THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

BY

CHARLES A ROBB
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CHARLES A ROBB

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DEPARTMENT OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION
EXAMINATION SECTION – NORTH CAMPUS

PO Box 77000
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Port Elizabeth, 6013
Tel.: +27 (0) 41 504 3206 / 504 3392
Fax. +27 (0) 41 504 9206 / 504 3064

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

NAME: Charles Arthur Robb

STUDENT NUMBER: 20143503

QUALIFICATION: Masters in Business Administration

TITLE: Impact of Leadership on Organisational Politics

DECLARATION:
In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned treatise is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

SIGNATURE: ...........................................

DATE: ...........................................
ABSTRACT

Today’s workforce consists of employees with diverse personalities, cultural backgrounds, nationalities, needs and wants, thus creating new challenges for today’s leaders.

One of the primary functions of leadership is the management of employee perceptions that influence organisational outcomes. Among these perceptions the perception of politics is an influential type of organisational phenomenon.

There is no denying the fact that leadership greatly affects the performance of organisations. According to DuBrin (2010:8), an overview of research on managerial succession conducted over a 20 year period provides support that leadership has an impact on organisational performance. The analysis of the research found that leaders might be responsible for somewhere between 15 per cent and 45 per cent of a firm’s performance.

From the above mentioned research, it can be seen that the importance of leadership cannot be underestimated when regulating the effect of politics in the working environment and to achieve the company goals and objectives.

Part of the challenge today’s leaders face is to help employees to see the different perspectives of political actions as a positive force, rather than seeing these as negative processes that cause internal competition for resources, recognition and promotions.

Company politics does not have to be about back stabbing, internal rivalry, manipulation for power and lack of trust. With the development of proper skills and personal and organisational goals, positive organisational politics provides the real foundation for competitive advantage to benefit the employee as well as the organisation.

The main purpose of this research paper is to identify the influence of leadership on organisational politics. The first step was to complete a literature study on the
selected factors which contribute to organisational politics. The factors selected were those of job ambiguity, scarcity of resources, personality, uncertainty and fairness. The literature study also includes the outcomes of organisational politics. These outcomes include job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intention and job stress.

An empirical study was then used to analyse the views of staff in various departments. These questions were based on the selected factors mentioned in the previous paragraph. This involved the staff completing questionnaires.

Based on the findings of the literature study and the empirical study, the last step is to make recommendations to the selected company on managing the perceptions of organisational politics. Recommendations are also made as to what leadership styles would best fit different situations.
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in modern organisations has changed. Effective leaders who possess political skills have the ability to moderate and minimise the negative effects of the perceptions of organisational politics.

In a perfect world, according to Hanft (2006, as cited in Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008:327), individuals and cooperative interests would be closely aligned and everyone would move forward as one. Instead, a rather messy situation is typically found in which self-interest often override the collective mission. Personal hidden agendas are pursued, political coalitions are formed, false impressions are made, and people end up working at cross-purposes. He goes on to say that leaders need to be able to guide diverse individuals, who are often powerfully motivated to put their own self-interests first, to pursue common objectives. No less than the ultimate survival of the organisation is at stake, in this tug-of-war between individuals and collective interests (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008).

Politics in an organisation can be seen as the conceptualised exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one’s interests in certain organisational issues (Dhar, 2009:37).

Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge and Werner (2005:157) state that mustering the forces required to navigate power and politics within an organisation takes respect, patience and determination. Increased power and the political game are not always detrimental to an organisation, however it is the balance of power individuals or groups hold in an organisation that decides whether conflict will rule or not. When employees are treated as key participants in the success of organisations, the total amount of power within the organisation will increase. It has been proven that organisations without a philosophy of empowerment will not survive for long in the company battlefields of today. Unfortunately, it is not easy to
attain an absolute state of empowerment, and leaders must persevere with their efforts (Schultz et al., 2005).

Vidoga (2002:572) defines organisational politics as the complex mixture of power, influence, and interest-seeking behaviour that dominate individuals’ activity in the workplace.

