, (ii) reactive, (iii) integrated and (iv) reluctance. From a theoretical perspective, Zibenberg (2017) associate the existence of positive politics in an organisation with the positive aspects of employee inclusion, collaborative work behaviour, connectedness, communication, social cohesion, and empowerment. The positive aspect of organisational politics was also linked by contemporary researchers such as Varshney (2019) with mission and vision, integrity and compliance, organisational excellence, fairness and accountability, indiscrimination and tolerance.

The type of culture and leadership prevailing in an organisation also determines whether positive or negative politics exist in an organisation. The conceptual model of organisational politics designed by Leslie and Gelfand (2012) links workplace politics with culture assuming politics to be a cultural phenomenon and that it is an inherent part of human life and their activities in an organisation. The type of organisational politics existent in an organisation was also linked with the dimensions of national culture as conceptualised by Hofstede. The core cultural dimensions of 'power-distance' and 'uncertainty avoidance' were linked with the nature of organisational politics that exist in multinational organisations. Organisations with high power distance, i.e., with centralised decision making and bureaucratic control, top-down communication and unequal distribution of authority usually give birth to negative-positive politics that emerge due to power imbalance, conflicts and misunderstanding.

Therefore, employees' perception of politics in organisations with high power-distance and in-equal distribution of power is usually negative. Contrary to this, organisations with low power-distance are characterised with a culture of fairly equal distribution of power, employee participation in organisational affairs, their voice and consensus in decision making, inclusion and clarity of job roles and responsibilities, thereby creating an organisational climate where employees can perceive workplace politics as a positive phenomenon.

The empirical investigation conducted in the UK based organisations revealsthe presence of influential groups in a highly politicised work environment and the existence of individuals and groups characterised as Machiavellians. People do cross over, or go against the views of influential groups and showing agreement with powerful members and/or influential groups is considered to be a safer option. .The presence of Machiavellians, i.e. employees with hidden agendas and separate goals isolated from the mainstream organisational goals make the work environment more political. Often employees not allowed to question the decisions taken by managers perceive that the decisions are politically motivated. Similarly, a work environment that discourages employees' voice in the decision making,non-inclusion and disengagement of employees is perceived to be highly political.

## Objective 2- Critically investigate the impact of workplace politics on organisation performance

An empirical investigation carried out in few organisations in the UK identifies the impact of workplace politics on a range of factorsthat lead to superior organisational performance. These factors comprise of employees' extent of commitment towards the organisation, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, daily work performance, intention to stay (retention) in the organisation, and how it influences their behaviour. Empirical reviews carried out in real-life organisations indicate that organisational politics and employees perception of politics is a cause of employee stress, anxiety and feeling insecure about the job. Employees demonstrate tendencies of staying aloof from their immediate superiors or managers and lose faith in the organisational policies with regards to performance management, appraisals, rewards and a range of other human resource functions. Employees consider that the existence of organisational politics makes the organisational policies relating to performance appraisals, rewards and promotions irrelevant.

Organisational politics was found to impact the commitment of employees towards the organisational goals in an adverse manner. This was not only validated with the help of findings obtained from the employee surveys but also in-depth, descriptive views obtained from the qualitative based managerial interviews. A politicised environment with the presence of Machs,

influential people at various levels of the organisation including those at the senior management level, and coalition groups with their self-centred ideologies send negative signals which lower the commitment level of other employees. In such workplaces, low commitment is also evident in the form of increased idle time, absenteeism, late coming, applications for leaves, excessive breaks, lack of adherence to schedules, and denial with the key work-based protocols. Lack of commitment in a politicised work environment is also apparent in the form of non-compliance with the organisational values and norms, key performance indicators and failure to meet the quality standards. Fearing that they would face redundancy employees often indulge in bargaining with the immediate superiors or manager, negotiation through the intervention of unions and increased demands to bring changes in the psychological contract and terms that could make their job and survival more secure. Generally, employees with low emotional intelligence (EI), lack of social astuteness and those resistant to change had a higher tendency to consider every decision take by management to be politically-driven even though the decisions are taken for organisational development and employee wellbeing. As a result, negative perception of politics combined with lack of commitment stimulates their decision to seek alternative employment in other organisations. Employees demonstrate higher intention to quit and turnover and this creates constraints retention capabilities.

Organisational politics was found to reduce the level of employees' inclination towards organisational citizenship behaviour. In a politicised work environment employees fall short of their daily work performances, roles and responsibilities and expecting them to take part in citizenship behaviour is a myth. The ones who are politically unskilled develop a strong negative perception of politics and this infiltrates negative behavioural tendencies, unfavourable actions and activities that are unproductive. Therefore, negative perception of politics weakens employees inclination towards voluntary acts or activities beyond their basic job roles and tasks.

A politicised work environment with a negative perception of politics has a very detrimental impact on the performance capabilities of employees. This is factual evidence validated by theoretical studies undertaken by scholarly researchers as well as findings obtained in the current study by surveying the employees and interviewing the managers. As opposed to superior performance, a highly politicised work environment leads to counterproductive behaviour as exhibited by most of the employees. The involvement of employees in gossips, indulgence in

unproductive work activities and chaos further disrupt their performance level. Employees show lack of interest in attending training sessions, counselling, and performance development activities meant to enhance performance. The common belief that their performances will not be fairly rewarded and appraised in a politicised work environment deters employees' desire to deliver superior performances.

Contrary to the above assertions, very few organisations have experienced the impact of organisational politics on employee behaviour and organisational performance to be positive. This is mainly true for organisations which keep close vigilance on Machiavellians, their behaviour and activities that are detrimental for the employee as well as overall organisational performances. Organisational managers check the formation of coalition groups usually formed by the union of Machiavellians and those with self-serving behaviours and opportunist tendencies.

## Objective 3- Provide recommendations to the organisational managers to develop strategies to manage workplace politics that leads to positive organisational performance

The third objective of the thesis focuses on key recommendations to be given to the managers of those organisations where employees perceive workplace politics to be negative and harmful for their job performance. The recommendations are meant for organisational managers who have experienced deteriorating employee behaviour and commitment towards the organisational goals, the decline in citizenship behaviour and low job satisfaction as a result of organisational politics. According to the findings obtained from the empirical research undertaken in this study, especially the managerial interviews it is apparent that the presence of organisational politics negatively influences employees' behaviour and instil a feeling of job insecurity, threat, and injustice, therefore stimulating their intention for turnover. The infiltration of widespread chaos and disorder due to miscommunication and misinterpretation of information, and gossips resulting in declining employee trust and withdrawal are persistent issues faced by the management. Other challenges cropping up due to negative perception of politics are negligence, failure to comply with the basic work-based protocols and KPIs and feeling sceptical about the decisions taken by the management.

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To develop workplace strategies to manage organisational politics in an effective manner that leads to superiorperformance leaders must intervene. Leadership intervention needs to be dynamic, inclusive and engaging that bestows employee trust, faith and confidence in the management. While a range of leadership styles and practices are used by organisational managers in the contemporary era, the adoption of the most appropriate leadership style is crucial to shapingemployees' perception of politics in a positive manner. This is essential because workplace politics is an inherent organisational component and cannot be eliminated, yet it can be used in the most positive sense to strengthen organisational competitiveness, shape favourable employee behaviour, cultivate superior relationships and enhance performance. Leadership intervention is necessary to coach and train employees on political skills that help them to identify the differences between negative and positive politics and how workplace politics can be capitalised upon. Dynamic leadership styles such as transformational leadership are essential to transform employee behaviour and perceptions by educating them on how to challenge conventions, modify existing behaviour andmaintain an optimistic vision for the long term.

The recommendations to organisational managers working in the highly politicised work environment are based on the implementation of effective leadership strategies that promotes employee engagement, involvement and consensus in decision making, training for political skills, building trust and authenticity in relationships, and transformation in behaviour. Each of the recommendations is discussed in the subsequent section.