DuBrin (2010:210) defines organisational politics as an informal approach of gaining power through means other than merit or luck. With these definitions in mind, it has become imperative for management to take organisational politics and its effect on employees and organisational well-being seriously and with the utmost consideration. DuBrin (2010:210) goes on to remark that in this sense, the meaning of politics in an organisation is conceptualised as the exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one’s interests in certain organisational issues. The importance of organisational politics lies in its potential consequences and effect on work outcomes.

Theoretical arguments suggest that politics often interferes with normal organisational processes such as decision-making, promotion, and rewards which damages productivity and performance at individual and organisational levels (Dhar, 2009:37).

Truty (2006) states that even though the art and practice of organisational politics have become somewhat public, the topic of politics continues to be surrounded by secrecy and denial, and the overt articulation of office politics continues to be taboo in the workplace. Management chooses to ignore the politics that become rife in the organisation due to conflicting agendas. The choice to ignore is often brought about by management’s fear of been ‘sucked in’ to the situation (Truty, 2006).

In the ever-changing business environment leaders needs to manage politics in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of the company, to enhance productivity, to motivate employees and ultimately to assist the organisation in meeting its desired outcomes.
Coetsee (2002:7) notes that no organisation will survive in a turbulent environment without individuals who are able to supply both leadership and management. He goes on to state that this new manager-leader should possess self-knowledge, insight and understanding of the world in which his role must be performed. The manager-leader should serve to unlock the potential of people and team members and create a motivating environment, which stimulates ownership behaviour and commitment. This will lead to greater effort by employees, increased performance and satisfaction (Coetsee, 2002).

This view of increased productivity and satisfaction is emphasised by Dhar (2009:50) who makes the statement that management should take appropriate steps to curb the political environment prevailing in the organisation. He goes on to say that, management should encourage equity and transparency and promote a culture of organisational support amongst the employees.

In order to achieve satisfaction and transparency in the working environment, leaders need to understand political behaviour and the negative outcomes that occur as a result. Leaders need to create an environment where trust and fairness prevail, resulting in increased job satisfaction and job involvement, and reducing turnover intention and job stress. The key for today’s leaders is to develop the ability to navigate the political minefield and help create a competitive, functional and supportive working environment.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Managers must become fully aware of the influence organisational politics can play on the overall effectiveness and efficiency of organisations. Politics in an organisation can be both positive and negative and it therefore becomes important for management to identify employees who possess the capabilities necessary to move the organisation forward. These employees will need to recognise the factors leading to a political work environment and manage the factors and outcomes efficiently.
Othman (2005:43) states that because of the uncertainty in the business environment, formal rules and procedures are no longer adequate in organisations. Organisations operate under conditions of resource constraints where individuals have to rely on informal and unsanctioned means to advance their goals leading to political behaviour. This new behaviour in the organisation makes it important for modern leaders to develop political skills of their own. Peled (2000:20) argues that political skills are the secret weapon of winning leaders.

In a study conducted by Roffey Park as part of her research carried out by Matthews (2004:50), it was found that from a sample of more than one thousand directors, managers and HR professionals, more than 61 per cent of respondents engaged in political behaviour, which had a positive outcome for the organisation. Politics invariably involves new thinking or a new strategy, which may be uncomfortable or even painful for some people; a good politician, or leader, always explains why change is important (Matthews, 2004:50).

Matthews (2004:50) suggests that people choose not to be involved in, or take part in office politics due to the stigma attached to it. Furthermore, he contends that people’s instinctive manipulation of power politics is to be applauded as long as it is used for the common good. He goes on to state that understanding office politics as a means of influencing staff and tuning into the office grapevine can result in politics becoming the lifeblood of any organisation.

Vigoda (2002:572) notes that the positive outcomes of politics are career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, getting the job done, feeling achievement, enhanced sense of control, and success. He goes on to observe that the harmful outcomes of organisational politics are loss of strategic power and position credibility, negative feeling toward others, internal feelings of guilt, and hampered job performance of various kinds.

Managers of companies can no longer ignore the realities of office politics. For the leaders of today’s business environment, being skilled in politics can form part of
the key components of being an effective leader. Leaders need to be able to identify the factors leading to organisational politics and establish workable strategies, often at short notice, to help in dealing with organisational politics. Additional factors leaders are challenged with, include, not only resource constraints and uncertainty in the market place, but factors such as the personality of employees, the hierarchical structure of the organisation, as well as job ambiguity. Fairness towards employees by supervisors is another contributing factor to political behaviour which organisations need to consider. All the factors listed above, in some way or another, influence the performance of employees and the satisfaction they hold towards their jobs. When leaders fail to manage politics in an organisation, employee stress levels inevitably increase. This increased stress, coupled with employees becoming dissatisfied with their jobs, and the decreasing level of performance, often results in employees’ intention to leave companies. The inevitable truth of such a scenario is that companies lose their competitive advantage and risk the chance of failure altogether.

Based on the aforementioned, this current study will concentrate on the following:

**What is the impact of leadership on Organisational Politics in the organisation?**

### 1.3 SUB-PROBLEMS

An analysis of the main problem allows for the identification of the following sub-questions:

**Sub Question 1**

What does the literature research reveal about the impact of office politics on the organisation?

**Sub Question 2**

What political tactics and strategies does the literature reveal that will assist managers in effectively dealing with politics in the work environment?
Sub Question 3

How can the results of the research of sub problem 1 and 2 be combined into effective outcomes, which the management of the organisation can effectively use to manage organisational politics?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The overall purpose of the research is to identify and analyse the potential role leadership can have on organisational politics in the workplace. To achieve this, both primary and secondary objectives are considered.

1.4.1 Primary objective

Work place politics is a reality for all organisations. The primary objective of this study was to identify how leadership can be used to influence organisational politics in an effort to help the organisation become more effective.

In order to achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives were pursued:

1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

The secondary objectives of this current study include:

- To assess the outcomes of strategies used by leaders in the organisation to manage organisational politics;
- To conduct a study on the factors influencing office politics;
- To conduct a study on the functional use of office politics;
- To conduct a study of the organisational environment favourable for positive influences of political behaviour; and
• To identify how leaders can gain power through politics and how they can avoid political blunders and build relationships in a political organisational environment.

1.4.3 Research design objective

To achieve the primary and secondary objectives, the following research design objectives were pursued:

• A secondary literature review study was conducted around the subject of office politics and political skills;

• A questionnaire was constructed and handed to respondents of the chosen sample in order to collect primary data on the impact of leadership on office politics;

• The questionnaire was given to employees of the Scanix Group. The companies used in the sample are situated in the Garden Route (Eden District) area of South Africa. A description of the Scanix group is provided in section 1.5.1 (The Sample);

• Interviews were conducted to achieve the desired outcomes where the response rate for questionnaires was not satisfactory;

• The data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet to analyse the results. The data was analysed further using the STATITICA software. Findings from the data were used to make conclusions; and

• The conclusions were used to make recommendations to the Scanix group as to the best ways to manage politics in the business environment.

1.5 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A paradigm is a framework that guides how research should be constructed, based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of
knowledge (Collis and Hussey 2009:11). There are two types of paradigms, namely Positivistic and Interpretivism paradigms.

According to the theories of Collis and Hussey (2009:56), Positivism provides the framework for the way research was conducted in the natural sciences. They assert that positivism rests on the assumption that social reality is objective and singular. This theory is not affected by the act of investigating it, and the research involves a deductive process with a view to providing explanatory theories to understand social phenomena. It can therefore be assumed that social phenomena may be measured, and because of this, Positivism is associated with quantitative methods of analysis. Words such as quantitative, objective, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist are often used to describe this theory (Collis and Hussey, 2009:56).

Collis and Hussey (2009:56) observe that Interpretivism is a paradigm that emerged in response to criticisms of Positivism. It rests on the assumption that social reality is in our minds, and is subjective and multiple. It concludes that social reality is affected by the act of investigating it. The research involves an inductive process with a view to providing an interpretive understanding of social phenomena within a particular context (Collis and Hussey, 2009:57). Interpretive research is any type of research where the findings are not derived from the statistical analysis of quantitative data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, as cited by Collis and Hussey, 2009:57). Words such as qualitative, subjective, humanist or, new mindset are often used to describe this theory.

The present study’s research objective was to investigate the impact of leadership on organisational politics in the workplace. The aim, which was to identify factors of organisational politics and the role leadership plays in the management of organisational politics, dictates that the Interpretivist or qualitative approach be used in this study.