## 6.3 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1
**Adoption of effective leadership such as participative, transformational leadership and authentic leadership**

As identified from the findings, the absence of appropriate leadership increases the possibility of the negative perception of politics as employees hold on to their existing behaviour and understanding, often disengaged, and excluded. However, not all organisations follow inclusive leadership behaviours such as participative leadership, authentic leadership, and transactional leadership. Even though a particular leadership style is not suitable for different organisational

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contexts, it is feasible to adopt dynamic leadership such as participative leadership that encourages open communication, and inclusion of employees in the decision-making to ensure their voice is listened and adhered to. By acting as a coach for the followers, leaders encourage followers, even the Machiavellians to express their ideas and concerns, views and perceptions and identify what they think about the organisation. It is a consultative leadership style because through continuous interaction, sharing best practices and information exchange employees feel belonged to the organisation and that their opinion counts in the core decisions. It also promotes creativity, versatility, and innovation linked to the problem–solving and ensures that the negative perception of politics is eliminated.

Transformational leadership helps to develop a workplace context based on equity and justice and reduce the negative aspects of organisational politics, increase the extent of employee commitment towards the organisational goals and performance levels. In a highly politicised work environment, transformational leaders reduce the level of ambiguity, fear and anxiety, stress and insecurity that employees are likely to experience.Transformational leadership ensures that biases, discrimination, favouritism and similar other negative tendencies are reduced, if not eliminated.

Leaders promote fairness, justice, trust and merit in decision-making, performance appraisals, job design and allocation of roles and responsibilities. They strengthen professionalism, control Machiavellian and self-serving behaviours and motivate people to challenge their existing status quo and behaviours. Therefore, even the Machs can be inspired to transform their self-centred behavioural tendencies and forego their personal goals to chase the collective goals and objectives of teams and the organisation. Therefore, Machiavellians rather than being opportunists choose to follow a path of justice, fairness, creativity to fulfil their goals of self-esteem. Transformational leadership is best suited for changing employees' behaviour during 'change' as change decisions are often perceived by employees to be politically driven. Transformational leaders set examples by themselves initiating, implementing and leading change and ensuring that fruitful outcomes are obtained that is beneficial for the organisation and employees. This reduces the negative perception of politics that employees develop towards the managerial decisions and actions usually meant for increasing organisational competitiveness and employee welfare.

Authentic leadership is most feasible in a highly politicised work environment and help to gain trust in a situation where employees lose faith in the management. Authentic leaders can affect the emotional state of employees as they tend to be honest to people, teams, and organisational members through self-regulation and self-awareness. These leadership traits are essential in a highly politicised work environment where employees form negative perceptions towards politics and thereby towards managerial decisions, change, or other activities meant for their wellbeing. As positive role models, authentic leaders help employees to overcome stress in a political environment where mistrust, anxiety, fear and insecurity prevail. Leaders are more socialised, show greater concern towards the well-being and welfare of the followers, provide mental support and develop their self-determination based on the creation of absolute trust and honesty. Authentic leaders are genuine, motivated by the aspiration to bring positive change and differences and guided by values that go beyond self-interest, ego and self-serving behaviours. By demonstrating genuine behaviour and trust-based relationships authentic leaders are in a better position to reduce negative politics, Machiavellianism and motivate employees to be honest and compliant.

## Recommendation 2
### Training employees to acquire the necessary political skills

It is recommended to the organisational managers to ensure that employees across various levels, teams and departments are politically skilled enough to tactfully deal with political skills rather than remaining silent observers of the unsolicited behaviour of Machiavellians, and/or influential groups. The acquisition of political skills would ensure that the employees possess the right attitude with the inclusion of useful traits such as interpersonal influence, social astuteness, networking ability and relationship building, and sincerity. Even though these skills are key attributes of managerial level executives, these skills can be passed on to the lower and mid-level employees who are most likely to be influenced by the existence of politics. Politically skilled employees would be able to have a positive perception of politics and acknowledge the importance of its existence. Rather than demonstrating behaviours of anxiety, fear, insecurity, scepticism and aloofness they would be inclined to be more communicative, build interpersonal relationships, and apply a creative solution to the organisational problems that arise. Politically

skilled employees should be able to categorise the differences between negative and positive politics rather than forming a dominant-negative perception of this phenomenon.

Politically skilled are in a better position to understand others and their behaviours. Rather than feeling stressed out or worried, politically skilled people stimulate others to act in suitable ways that help to build constructive relationships. They are effectively accustomed to their work environment, and knowledgeable about the critical need to flexibly adapt to change as opposed to considering it a politically driven move. Politically skilled workers possess a positive mindset and view things from an optimistic standpoint setting similar examples for others. Even in a highly politicised work environment they are capable of promoting a collaborative workplace, teamwork, and use their networking capabilities to establish balanced relationships between teams and between the employees and employer/management.

## Recommendation 3
### Employee inclusion, involvement and engagement

It is strongly recommended that the organisational managers, irrespective of the leadership style or approach they adopt, they should encourage employee inclusion in the organisational affairs and decision making. The 'power' aspect of involvement entails that the organisation provides empowerment to the employees to share their ideas, raise their voice and question the management if doubts arise. At the same time, open communication should be maintained throughout the organisational levels to ensure the management shows its answerability to employees when any questions or issues are raised. This eliminates the possibility of any misunderstanding between the employees and the management with regards to key decisions, actions, or change and the perception that these are politically-driven. The elimination of misunderstanding reduces the possibility of conflicts that may arise due to negative perception of politics as queries, doubts, misunderstanding and disputes are resolved.

Employee engagement implies a positive, contented and motivational work-related mindset typified by vigour, commitment and inclusion.In a politicised work environment engaged employees to participate in knowledge sharing, and pursue a more creative, adaptive, and proactive approach to resolving issues that emerge. They are in a better position to reshape their

work environment which is highly political by developing positive relationships among individuals, groups and joint actions to combat the negative effects of politics.


## 6.4 Limitations of the study

Limitations are the influences in research that are difficult to control and include the shortcomings, conditions and constraints that may restrict the scope of the methodology, findings and subsequently, conclusions. In this study, due to time constraints and budgetary limitations the empirical investigation, i.e. the surveys and interviews were conducted from a small sample size and data was collected in a single time phase. Therefore, cross-sectional research was undertaken to conduct the employee survey and managerial interviews in a given point of time. However, human perceptions change with time and therefore it is crucial to identify and measure the changes in the behaviour and attitude, views and perceptions over an extended period. This could have been possible with longitudinal research which involves data collection over multiple periods in different phases of time to gain deeper insights into the problem being investigated.

Survey and interviews were done for a very limited number of participants. Larger sample size could have yielded extensive data to conduct an in-depth analysis.

The next major limitation is the possibility of inclusion of biased responses in the empirical data obtained from the survey and interviews. The participants in the primary research may be reluctant to share the actual state of affairs, events and happenings at their respective organisation due to issues of integrity and confidentiality. Hence, the inclusion of prejudiced responses in the data obtained from primary research cannot be ruled out, thereby affecting the validity of the overall findings.

## 6.5 Scope for future research

Scope lies for future researchers to carry out an empirical investigation with regards to the influence of organisational politics in multinational organisations undergoing global mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, franchising and similar other international alliances. It will be interesting to know how cultural integration influences and shapes the nature of organisational politics across global destinations and how it impacts employees' behaviour, attitude, commitment and performances in the international arena, especially those involved with expatriate projects. Research in similar lines is essential because very limited research exists with regards to the influence of culture on organisational politics, even though, few dimensions of Hofstede's national culture differences such as power distance have been linked with the nature of workplace politics. There is still a pressing need to explore and analyse how cultural integration in multinational organisations or those forming international alliances deal with the differences in politics that exist between them.

From a different perspective, research can also be carried out to understand how OP helps an organisation to sustain its competitive advantage, especially in the current volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business environment. This implies that further research is necessary to investigate the impact of favourable politics on organisational competitiveness. Conducting such research is a pressing requirement for UK based companies that are currently placed in the transition period of the Brexit decision, i.e. withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. It will not only be interesting but useful to explore how decision-makers in UK based organisations use OP to strengthen their internal resource capabilities, especially human resources to respond to the challenges post- Brexit, which has made the survival of organisations difficult.

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## APPENDIX A– Survey questionnaires and interview questions

**QUANTITATIVE – SURVEY QUESTOINNAIRES FOR 100 lower level employees**

There exist an influential group in your organisation that no one tries to ever cross

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

People in this organisation make unsolicited attempts to build themselves by letting others down

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

To agree with the most powerful members/groups/superiors (or others) is the most desired alternative in the organisation

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

Employees are encouraged to question the decisions undertaken by top managers if they perceive such decisions to be self-serving

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

I have observed/ experienced that employees delivering the best performances are not fairly rewarded or promoted

o   Strongly agree o Agree

o Neither agree nor disagree

o Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

When it comes to performance appraisals (salary increment, promotional decisions) organisational policies seem to be irrelevant

o   Strongly agree o Agree

o Neither agree nor disagree

o Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

Telling others what they want to hear is often better than speaking out the truth

o   Strongly agree o Agree

o Neither agree nor disagree

o Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

I perceive there exist high political behaviour in the organisation due to the existence of coalition groups

o   Strongly agree o Agree

o Neither agree nor disagree

o Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of stress at work

o   Strongly agree o Agree

o   Neither agree nor disagree
o Disagree
o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has been a cause of fear and anxiety at work

o   Strongly agree o Agree
o Neither agree nor disagree
o Disagree
o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of commitment you had for the organisation

o   Strongly agree o Agree
o Neither agree nor disagree
o Disagree
o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has affected your daily work performance in a negative way

o   Strongly agree o Agree
o Neither agree nor disagree
o Disagree
o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has reduced the extent of job satisfaction

o   Strongly agree o Agree
o Neither agree nor disagree
o Disagree
o   Strongly disagree

The existence of workplace politics (perception of politics) has discouraged you to undertake voluntary activities as a part of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)?

- o Strongly agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

The perception of politics at the workplace you prefer to remain isolated from others (peers/colleagues/superiors)

- o Strongly agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

The perception of politics at the workplace makes you feel that your job is insecure and/or career is uncertain in this organisation

- o Strongly agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

Leadership encouraging ethics at the workplace are able to create a positive impact of organisational politics

- o Strongly agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

Transformational leaders (encouraging change) are able to yield positive outcomes of organisational politics

- o Strongly agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

When you are engaged your feel motivated to perform better despite the presence of organisational politics

- o  Strongly
  agree o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o  Strongly disagree

**Interview questions** for supervisors, team managers, managers, senior employees (leadership) of various UK based organisations.

**Objective 1- Explore the nature of workplace politics in organisation**

Q1)Is workplace politics present in your organisation? If, yes please elaborate on the nature of the workplace politics that is currently present. Please elaborate

Q2)In your opinion how do workers/subordinates or lower level employees perceive organisational politics? Please elaborate

Q3) Is organisational politics always negative? Please elaborate

**Objective 2- Critically investigate the impact of workplace politics on organisation performance**

Q4)How does workplace politics influence employee behaviour? Please elaborate with respect to their organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)?

Q5)How does organisational politics impact culture at the workplace? Please elaborate

Q6)What impact does workplace politics have on employees' work performance? Please elaborate

Q7)What impact does workplace politics have on employees' commitment towards the organisation and their intention to stay (employee retention)? Please elaborate

**Objective 3- Develop strategies to manage workplace politics for positive organisational performance**

Q8)Do you consider it feasible to eliminate organisational politics/politics at workplace? Please elaborate

Q9) Is it possible to shape organisational politics to make it beneficial for people and the organisation? If so how does leadership help in doing so? Please elaborate

# Appendix B– Transcripts of managerial interviews
## Objective 1- Explore the nature of workplace politics in organisation

**Q1)Is workplace politics present in your organisation? If, yes please elaborate on the nature of the workplace politics that is currently present. Please elaborate.**

R1- The respondent explained that the occurrence of politics is natural and it emerged in the organisation in various situations. The prevalence of power is mainly apparent when employees' felt that their interests are not met or when they perceived that there was some kind of injustice of discrimination. R1 stated "*it's difficult to define the nature of politics as politically motivated activities are of various forms ranging from protests by workers, creating chaos, or disruption of workflow....its fuelled through rumour and spread of negative gossips and takes the form of negative politics.... i don't consider it a healthy practise".*The manager did not categorically demarcate the nature of politics that exists in their organisation emphasising that it is display of various forms of power usually by workers being supported by unions. The manager also explained that political environment was created in the organisation out of misunderstanding and suspecting decision-makers (top managers/leaders) to be politically-driven to fulfil their personal interests but this is simply a perception.

R2The manager stated "*Look! the behaviour and actions of one person characterised as politics can be perceived as effective management by others and the other way round is also true... to a large extent it depends on the personality, thinking and mindset of a person to perceive something 'political', let's suppose any form of 'change' led by a change-manager can be perceived to be politically motivated by some while those who are politically skilled will consider it effective management.....or an effective leadership strategy .....*" The manager cited some
other examples stating how managerial initiatives taken by senior managers are labelled as political in the organisation, for instance, managers trying to convince subordinates to accept change are perceived as self-serving behaviour to coerce someone to something new and thereby make him redundant. In addition, political behaviour is also apparent between members of a team, for instance, if someone takes extra initiatives and make attempts to facilitate teamwork, it may be perceived by others as politically motivated behaviour intending to form coalitions.

R3 The manager pointed out "*we need to go deep down into the causes of it, and why it occurs ... it could be due to individual factors such as someone with a high mach personality, or those seeking superior job positions in a short time period to achieve power, and meet their esteem needs......*(takes a deep breath)...it could be organisational factors .....it often happens when people suffer from role ambiguity which causes confusion, high performance pressure, lack of opportunities for promotion, and at times when people are not convinced with the performance appraisals.

R4 ********no comments ***********

R5 The manager disclosed "*Ours is a global organisation and therefore we come across various cultures, encounter people from diverse background and with different political mindset..... what kind of politics breeds in an organisation (referring to the nature of organisational politics) depends on the leadership style of the decision makers which significantly affect political climate...*" R5 explained that organisational leaders embrace an inclusive leadership style to encourage open communication, participation and set the stage for mutual cooperation and exchange of information where individual differences are acknowledged and every-ones' views are respected. Leaders also maintain strict vigilance through observation to eliminate any chances of the emergence of negative politics.

R6 -"*Yes it is! Politics is present in almost every organisation and its presence in our organisation is obvious...there are certain activities that are carried out for the purpose of acquiring, developing and making use of power to achieve one's desired outcomes ...*" . R6 also considers the occurrence of organisational politics to be natural and an inherent, in-built part of any organisation irrespective of its structure, culture, and managerial behaviour.

The respondent elaborated that the use of political behaviour is usually displayed by those holding hierarchical power and authority and take undue advantage of complex situations which require quick decision-making and implementation of a policy. Decisions during uncertainties and emergency cannot be taken in consultation with subordinates and it needs to be expedited. If this is perceived as a political behaviour then there is need to counsel employees.

R7 The manager indicated " *Politics is an inherent part of our organisation, and politics is characterised with both negative and positive attributes yet we mould it in the sense and divert it in the positive direction....(pause for a moment and after sometime)....now see work organisations today require skills in dealing with shifting power bases and conflicting agendas and this is true for our organisation also. .....I'd say that the political orientation of our people (employees) is directed towards building constructive relationships, pursuing collective goals, and forming coalitions to divide responsibilities. We train people to develop political skills,ie competitive behaviour with no hidden agendas and undertake efforts to minimise the destructive aspects of negative politics.*

R8 The manager stated "*often the actions of few demonstrate self-interest at the expense of others and they remain cool and manipulative even when others in the same team get emotional ....(pause) and politically driven members often form alliances with powerful others to get their goals fulfilled ....these people are high machs"*..The manager explained that machs do not hesitate to deceive others, pretend to be honest, and use unethical ways to manipulate others to fulfil their personal goals which deviate from the mainstream organisational goals. The manager disclosed that this is human nature and said *"to be selfish is human"* and that the organisation had

whistle blowers who observed such human behaviour and ensured that innocent workers did not fall victim to such traps.

**Q2)In your opinion how do workers/subordinates or lower level employees perceive organisational politics? Please elaborate**

R1- In response to the above question, the manager replied " if*you are asking about members at the lower level of the organisation they perceive that someone in their own team, or a co-worker is politically obsessed and this creates internal conflicts and spoils team spirit......people with low EMOTONAL INTELLIGENCE are the ones who perceive politics to be unfavourable ...".* The respondent also disclosed that "individuals at the lower level not getting decent appraisals or job design according to what they expect feel that the HR policies have inherent politics and the organisational policies are relevant and thereby their behaviour is counterproductive. The manager summed up that the lower level employees get badly influenced by the prevailing buzz (rumour) and most of them sense it in the most negative way.