The importance of validity and reliability in a qualitative study, according to Collis and Hussey (2009:64) is concerned with the findings of the research and supports
credibility of the qualitative study. However, they go on to say that under an interpretive paradigm reliability is of little importance. What is of importance to them is whether observations and interpretations made on different occasions by different observers can be explained and understood. They therefore conclude that the emphasis should be placed on establishing protocols and procedures that will authenticate the findings. Collis and Hussey (2009:64) add that validity on the other hand is concerned with the extent to which research findings accurately reflect the phenomena under study. They contend that validity under a Interpretivism paradigm seeks to capture the essence on the phenomena and extract data that provides rich, detailed explanations.

For the purpose of this study, the following strategies were implemented in order to ensure reliability and validity:

- Respondents were asked to complete questionnaires at the same time of day in order to eliminate external factors influencing respondents;
- Confidentiality was guaranteed;
- The purpose and potential positive impact of survey was explained to employees; and
- All possible effort was made to ensure that respondents understood the meaning of questions by making use of colloquial expressions.

1.5.1 The sample

According to Collis and Hussey (2009:62), a sample is a subset of a population. In a Positivist study, the sample is chosen to represent an unbiased subset of the population; however, for an Interpretivist study the goal is to gain rich, detailed insight into the complexity of social phenomena. For this reason research could be conducted with a sample of one (Collis and Hussey, 2009:62). The systematic sampling method for selecting the random sample was used in the study. Even though a smaller sample is needed in a qualitative study, the author aimed to have as many respondents as possible, as the respondents do not always give
feedback. It was therefore desirable to achieve a sample size of between 30 and 40 respondents.

The organisation studied, Scanix Group, came into existence in 1994 with the establishment of Boardware (Pty) Ltd. In 2001 two more companies, Mustrade Nineteen (Pty) Ltd trading as Mustbuild and Vest-Activ (Pty) Ltd trading as Timbercity Mossel Bay, were purchased. In 2005, Mustbuild Roof Trusses was started, to complete the quest for a complete service and supply of the entire building demand. These companies form the cornerstone of the trading operation. Since then the group has branched out in acquiring more Property Companies. Boardware specialises in the wholesale trade of board products and cabinet hardware supplies to retailers and cabinetmakers. Under the flagship of Boardware, a production concern was started in 1995, to provide the cabinetmakers and joiners with ready-to-fit units. Mustbuild specialises in the wholesale and retail trade of supplying building materials and relevant products to other retailers and builders. Timbercity Mossel Bay specialises in the DIY market. The Boardware Group of Companies benefits greatly from being part of a franchise group, with national exposure, as well as access to new deals.

Firstly, the issue of confidentiality was explained and guaranteed to the sample selected in the Scanix Group of Companies. Different categories of staff were selected, namely Senior Management, Management, Supervisors, Sales staff, as well as the clerical and production worker categories.

1.5.2 The measuring instruments

Both secondary as well as primary data was used in an effort to achieve the desired outcomes of the proposal. Secondary data was collected from various sources namely: the online NMMU library to obtain information from the books, journals and databases. Further information was gathered through the reading of previous theses and dissertations related to the research problem. The use of databases such as EBSCOhost was also utilised. Primary data was collected through the means of questionnaires as well as interviews.
According to Collis and Hussey (2009:192), a questionnaire is a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of respondents are asked a list of carefully structured questions chosen after considerable testing, with a view to eliciting reliable responses. The questionnaire was designed, keeping in mind the variables identified in the research question. The questionnaires were distributed via e-mail and through group distribution.

During the interview a semi-structured approach was adopted to help build more information around certain areas of the study, and to help elaborate on any additional information which came to light. The data collected was used in an effort to help identify the issues of office politics. The questions in the above-mentioned instruments were anchored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from, strongly disagree (1), to disagree (2), to neutral (3), to agree (4), and finally to strongly agree (5). The proposed measuring instruments are depicted in Annexure 2.

1.6 TERMINOLOGY

The following definitions briefly describe a number of terms that will be utilised in conceptualising the research:

1.6.1 Empowerment

According to Coetsee (2002:33), empowerment allows people the freedom to decide how to do things. The critical underlying principle to do this is to trust the people to the extent to empower them.