R2 The respondent pointed out that most of the employees at lower level had a tendency to have negative perception towards any form of organisational politics. This was mainly true for those who lacked political skills and got easily influenced by others trying to manipulate their behaviour. Citing an example, the manager narrated from his experience that many workers in the company were resistant to change as they perceived any kind of change as politically driven. Hence, employees at lower level responsible to execute the daily tasks were more likely have higher perception of politics and consider it detrimental towards their job security and career growth opportunities. The manager remarked "*their behaviour reflects what they think and the way they perceive politics at the workplace ....they resist almost every decision we (managers) take, every action undertaken by us even if it is for their welfare and prosperity".*

R3 The respondent comment "O! now you are talking exclusively about those who are the main pillars of any organisation....its its (bit stammering) its usually associated with feelings of anxiety and stress for the poor fellows .....the very word 'politics' is a cause of fear, disbelief and something fishy going-on in the management .....(laughs) thats how they perceive ..... but then it's not their fault because they might have observed their colleagues may have fallen victims to political traps ....."

R4 Themanagerpointed out " not an admirable perception

*There are machs at every level and the lower level staff is not an exception to this. They are aware of the tactical measures to take unfair advantage of their colleagues and peers without the*

*latter knowing that they are being manipulated and controlled...however it is difficult to trace what their intentions are ..."*

R5 The manager (seemed not very convinced with the question) quickly responded and remarked "why lower level employees? Why subordinates? (huh)...everyone at every level be it lower, mid or senior level have different perception towards politics, however, how they perceive it whether negative or positive depends on the leadership, culture and nature of communication that exists .....YES! employees at the lower level are at a higher risk to be deceived by the politically dominant ones ......" The manager's further indicated "their immediate reaction to anything that they perceive political would be negative however they were not only trained on developing political skills but counselled whenever they came up with any issues, fear, or complaints". Therefore the respondent clarified that the perceptions of lower level employees towards organisational politics mainly depended on the way they were treated, managed and led by the leaders.

R6 The respondent stated "Obviously negative! employees at the lower and most executives at the middle management level perceived that decisions taken by the topmost level is politically motivated and would yield unfavourable results for individuals and teams ". In addition, the manager shared his experience how employees indulged in cross questioning with the senior management during meetings raising doubts and suspicion for decisions taken and policies implemented.

R7 The manager shared his perceptions " I personally do not believe in categorising employees as lower level employees or superior level, we rather follow a flat structure that eliminates the strict division of organisational levels.....employees at every level are trained on behavioural skills and perceive politics to be positively construed ....". The manager explained that employees who were politically skilled always perceived politics to be positive for themselves and for the organisation as well.

R8 The respondent remarked "If we are taking about organisational politics then we need to talk about it as an organisational whole as it is widespread and its perceptions are not limited to a certain sect identified as lower level or mid level .......Look ! politics in organisation is usually perceived to be negative and people presume that it brings lots of misfortunes, yet it is difficult to categorise which level of employees think what...even my personal perception about politics is not very positive and i believe that employees working on the organisational payroll, those on fixed term contracts and every part timers have different perceptions for politics which is difficult to identify. I wont deny that employees at every level may be framed through politics which is often termed as backstabbing, backbiting (laughs) and similar acts.

**Q3) Is organisational politics always negative? Please elaborate**

R1- The manager stated that it is negative in most cases as it leads to divisiveness and distraction. Political behaviour leads to ego-clashes and conflicts among people and the outcome is lack of cooperation and harmony at the workplace. Those who can isolate their political mindset and views from their lives can transform it for constructive purposes, however, in actual world this is next to impossible and greater disagreements among people hamper the workplace decorum. There employees holding incompatible views backed by political behaviour that may not be acceptable.

R2- Even though it is positive, it is always perceived to be negative by almost every second employee in an organisation. The manager stated " *My personal opinion is that it is usually leads to negative behaviour in most cases because it acted as a barrier in implementing any change or any strategic decision meant for the organisation's welfare or competitiveness*
*......Now see people with the right attitude and attributes such as astuteness, foresight, networking capabilities and deep concern for the organisation usually perceive politics in the right sense but people with such capabilities are rare ....i hope this answers your question*
*"*.Therefore the manager clarified that whether politics is positive or negative depended on the way it is perceived to be negative or positive.

R3 "*See everyone in an organisation have their own personal aspirations, egos, agendas and goals, and they strive to achieve what they want, and therefore there will always be some extent of compromise, negotiation, bargaining with others, and politicking. When the personal motivation of individuals is not aligned with goals and objectives of the organisation, it begins to create problems....*"

R4 The manager shared his opinion that politics can be both positive or negative and it was two sides of the same coin. Citing an example the manager narrated that positive political behaviour is apparent and evident when individuals identify and align themselves with the key influencers with the fundamental aim of leveraging their influence for fulfilling career goals and aspirations. These individuals do not compromise on their personal values neither on the values of the organisation and are most like to possess dynamic personalities with strong political skills and strive to fulfil their personal goals as well as the goals of the organisation. The manager elaborated that negative politics could be widespread in organisation which is common for most of the organisation. Citing an example, the manager stated " *negative politics is all about playing dirty games at the cost of someone else, for instance, an employee may observe a co-worker making an unintentional mistake on a particular project and then simply go and report to the project manager .. subsequently try to gain kudos by taking initiative to correct the mistake*". Referring to the example, the manager pointed that the employee could have made the co-worker aware of the mistake then and there but being politically motivated the person chose to walk up to the project manger and escalate the same.

R5 The manager commented " *I will stick to my point as I stated earlier I don't believe in negative politics and that is the way I have managed and led my organisation and its members*

*.....Personally speaking about my organisation I would proudly say that positive politics prevails throughout the different levels, departments and teams......Politics is negative when the organisational structure is largely bureaucratic, communication is downward, there exist a culture of exclusion and non-participation within which the behaviour of employee tend to be politically negative..."*

R6 The respondent commented 'Ah! There exist no strategies or tactics to remove politics yet positive politics is the most desired in an organisation. Now see a workplace with the infitratoin of positive politics is possible by 'not fuelling the fire', avoiding to spread rumours, avoiding to hold back information or things like inculcating negative behavioural tendencies that create misunderstanding and misinterpretations of decisions and associated events. The manager further suggested "*I would personally caution everyone in any organisation be in the lower level, mid or seniormost level, not to take sides with anyone, or get sucked into unnecessary arguments or allegations...each time a conflict crops up, it is not necessary that there has to be a winner or a loser rather it is advisable to adopt a win-win negotiation approach that finds a practical, actionable and justifiable solution for everyone resulting in satisfaction while ensuring that relationship between people do not go sour..."*

R7    The manager exclaimed "Nops !not at all ....politics is not always negative, however, negative politics stems in organisations with poor leadership and culture when employees are not given the right direction to work, to think, to behave. In our organisation we maintain a set of core values in the form of transparency, communication, integrity and impact ...while recruiting and managing people we ensure that they possess these values deep within them. We also ensure that we generate and adhere to clear human resource policies and practices for appraisals, promotions, and bonuses and so on. This automatically eliminates the likelihood of any negative politics.

R8 Similar to the responses shared by the previous participants R8 also considered that it was a myth to believe that political perception can be eliminated or totally wiped out from a workplace. The manager suggested taking well planned and calculated steps to eliminate toxic ingredients that are inherent in politics and take proactive steps to identify what is bad politics and what is good. The manager also suggested that the Machs need to be identified, taken for various training sessions including role plays, workshops and behavioural trainings. Rather than creating hatredness against those who are politically obsessed or deceitful it is advisable to give them a strong feedback and led in a manner that they bring transformation in their behaviour and develop a dynamic vision for chasing long term goals and objectives rather than lingering around short term gains. The respondent insisted that it was natural that employees with self-centred goals and clever intentions would be present in almost every human society and therefore in most of the organisations nowadays but the solution is to transform their behaviour, be assertive

rather than aggressive against them and make them realise the importance of being honest, transparent and compliant.