1.6.2 Political skill

DuBrin (2010:210) views political skill as a constructive force. It is an interpersonal style that manifests itself in being socially astute and engaging in behaviour that leads to feelings of confidence, trust and sincerity.
1.6.3 Political savvy or knowhow

Political savvy according to Truty (2006) is the totality of skills needed for successfully navigating the political dynamics of an organisation to accomplish one’s goals.

1.6.4 Politicking

Muhammad (2007) defines politicking as actions which undermine fairness in the organisation. Some examples he lists of these self-serving behaviours include bypassing the chain of command to gain approval, going through improper channels to obtain special equipment, and lobbying high-level managers just prior to promotion decisions.

1.6.5 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Byrne (2005:178) defines organisational citizenship behaviour as individual behaviours that are discretionary in nature and are not explicitly recognised in the formal appraisal or reward system.

1.6.6 Procedural Justice

According to Muhammad (2007), procedural justice (PJ) has been conceptualised as an administrative process which leads to positive outcomes for employees. The construct serves to capture the process by which administrative decisions are reached. Elements of this process include employee involvement, systematic decisional processes and timely implementation of decisional goals/strategies.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study has been divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1

This chapter outlines the scope of the study, the problem statement, the objectives and the methodology.
Chapter 2

This chapter contains a literature overview of office politics, the stigma attached to it, the implications for managers, as well as strategies and tactics to help equip managers for political behaviour.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the research methodology, which includes the research paradigm, sampling and measuring instruments.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the empirical results.

Chapter 5

This chapter reaches a conclusion and makes recommendations for the impact of leadership on organisational politics.

1.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chapter 1 the main problem and sub-problems were addressed. The key concepts and assumptions were identified, together with a discussion on the significance of the topic. This was followed by the research approach that was implemented. In Chapter 2, a literature study on the factors and outcomes of organisational politics as well as the influence of leadership on organisational politics will be presented.
CHAPTER 2: THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In an effort to gain more insight into organisational politics, it must be understood from the outset that people react to their perceptions of politics, not to organisational politics itself. Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989, as cited in Vigoda and Cohen, 2002:311) have done much empirical work on organisational politics, and they suggested that organisational politics is best conceptualised as a subjective state. Kacmar and Carlson (1994, as cited in Vigoda and Cohen, 2002:311), state that the perceptions of organisational politics are represented by the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political in nature, promoting the self-interests of others, and are therefore perceived as unjust and unfair from the individual point of view.

According to Ferris and Kacmar (1992 as cited in Kacmar and Carlson, 1997:628) the political nature individuals hold towards their working environment influences the way they do their jobs. The perceptions of politics affects how employees feel about the company, bosses and co-workers and these perceptions impact on productivity, job satisfaction and the intention of workers to leave the company (turnover intention). Workers will be more inclined to act in a political nature if they perceive fellow workers of being political and getting ahead in the organisation by doing so (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997:628).

Kinicki and Kreitner (2008:336) make the point that leaders are endlessly challenged to achieve a workable balance between employees’ self-interest and organisational interests. When a proper balance exists, the pursuit of self-interest may serve the organisation. They go on to report that political behaviour becomes a negative force when self-interests erode or defeat organisational interests.

DuBrin (2010:210) states that people want power for many different reasons, which contribute to the widespread appearance of political behaviour in organisations. He
goes on to state that there are a number of individual and organisational factors, amongst others, organisation structure and emotional insecurity, that contribute to this political behaviour.

Below is a list of popular beliefs people have about organisational politics. There has always been a stigma attached to the concept of organisational politics and it is for this reason that leaders in their perspective fields need to use their influence to alter the individual's perceptions.