**Objective 2- Critically investigate the impact of workplace politics on organisation performance**

**Q4)How does workplace politics influence employee behaviour? Please elaborate with respect to their organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)?**

R1- The respondent shared his views on the existence of perception of politics mainly among the lower level staff members that were the main causes of conflicts with peers, often members of other departments and with the immediate supervisors including line managers working with the human resource management (HRM) departments. The respondent remarked *'In most cases there are un-necessary chaos, gossip giving rise to misunderstanding that the senior management is politically driven and so is their decision making…..but these are mere*
*perceptions and there's no reality in this'.* Elaborating on how workplace politics influence the behaviour of employees in the organisation, R1 shared a very negative response indicating that it led to counterproductive behaviour among those perceiving high political climate in the organisation. R1 commented 'See *what counterproductive behaviour is (takes a deep breath) …as opposed to voluntary citizenship behaviour it is a behavioural tendency that violates important norms and values of the organisation and thereby threatens the organisational wellbeing ……employees indulge into acts such as taking excessive breaks, increasing idle time,*
*showing disinterest at work, feeling demoralised, speaking rudely to the supervisor and knocking the human resource managers with some type of issues or complaints ……they seem to be always complaining….'….'*


R2 - I have personally come across situations where any kind of change, whether planned or emergent is considered by employees as politically motivated. R2 expressed '*We at the management level are more aware of how the market is evolving, consumer needs are changing, competition is intensifying and survival is become more challenging than ever and hence quick decisions, change, and change implementation is inevitable ……now each time a change takes*
*place we cannot explain people across all levels beforehand …. It is a mammoth task …..so*
*decisions are taken, change is implemented, circulars are issued and this is perceived as a political move by few...".* The respondent pointed out that employees feel threatened that the implementation of change is driven by managers' political will to make them redundant and therefore resist change. The manager further revealed that there were no signs of citizenship behaviour as employees were more inclined to get involved in gossips, forming groups, especially sub-cultural groups deviating from the mainstream organisational culture, goals and values. Employees perceiving high politics not only demonstrated negative behaviour

themselves but provoked others to show resistance, absenteeism, bargain with the managers and indulge in conflicts.

R3 The respondent disclosed that the perception of politics in the organisation usually led to negative employee behaviour as the very word 'politics' is believed to yield unfavourable outcomes. R3 remarked '*theoretically politics is not always bad but people perceive it as an evil that occurs to ruin their wellbeing at the organisation, growth and career development ... and people start opposing the management....'.....*The manager revealed that the workers behaved in a way that showed that the organisation they worked for was not theirs. They see the management with scepticism and being very inquisitive about every decision the management takes, every move and every action the management takes. The respondent remarked 'I *have experienced even those who were most eager to take extra initiatives, showing disinterest in even fulfilling their core job obligations'.* The respondent indicated that employees were too reluctant to take part in voluntary activities like mentoring new comers, nor showed any enthusiasm to go an extra mile to help others.

R4- The views of R4 was similar to the response of R1 in terms of the influence of organisational politics on employee behaviour. R4 mentioned that the staff members at the lower level were more likely to misunderstand the decisions taken by the management, policies implemented and any changes undertaken to meet the emerging business challenges. R4 remarked '*Now See ! the very thought of the term politics raises suspicions that something is going wrong and lower level staffs are the ones very quick to react unfavourably to anything that is perceived as political.' ....(pause) .....even the most well-performing members start demonstrating irresponsible behaviours, elongated breaks, coming late to office on a regular basis, being delinquent and hostile, and passing comments that are sarcastic ....... ..forget about citizenship behaviour ...it is counterproductive behaviour that they show ....it is very difficult to handle such situation as things become very unruly ......'*

R5 The manager explained that politics was an inherent part of organisational behaviour and culture and hence not always harmful, yet most employees at the lower tend to show behaviours that is unacceptable. The respondent pointed out "*mid-level and senior level employees occupying leadership positions were most likely to perceive politics as positive while those at lower level, not very educated ones and chasing short-term goals behave pessimistically".* The manager remarked '*POLITICS IS FAVOURABLE.... ESPEICALLY WHEN PEOPLE ARE POLITICALLY SKILLFUL ....*' Elaborating on this point of view the manager explained that politics provides the groundwork for competitive advantage and hence the influence is positive for those who are politically skilled. Generally managerial level executives are politically skilled and engage in actions that promote feelings of trust, empathy, confidentiality and sincerity. These employees consider politics to be constructive and exhibit behaviours directed towards teamwork, commitment, and inclination towards citizenship behaviour. The manager commented ' *most of the lower level workers perceived politics to be harmful and acts related to favouritism,*

*prejudice, and discrimination, therefore, their behaviour towards the organisation was unfair......and NAH! they would never take part in citizenship behaviour...'*

R6 The manager pointed out that *the employees who perceive the organisational climate to be highly political demonstrate behaviour as if they are very insecure and threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty........ not about the organisation but their personal goals and aspirations (laughs).....those who perceive politics to be negative, feel inherently distressed and this in turn breeds violent behaviour causing more and more anguish among co-workers ......"* The respondent pointed out that it was not only easy to establish how organisational politics influenced citizenship behaviour among employees as those feeling belonged to the organisation, or the ones with leadership potential and pursing long-term goals will always go beyond their usual duties to serve the organisation voluntarily.

R7 ****** not available to deliver response to this question*********

R8 The opinion of R5 was akin to that of R8 who indicated that the influence of organisational politics was both positive and negative, however, most of the behaviours were likely to be negative. The manager expressed ' *Look! Politics is an essential part of every organisation, where social or commercial, for-profit or an ngo, it is not intended, it originates, develops and spreads on its own.......(pause) ..now those who are politically skilled respond positively towards organisational politics and become more communicative, balanced, and ethically driven. They perceive that the competition is healthy, work towards their own career progress, strive towards the achievement of personal goals as well as organisational goals in the process....'*

Q5)How does organisational politics impact culture at the workplace? Please elaborate

R1- The participant respondent by saying that " politics at the workplace influences the behavioural tendencies of others in terms of making them feel differently, act differently, communicate differently than they otherwise would. People may exaggerate their own goals, and develop feelings to destroy someone else to succeed in their efforts. At the same time, people may have a feeling of guilt, fear revenge, and often to evade guilt they may deny their inherent thoughts and wishes and point them to someone else. R1 also remarked that ' *from my personal experience people getting involved in conflicts, questioning their immediate supervisor several times for any new policy implemented, or for not being rewarded according to their expectations even though rewards are based on performance and fairness is performance appraisals is maintained'*

R2 – The manager expressed his opinion stating that *' I have seen how sub-groups are formed with their own separate agendas and norms...these are more like sub-cultural groups whose goals are different from the common goals and objectives of the organisation and their existence is dangerous ........(pause) these sub-cultural group form their own cultural values, mindset, and norms'. ...... People may perceive everything to be politically driven and therefore get involved in activities such as gossip, spreading rumours, expressing their feelings exaggeratedly, spreading negative word of mouth comments about the management and the organisation and thereby promoting negative culture..'*

R3 - The respondent R3 shared his opinion that politics shaped employees' behavour in terms of their thinking, mindsets, and outlook towards organisational goals and values, and most importantly towards any change. The manager disclosed and their organisation followed a culture of competence and change and perception of politics disrupted the extent of competitive behaviour and change orientation that the executors of change, i.e. employees' should possess. R3 remarked *"we operate in a very competitive environment and accordingly our culture is shaped ... (pause) the cultural outlook of our organisation is built upon the necessity for change, the necessity to be creative, and embrace innovation... we promote risk-taking because without risks competitiveness comes to a standstill (pause) however, the perception of politics disrupts the process of change and innovation as employees raise suspicions, feel threatened and resist change...... they believe that the emergence of change is to fulfil the self-interests of top management responsible to take 'change decisions' and the outcome would be employee layoffs.....it's a very difficult situation !"* The manager pointed out that perception of politics is usually negative on the culture of change and innovation and competitiveness of organisation.

R4 The manager disclosed that organisational politics is pervasive, omnipresent and an organisation without it a fantasy. The respondent revealed from his personal experience that when resources are constrained, widespread ambiguity prevails, forecasting the future becomes difficult such as in vuca (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) and decision making is difficult then specific groups of workers emerge who create trouble adding to the complexity rather than extending their help to the organisation. The manager explained that when salary increment was negligent, job promotions were difficult, appraisals were weak, benefits and allowances were curbed and layoffs were necessary to cut down costs; in such situation, certain groups indulged in political behaviours by negotiating terms with the managers, asking for increased compensation or else they would resign, or demanding immediate job promotions so that they can acquire power and decision-making authority. Their political behaviour was apparent and this kind of politics spoils the cultural set-up of the organisation. Based on the aforementioned example, the manager remarked *" politics used in a wrong way destroys the collaborative work environment that is built upon mutual trust, involvement, human values and*

*respect for diversity (hmmm).. the most tenured employees are the ones who exhibit political behaviour, surprisingly, instead of being loyal to the firm...seek recognition even in difficult times ...."*

R5-P The manager indicated that the way politics influence culture at the workplace is largely dependent on how members of the organisation are managed. The manager commented *"politics influence culture in the same way as culture influence politics (smiles) ... we largely follow 'people' culture and employees are the most important form of assets that we have, we make our employees feel important, and belonged, their voice is always listened to and their issues are attended in real time no matter how politically driven their intentions, we don't allow workplace politics to harm employees, either emotionally or physically .....I personally feel that engaged employees rarely indulge in politics that is harmful for the organisation ..."*Finally the manager stressed on helping employees to be politically competent so that they use politics in a healthy way and promote a positive culture of collaboration, cultivation and competence.

R6 The manager disclosed that they the company operated in a global environment and hence cross cultural integration was an indispensable part of the organisation, however, it was largely affected by the presence of organisational politics. R6 stated "*global firms possess different types of political climate and diverse forms of culture as well .......we sendemployees to different geographical locations to work on expatriate projects and in doing so they encounter different power status and political dominance in different organisational contexts which affects their communication level, thought-process, relationship building and attitude towards work. Now, in overseas locations if senior management hold all the power and power is unevenly distributed, an employee who has worked under participative leadership feels alienated.....he may perceive that the new work environment is politically dominant and may not feel free to share information, build relationships, or participate in activities other than work.*

R7-P The respondent remarked " It*actually favours ! Look! I believe that organisational politics is natural, it's a part of culture and therefore promotes a collaborative environment of trust, confidence, autonomy and empowerment. In our organisation decision-making is shared and employee inclusion, including their consensus in final decisions is a norm. Organisational decisions where employees' interests is affected is not taken autonomously by managers or else it would be considered politically motivated.... since managers may take autonomous decisions without consulting anyone to fulfil their own interests.....and hence employees perceive the presence of positive politics which influences their behaviour as in communication, peer-relationships, and thinking in a positive way'.*

R8 The respondent explained that organisations do have employees with selfish intentions who make unfair use of social relationships to benefit themselves. Such people are not easily identifiable as their behavour is just like any other employee however their personal goals and intentions are destructive. Innocent employees are often victimised by these politically motivated employees who use manipulation, dishonesty to fulfil their opportunist purpose rather than collective team goals or common goals of the organisation. These people are largely competitive, ego-centric, and achievement-oriented and strive to fulfil their esteem needs in the wrong way, thereby encouraging a culture of distrust and disbelief. These people are largely competitive, ego-centric, and achievement-oriented and strive to fulfil their esteem needs in the wrong way, thereby encouraging a culture of distrust and disbelief. Their cultural mindset is that of an individualist trying to fulfil their selfish goals, manipulating others to achieve better performance ratings, considering the efforts of others as their own and striving to get better rewards. Their manipulative behaviour spoils the cultural values of the organisation and thereby the cultural orientation of individuals, groups and teams.

**Q6) What impact does workplace politics have on employees' work performance? Please elaborate**

R1- The manager shared his views stating that the employees sensing the existence of politics at the workplace were counterproductive. R1 remarked *' Ah! I have come across several issues of employees feeling unhappy, stressed, or frustrated for no reason, rather a disbelief that there is some kind of injustice going on ......its just a belief and this actually ruins their performance levels....(pause).... obviously their performance level goes does which deteriorates team performance and bit by bit affects the overall performance of the organisation...'* The manager further clarified that employees with a negative mindset and pessimist thought process always sensed some kind of political game going on behind them and delivered poor performance.

R2 -R2 was straightforward in answering this question and opined that the impact of organisational politics on performance was always negative. The reason being employees lose faith in the organisation, feel discouraged and fail to perform to the best of their abilities. The respondent remarked *'Its its....very discouraging for them....it comes like a rumour, O!*
*something fishy going on... politics ! hmmm..now everything is politicised and we will be the victims . ...this is how employees feel like and then they spread the word, form groups, and then subgroups thereby destroying their own performance capabilities and that of the others .....'*
The respondent asserted that a handful of employees with a negative belief towards workplace politics reduced their own performance levels as well as that of the others

R3 The manager pointed out that employees across various teams and departments developed negative attitude towards any form of organisational politics and it was detrimental to their performance. R3 remarked *'employees behaved like laggards, low performers showing no interest in improving their performance at work,,,, they were reluctant to take part in trainings that were designed to help them acquire better skills and competencies to improve job performance .... ... they are negligent towards any kind of behavioural trainings or counselling meant to create a positive work environment and direct their behaviour towards constructive thoughts that could lead to better performances....'* The manager further explained that the HR managers faced difficulty in dealing with such employees as they did not show any signs of performance improvements despite being counseled or motivated through incentives.

R4 The manager pointed out that workers with low emotional intelligence (EI) were most likely to have a negative perception towards organisational politics and this affected their daily work performance in a negative manner. The manager conveyed that few workers felt higher stress and burnout at the workplace, remained frequently absent, took increased leaves and avoided coming at the work, the cumulative effect of which was poor performance. R4 expressed his views *' Look ! perception of politics is fatal ! but organisational politics can't be avoided.....what I have come across is the general feeling among workers that managerial decisions are biased.....their (employees) consciousness says that performance appraisals carried out by the line manager including HR managers is unfair and lacks transparency......they feel that organisational managers have favourites who get better appraisals through increment in pay, benefits, and job promotions ......'* Conclusively the manager said that employees who perceive the existence of politics

R5-P The manager was optimistic about the existence of politics at the workplace and emphasised on positive work behaviour and superior performances. R5 pointed out that employees who understand what politics is, what its positive sides are, and its essence for organisations' competitive advantage will work hard to advance their own career as well as facilitate organisational progress. R5 said that the onus for this lies among the managers who should act as participative leaders, promote inclusivity and regularly communicate with the employees across different levels.

The manager explained that communication gaps and absence of information exchange between the top management and the lower levels is the main cause of employees perceiving the existence of harmful workplace politics. The manager explained that communication gaps and absence of information exchange between the top management and the lower levels is the main cause of employees perceiving the existence of harmful workplace politics However, at their company, continuous interaction between the managers and employees and open communication

bridged the gap that led to negative perceptions of politics and educated employees about the possible benefits of organisational politics. This motivated them to continuously improve their performances and set similar examples for others.

R6 The manager indicated that the employees react negatively towards the very idea of organisational politics and this affects their performance levels. Employees develop a feeling of insecurity and start losing confidence in the organisation. They show lack of trust towards their supervisor and those in the management position and indulge in behaviours that yield nothing. R6 stated "*The employees, even the best performers seem to get lost and compromise with their quality of work despite knowing the consequences ....even after several trainings, provision for holidays and leaves, and extra benefits they do not feel motivated to improve performance and cling to the same behaviour that affects performance .....".* The manager added that employees perceiving high political environment at the workplace get isolated and express clear feelings or withdrawal forming their own coalition groups which is detrimental for their own performance as well as the health of the entire organisation.

R7-P The manager disclosed that employees perceiving high politics at the workplace initially show unsolicited behaviours such as being rude, anger, frustration and fear. However the managers remain watchful of any behavioural change and take quick action without any delay. The employees showing unsolicited behaviour, feelings of despair or anxiety are probed by the HR personnel to identify the root cause of such behavioural change. Through probing or counselling the HR managers get vital inputs/information about the causes behind employees' behavioural change and whether it is a result of politics. R7 conveyed '*the perception of politics is usually detrimental to performance to such as extent that employees show negligence and not even perform their basic duties carefully however probing them, providing counselling and bringing behavioural change helps to modify their behaviour and this has to be done at an early stage (smiles) .......I will stick to my point that politics is not always negative rather it is perceived to be negative and managerial intervention at the right time helps to transform employee behaviour and motivate them to deliver better performance ......*'

R8 The respondent stated that '*most employees get distracted and show disinterest at work......when they perceive unfair distribution of power and their voices not being listened to they start perceiving that there exist politics at the senior level and that decisions taken by them are guided by self-interests.....this is a major cause of de-motivation that affects performance....*R8 elaborated that their organisation maintained an 'open forum' where employees could raise their voice or question the decisions taken by managers, or escalate any doubts or dilemma being faced to the HR department , yet employees felt reluctant to approach the line managers or those in decision-making positions to share their problems and get them resolved. The very perception of politics at the workplace causes anxiety which leads to mental stress and severe trauma in the long run causing performance defects. R8 further commented " *what hinders their performance is the wrong belief that their efforts will not be rewarded fairly*

*... they seem to make their own judgements about others and feel discriminated in their own way ....".*


**Q7)What impact does workplace politics have on employees' commitment towards the organisation and their intention to stay (employee retention)? Please elaborate**

R1- As regards to the impact of workplace politics on employees' commitment the manager asserted that it lowered the extent of affective commitment that employees have towards the organisation. R1 stated '*people seem to be disillusioned and less emotionally attached to the organisation.... its' strange that they feel so worried about the workplace environment being political and this affects their behaviour, attitude, and therefore the level of commitment towards the organisational goals and objectives.....'* The respondent elaborated that the team members remain disengaged from the teams and form a set of their own perceptions and personal goals that is different from team goals.