**Table 2.1 Popular beliefs about organisational politics** (DeLuca, 1999:8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manipulation</th>
<th>Petty Personal Squabbles</th>
<th>“I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking Good without Substance</td>
<td>Looking out for #1</td>
<td>Back-Room Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructiveness</td>
<td>Power Plays</td>
<td>The Organisation’s Soap Opera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Human Behaviour</td>
<td>Covert Under-the-Table Deals</td>
<td>Behind-the-Scenes Manoeuvring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstabbing</td>
<td>Brownnosing</td>
<td>One-Upmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever Operators</td>
<td>Deceitfulness</td>
<td>Hidden Agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turf Battles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It becomes important for leaders in organisations to have an understanding of both the positive and negative outcomes of politics in the working environment. Understanding the initial signs of politics in a working environment will help leaders deal with the situation in a constructive manner before it becomes difficult to manage. Leaders who are able to identify political situations and show political skills are great assets for the organisation.
2.2 THE IMPACT OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS ON THE ORGANISATION

Modern organisations are described as political systems that are characterised by diversity, scarcity of resources, group or personal interests, and disagreements that result in conflicts (Ladebo, 2006:256).

Organisational politics is an important ingredient of organisational life, which refers to behaviour in which personal interests are safeguarded rather than organisational interests (Malik, Danish and Ghafoor, 2009:23).

In general, people in organisations typically responded to their perceptions of politics in one of three ways: by withdrawal or planning to quit (intent to turnover), by increased work involvement, or by reacting with similar or more aggressive political behaviours (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992, as cited in Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:41). An individual who is in a political setting may believe that hard work will not be consistently rewarded (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth, 1997, as cited in Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:41).

According to Ullah, Jafri and Dost (2011:43) the impact of organisational politics at an organisational level is exceptionally critical in nature. Political behaviour has both functional and dysfunctional effects on the organisation. They maintain that the involvement of employees in organisational politics affects not only the performance of the organisation, but the effectiveness as well as decisionmaking and any change processes the organisation wishes to implement. It was however found by Ulla et al. (2011) that the involvement of managers was positively related to the performance of organisations.

According to Randall (1999, as cited in Byrne, 2005:178) individuals perceiving negative politics tend to contribute little to the organisation because of their assessment that performing in a political environment is a risky investment. Therefore, the overall effectiveness and performance of the organisation is put at
risk in a political environment without the guidance and influence of competent leaders.

2.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

Vigoda (2002:571) points out that organisational politics has emerged in the last decade as a field of growing value and relevance for understanding managerial processes. He concludes that during this time, many studies have been conducted in the field of organisational politics, as well as on the factors leading to, and the outcomes of politics in the working environment.

DuBrin (2010:211) makes the point that despite the shift of organisational politics into a positive, constructive direction, people need to possess political skills, i.e. an interpersonal style combining social awareness with the ability to communicate well. He goes on to identify several factors which lead to political behaviour in the organisation.

Table 2.2 Factors contributing to organisational politics (DuBrin, 2010:211)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pyramid-Shaped Organisation Structure</td>
<td>The shape of organisations creates a climate for political behaviour. Power is situated at the top in a centralised pyramid structure and only a limited amount of that power filters down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Standard of Performance</td>
<td>People will resort to political behaviour if they believe the organisation lacks objective and fair ways to judge performance for promotion. Without objective ways for managers to differentiate between effective employees, favouritism becomes the norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Uncertainty and Turbulence</td>
<td>In an unpredictable environment characterised by insecurity, political behaviour dominates. This is often evident during corporate downsizing where favouritism rules and people attempt to align themselves with influential people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional Insecurity

Some people resort to political manoeuvres to ingratiate themselves with superiors because they lack confidence in their talents and skills.

Machiavellian Tendencies

Some people engage in political behaviour for the sole purpose of manipulating others for their personal advantage.

Encouraging Admiration from Subordinates

Without even realising it, many managers and employees send out subtle signals in an effort to receive praise. They encourage flattery and servile praise.

Several of the factors mentioned above are also supported in other studies. Muhammad (2007:235) makes mention of three types of factors influencing organisational politics. These factors include the organisation itself (centralisation, formalisation, and hierarchical level), job/work context factors (scarcity of resources, procedural justice (PJ), role ambiguity, trust climate) and personal factors (gender, age, tenure), on perceptions of organisational politics. However, in the conclusion of his study, Muhammad (2007:242) found that only company hierarchical level, scarcity of resources, PJ, role ambiguity, and trust climate were predictors of organisational politics perceptions.