R2 – The manager shared his experience stating that ' *I have come across a situation where the amount of monetary incentives was cut down due to financial constraints that the company was facing .. we were going through hard times and hence we decided to limit the extent of incentives and bonuses provided to employees rather than make anyone redundant ...... also job promotions were limited as any internal job postings (IJPs) were not coming up .......even though some promotions were made......lemme also add that the financial crunch made it difficult to give handsome appraisals to employees and meet their expectations .....(takes a deep breath)....this situation was considered as politically driven by most employees and they complained ....many developed high turnover intention and quit their jobs .......'* The manager further asserted that when the organisation fails to provide high monetary incentives, benefits or promotions, the employees sense that managers are politically motivated to do this.


R3 The respondent said '*Yes! The level of commitment goes drastically down when people observe any political acts or behavioural tendencies that are politically driven.....(pause) I won't deny that there are people who try to take unfair advantage of others at any cost, are opportunists and often try to deceit others to gain something (MACH) .......these are the ones who send wrong signals and pollute the work environment.... the politically motivated ones have hidden agendas and their actual intentions are visible when the damage is done ......'* The respondent further added that such people have selfish goals and think about their own progress rather than thinking about the welfare of others and the organisation they work for. After observing their behaviour, even the most loyal employees lose faith in the organisational policies and norms and this lowers their commitment level also.

R4 The respondent exclaimed '*I completely agree that the presence of politics as perceived by employees beings negative outcomes and low commitment is a major setback that the organisation suffers'.......' employees perceiving the presence of politics at the workplace lose*
*their commitment levels and show less concern towards meeting the organisational goals ...they get involved in unnecessary gossips, hang around with similar others at kiosks ore rest rooms, increase idle time, commit more mistakes and seem not to bother about organisational sustenance...'* R4 also commented '*Despite our efforts to reform their behavour through feedback sessions, or similar other initiatives they do not seem to emotionally connect with the organisation.....at times we revise the organisational policies, invest in training, job rotation,*
*and include better terms in the psychological contract to ensure employees feel that we are conscious of meeting their expectations, yet to no avail.* R4 summed up that organisational politics made employees suspicious that their bests interests are not taken care of, decisions are made to serve managerial interests rather than common interest of all and therefore develop high turnover intention. This makes it difficult to retain staff.

R5- In response to the question, the manger was quick to comment '*Now see, what makes employees feel that the workplace is politicised? It is ambiguity of job roles and when people are not clear of their roles and responsibilities and outcomes of their efforts....when they do not get direction..when managers show less interest in identifying their career goals and design action plans during appraisals that helps them to achieve their goals and aspirations ...' (smile)... Obviously if employees consensus in organisational decisions is not taken, if they are not*
*satisfied with the performance appraisals and if they are not engaged .. they are bound to perceive things as politically motivated and YES! such circumstances lowers their commitment level, especially the ones who are politically unskilled ....'* The respondent further revealed that
high perception of politics resulted in high absenteeism, turnover intention despite offering them additional bonus in the form of loyalty bonus to continue to work for the organisation. R5 explained that the HR managers spun into action immediately whenever they found employees losing commitment and took appropriate steps such as employee engagement to achieve their commitment level.

R6 - The manager remarked " *the level of affective commitment is low and employees show less interest in contributing towards the organisational goals and values.....their behaviours makes us feel that they do not consider the orga*

*nisation to be their own even though we treat them as members of the same family ...'* The respondent expressed that there were repeated incidents of anxiety, stress at work, low satisfaction from the job, withdrawal tendencies that clearly showed that employees were less committed towards the job and the organisation. The manager also stated that the employees who earlier showed willingness to go an extra mile to serve the clients, or help junior colleagues, were not even committed towards their own performances. The resultant outcome of politics was low employee commitment and their desire to seek some other employment.

R7 The participant indicated that any form of politics generally had a negative impact on the level of employee commitment towards the organisation. The manager R7 remarked " *when staff members perceive that things are not going their way their initial reaction is that there is some kind of political game going on .... they seem to be highly unconvinced with the decisions taken, policies implemented or any change adopted to sustain the competitive pressures ......(sigh) ,.. not all employees are politically skilled to understand the importance of politics in maintaining a competitive position .......anyhow, most employees fail to pursue shared goals and formulate their own goals to be chased'* . The managers disclosed that it becomes very difficult to convince employees that some decisions are taken in urgency and it is essential for the organisational wellbeing. Many staff members apparently show their lack of commitment by failing to show seriousness at work, failing to follow the work protocols and KPIs, get involved in conflicts and clearly show their intention to leave.

R8 The respondent asserted that the perception of politics was fatal and detrimental to the level of employee commitment towards the organisation. R8 revealed that employees who sensed that managerial decisions were politically motivated lost their commitment and become disloyal to the organisation. Often employees got involved in useless activities such as gossips, long hours of chit-chat, long breaks, and lack of participation in trainings, lack of response towards idea sharing or sharing of tacit knowledge. The manager clearly mentioned that organisational politics was associated with fear, feelings of insecurity, high absenteeism, asking for unnecessary leaves so as to search for jobs elsewhere, asking for transfer to other departments or job locations and so on.

**Objective 3- Develop strategies to manage workplace politics for positive organisational performance**

**Q8)Do you consider it feasible to eliminate organisational politics/politics at workplace? Please elaborate**

R1- The manager pointed out *"Listen, there's no need to eliminate organisational politics, rather it can't be ... it occurs naturally and will always be there .... i don't consider it feasible to eliminate politics because it is inherent in any social form of togetherness.. .so my answer is NO !"*

R2 The respondent expressed his views stating that organisational politics cannot be completely wiped out but used in a positive manner to yield fruitful outcomes. R2 commented *"everyone across the various organisational levels and everyone throughout the hierarchical ladder should be trained on political skills... to be politically competent and conscious of what is wrong and*

*what is right ...”* The manager elaborated that political skills can be acquired through learning which can be self-driven and can be acquired through experience.

R3 The respondent pointed out that there are no ways to eliminate politics completely, however, there are ways to reduce its disastrous effects. R3 commented *“Look! people need to be proactive.. now that doesn't mean kicking co-workers or colleagues out of competition, doing so implies negative politics ......to be proactive implies developing and leveraging a strong network of others in the organisation who support you.....be authentic in your approach ..dont crib or complain, rather come up with creative solution to problems ...... ..people should learn how to create a favourable climate of trust and co-operation .....”* . The manager inferred that politics should be dealt with tactfully by everyone and its harmful effects should be eradicated.

R4 -- The manager said that this question was very direct and to some extent not valid as no one can eliminate organisational politics. The respondent explained that “*in a laymen's terms people often imagine the existence of an organisation or a workplace where there exist no politics this is because their understanding about politics is always negative ....”.* The respondent emphasised on reducing negative politics and infiltrate positive aspects of politics which can be done through open communication, knowledge sharing, sharing tacit knowledge, team-work and collaboration. The manager expressed that organisational culture, norms and values, including HR politics need to be fair and ethical that ensures transparency. The manager also considered that effective leadership that supports employee participation and engagement also helps to eliminate negative politics. Rewards, performance management systems comprising of pay-rise decisions and promotions should fair and transparent so that people have trust in policies and practices.