2.3.1 Role / job ambiguity

People need to be committed to and align themselves with the vision of the company they work for. A key organisational characteristic that provides an opportunity for political behaviour as well as influences perceptions of organisational politics is ambiguity in the workplace (Ferris et al., 1991, as cited in Poon, 2003:141).

When goals, roles and performance criteria are nebulous, employees have more latitude to safeguard their interests using the political route such as engaging in defensive political behaviours in the form of shifting the blame, playing dumb and so forth, (Ashforth and Lee, 1990, as cited in Poon, 2003:141). In addition, they may well perceive decisions as determined by politics rather than by objectivity.
Job ambiguity refers to the degree of equivocality surrounding the job environment. Muhammad (2007:237) observes that in highly ambiguous situations, employees are unclear about their work objectives, their roles in the workplace and what they have to do to be rewarded. He goes on to insist that employees may then feel the need to amass power, to rely on personal relationships, or to use other political means for protecting and advancing their interests. When the roles of employees are unclear, there are fewer limits to the scope and functions of employees’ political behaviour. This, according to Ashforth and Lee (1990, as cited in Muhammad, 2007:237), gives employees more opportunity for engaging in self-serving behaviours in the form of bypassing the chain of command to gain approval and lobbying high-level managers just prior to promotion decisions.

Overall Muhammad (2007) concludes that the key for management and leaders in the company is to make organisational goals, roles and performance criteria clear, resulting in everyone knowing what to expect from one another. Therefore, there is less scope or need to engage in politicking and, subsequently, less likelihood of employees viewing the workplace exclusively as a political arena. Empirically, studies using indirect measures of ambiguity such as formalisation have found a positive link between these measures and perceptions of organisational politics (Parker, Dipboye and Jackson, 1995; Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar and Howard, 1996, as cited in Poon, 2003:141).

### 2.3.2 Scarcity of resources

Organisational situations that are characterised by scarcity of resources tend to attract more political activity than situations that are not so (Bhatnagar, 1992, as cited in Poon, 2003:142).

Muhammad (2007:236) states that when organisational resources that employees value (e.g. monetary incentives, promotions, or advancement opportunities) are limited, they would need to compete for such resources. One way to influence the outcomes of organisational resource allocations is to rely on political tactics in a
self-serving fashion. In general, competition for scarce resources is likely to result in both real and perceived politicking.

For example, researchers have found opportunity for promotion (Ferris et al., 1996; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992, as cited by Poon, 2003:142) and career development opportunities (Parker, Dipboye and Jackson, 1995, as cited by Poon, 2003:142) to be negatively related to perceptions of politics.

Zivnuska, Kacmar, Witt, Carlson and Bratton (2004:627) make the point that as employees confront scarce resources, increasingly competitive work environments, and an unstable economy, they must find ways to increase their perceived value to the organisation. To do this, an individual may engage in political behaviours with the aim of positioning himself or herself as a powerful and crucial person (Zivnuska et al., 2004).

2.3.3 Personality and political behaviour

Personality can be used to predict behaviours and job performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991, as cited in Witt, Kacmar, Carlson, and Zivnuska, 2002:914). As a set of relatively stable traits, personality also may influence the interpersonal factors that colour individual interpretations of the environment. Witt et al. (2002:914) go on to point out that personality may influence the process by which employees interpret their organisational environment, thereby shaping the behaviours that are selected in light of those environmental interpretations. Furthermore, an individual’s personality traits are informally assessed and interpreted by other people. This constant assessment leads others to form general beliefs about people with certain personalities. These belief systems, in turn, may be used to supplement imperfect information about an employee’s true performance (Witt et al., 2002).

No two people are created equally, and for this reason, leaders are faced with employees who use power and politics differently, based on their personalities. Therefore, it becomes important for leaders to know and identify people with various personality traits. Schultz et al. (2005:155) identifies several traits.
2.3.3.1  *Electronic recruitment*

Power needs are classified as personal and institutional power. When someone practises personal power they try to dominate others, but when institutional power is practised, it may lead to a supporting climate where there is understanding and loyalty in the organisation.