R5 – The manager remarked “*why do we need to eradicate politics? it's an inherent feature of an organisation similar to culture, communication and so on, and I don't consider it destructive to be removed ...however there should be elimination of discriminative behavour, bullying and harassment, biased appraisals, misuse of power and autonomy, and similar other amoral standards that many organisations have”.* The manager summed up by saying that the elimination of negative behaviour is the key to reduce negative politics and any form of politics whether negative or positive cannot be completely removed.

R6   The respondent chose not to comment on this question.

R7 The manager commented “Well, *the question of eliminating politics from the organisation never arises (laughs), it's not feasible to remove something that is abstract and intangible ...rather remove its negative vibes and this is possible by bringing transformation in the way people think and perceive .....”.* The respondent stressed on various leadership roles that superior level employees should play to remove the extent of negative politics that exist. In addition by challenging existing behaviours and adopt new set of behaviours.

R8 The manager replied “ *Absolutely ! if you are talking about the elimination of negative politics that you need to frame your question right and ask whether negative politics can be*

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*eliminated, if that's so then my answer is YES"* ..... R7 further emphasised on encouraging a culture of equality, especially equal distribution of power and autonomy, fairness and transparency. The manager also suggested the elimination of autocratic management, or bureaucratic control where the possibility of employees feeling suspicious of negative politics is maximum.

**Q9) Is it possible to shape organisational politics to make it beneficial for people and the organisation? If so how does leadership help in doing so? Please elaborate**

R1- The respondent stated (after a careful thought) .. "*I clearly believe that all organisations to some extent are political, as individuals bring their personal needs, ambitions, emotions as well as insecurities at the workplace which affects their professional lives. Often people do not agree with each other due to ego clashes, differences in personalities and different ambitions which causes conflicts and gives birth to politics ... which is natural...Now in the process the most influential ones will be those holding more power .....(pause)....".* The manager assertively replied "*LEADERSHIP INTERVENTION IS CRUCIAL.. ...........but leaders should themselves possess the right political behaviour and skills that can be transferred to the followers..".*

Leaders should train followers to develop a set of political skills such as social astuteness that helps people to understand others' actions and understand their own behaviour; they should learn the art of negotiation, active listening, and interpersonal skills and develop strong relationships with others. Peoples' behaviour should not be manipulative as manipulations can be identified and manipulation brings short-term gains only. If any conflicts arise, win-win negotiation is necessary no matter how political the cause of the conflict. Peoples' behaviour should not be manipulative as manipulations can be identified and manipulation brings short-term gains only. If any conflicts arise, win-win negotiation is necessary no matter how political the cause of the conflict. This is essential to maintain congenial relationships based on harmony and respect. Honest relationships are based on reciprocal relationships rather than manipulations and people need to understand this. The manager explained that leaders should act as mentors and set examples through their own political behaviour steered in a positive direction.

R2 The manager was quick to answer this question and excitedly *commented "YES! I have experienced destructive political behaviour of employees during emergent situations such as 'change' therefore I would focus on 'people management' and leadership approaches that help to overcome the evil effects of politics...... it is important to transform human behavour, the behaviour of employees by following the soft approach to human resource management rather than believing in rewards and exchange relationships.......soft HR practices should be supported with dynamic change leadership to promote planned or emergent change in an effective manner despite the presence of politics........I would also suggest the use of participative leadership to promote involvement and transformational leadership to stimulate employees to change their* 237

*political behaviour to do something constructive".* Transformational leaders are in a better position to create an encouraging climate of trust and confidence that promotes professional competence and superiority leading to reduced perception of OP. Moreover, transformational leaders are known to maintain transparency in the process of decision-making by ensuring employees' consensus in decisions, strengthen the belief that the organisation and decision makers are trustworthy. The respondent concluded that transformational leaders are better equipped to transform the behaviour of politically-motivated people and divert their attention towards constructive activities.

R3 The respondent commented '*there is a common saying that politics is always dirty... the usual terms that we hear in relation to politics is backstabbing, or sucking up and so on .....NAH! that's not so ...* The manager narrated from his own understanding and commented "staff *membersperceive their managers to be more political and to some extent this is true because managers have to handle competitive pressures, forecast and envision the future and take decisions, yet our role as leaders is essential to shape a positive work environment where the influence of negative politics is minimum.......I'd personally follow authentic leadership which encourages a positive psychological climate and fair ethical values ....."* Followers are motivated to be more proactive in chasing the organisational goals and understand the need to be competent, challenge the existing status quo and embrace new work behaviours based on better interpersonal interactions, understanding others and forego self-interests while chasing collective goals. Authentic leaders train followers to be proactive, act as partners to their supervisors, managers and decision-makers, stay close to them, maintain superior interpersonal interactions and give suggestions rather than spreading rumours or creating chaos.

R4 The manager commented "*Its challenging not impossible...it could be a herculean task (smiles) yet we have had instances where people with a political mindset were motivated to change their behaviour and use politics in the most positive manner" ...* The respondent further elaborated that human motivation was the key to behavioural change and diversion of negative energy towards the positive side. People get involved in politics when their needs are not fulfilled which could range from the most basic one to higher order needs such as esteem needs. Identification of the unmet needs of employees shows that needs differ according to human personality, tenure and age, and levels. People working at the lowermost levels are more induced by monetary needs and benefits and expect higher pay increment during appraisals which are external motivational needs while those at a mid-level or managerial level seek higher responsibilities, job promotion and autonomy. It is vital to identify the different needs, usually latent needs that are not met which is one of the major causes why people indulge in politics. The manager commented " *Leadership is an essence across all levels to engage employees, identify what needs are unfilled and then create action plans to fulfil the needs ...so what is*

*important is participation , i.e. participative leadership, and it can't be denied that transformational leadership has the greatest potential to change peoples' behaviour"*.


R5 The manager remarked " *very good question, I personally believe this is possible and I myself formulate strategies that favour the organisation and its members ..as I had explained in the previous sessions that employees need to be engaged, involved in decision making, made to feel that they are cared for so that they feel belonged to the organisation... this is people-centric management" ........"yes dynamism in leadership is necessary and my personal opinion is the adoption of distributed leadership to ensure equality prevails throughout the organisation and everyone is treated like a partner, and like a leader (smiles), this has worked for our organisation, it breaks the strict hierarchical mindset and everyone feel free to express, share information, raise concerns and think creatively*". The manager explained that there is no unequal power distribution and hence the perception of politics is minimal.

R6 The manager was very optimistic about the idea of using politics for the benefit of individuals and stressed on the importance of employee counselling, behavioural based training to make them politically skilled...train employees to make them politically intelligent .......train
them to be a team player, understand the power map and learn how to remain connected to politically driven people, create partnerships with them yet remain strongly committed to the organisation. The manager explained that most organisations are power hierarchies and power is likely to shift from time to time, therefore, it is essential to know where power leverage exist that is who are the most influencing people and the extent of influencing abilities one has. To be politically skilled means understanding the equation of leverage and identify when it is changing.

The manager stressed that there were specific or one single leadership approach that could facilitate the use of politics for positive means. It is actually developing the right mindset, the right attitude, chasing the right set of goals, personal goals (career aspirations) and organisational goals and the like. The drive to sense politics, understand politics and use it in the most favourable manner is a lesson that cannot be taught, albeit leaders can show the right path to practice perseverance, foresightedness, resilience and vision.

R7 The manager replied "*Genuinely it can be, politics can always be used to bring positive outcomes albeit it is perceived the right way .......and leaders have to take the onus of eradicating thoughts such as manipulative, self-serving, untrustworthy , deception and the like ......you'll find loads of debates about politics being negative and these are agenda of public discussion .... Let's change our mind and the views of others' and on a serious note lets associate workplace politics with positive words such as social astuteness, influence, resourceful, foresight and vision.* The manager stressed on transformational leadership as the way to change peoples' behaviour and inspire them to think more creatively, develop problem- solving skills and transform challenges into opportunities.

R8-- As regards to leadership intervention, I suggest the use of distributed leadership.... Leadership should not be seen as a property of someone holding a superior position but a shared phenomenon that requires distribution between different people, leadership should be fluid and developed through human interaction and co-operation. Through the distribution of empowerment and autonomy, we expect everyone to take initiatives and action for any issue – BE IT POLITICS – especially elimination of negative politics and creation of a positive environment based on sincerity, trust and commitment....... in a negative political organisational

climate we have loyal and committed members keen to help managers eliminate the evils of negative politics and it feels good when these deserving ones assume leadership positions to change the politically induced mindset of others.