2.3.3.2  *Machiavellianism*

This is a personality characterised by deceit and opportunism in interpersonal relations, a cynical view of the nature of others and a lack of concern for conventional morality. These types of people are good influencers, especially in face-to-face situations and they tend to initiate and control social interactions.

2.3.3.3  *Locus of control*

This personality is based on how much people feel they can control events that affect them. People with an internal locus believe they are responsible for what happens to them. People with an external locus believe they do not have the power to control situations, which they leave in others’ hands. Therefore, a high internal locus of control indicates a person who will more likely display political behaviour.

2.3.3.4  *Risk-seeking propensity*

People are either risk-seekers or risk-avoiders. Risk-avoiders chose to avoid negative outcomes and therefore avoid political behaviour.
2.3.3.5 Maccoby’s four political types

**Table 2.3 Maccoby's Four Political Types** (Schultz et al., 2005:156)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The craftsman</th>
<th>Amongst other things, this individual is sincere, quiet, modest and practical. They are providers and are the least politically active.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The jungle fighter</td>
<td>This individual desires success at any cost. They will either take others territory or establish safe bases to work from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company man/woman</td>
<td>This individual is conservative, protecting self and company. They are concerned with security and miss opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gamesman</td>
<td>This individual views business as a game consisting of calculated risks, challenges and competition. They are charismatic and motivate their fellow employees with enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.4 Uncertainty

Political manoeuvring is triggered primarily by uncertainty. Kreitner and Kinicki (2001:534) and Nelson and Quick (1997:324, as cited by Schultz et al., 2005:155), mention some common sources of uncertainty within organisations, most of which can be related to job ambiguity and scarcity of resources:

- Unclear goals and objectives
- Vague performance measures
- Ill-defined and autocratic decision-making processes
- Strong individual or group competition
- Any type of change
- Ambiguous lines of authority
- Scarce resources

2.3.5 Fairness / justice

Leaders need to be aware of certain behaviours which could ultimately lead to perceptions of unfairness in the work environment. Some of the examples mentioned by Parker, Dipboye and Jackson (1995, as cited in Muhammad, 2007: 234) of self-serving behaviours include bypassing the chain of command to gain approval, going through improper channels to obtain special equipment, and lobbying high-level managers just prior to promotion decisions. He goes on to add that these types of actions undermine fairness in the organisation because not everyone engages in politicking to meet their own objectives. For those who do adhere to proper procedures, there is often jealousy and resentment largely due to their perceptions of unfair distributions of the organisation’s resources including rewards and recognition (Muhammad, 2007).

Byrne (2005) observes that individuals’ negative reaction to perceptions of politics should lessen as a result of the buffering effects of perceptions of fair procedures and treatment. Because politics is considered necessary for normal business functioning (Pfeffer, 1981; Pinto, 1997; Williams and Dutton, 2000, as cited in Byrne, 2005:176), the existence of fairness will not eliminate perceptions of politics; politics will continue. For example, politics are inherent within performance appraisals, personnel selection, and compensation decisions to name a few (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Thus, fairness should mitigate the negative effects of politics, but not eliminate it.

Distributive justice according to (Byrne 2005:178) refers to the fairness of outcomes or final decisions in comparison to what others receive. Research has shown that perceptions of distributive justice predict satisfaction with pay (Folger and Konovsky, 1989, as cited in Byrne 2005:178).

Procedural justice refers to the individual’s perception about the fairness of formal procedures governing decisions (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman and Taylor, 2000, as cited in Othman, 2005:44). It involves the fair, ethical and consistent use of procedures. He concludes that the elements of procedural justice include employee involvement, systematic decisional processes and timely implementation of decisional goals/strategies.

Thibaut and Walker (1975, as cited in Muhammad, 2007:236) advanced two criteria for procedural justice, namely: The ability to voice one’s views and arguments during a procedure (process control) and the ability to influence the actual outcome itself (decision control).

The final type of justice is interactional justice. Interactional justice refers to a person’s evaluation of the truthfulness, impartiality and respect an authority has shown to him or her (Aquino, Griffeth, Allen and Hom, 1997, as cited in Othman, 2005:45). It relates to the interpersonal treatment one gets from a superior. Procedural and interactional justices are related since individuals experience both through the conduct of their superior as the agent of the organisation. Othman, 2005:45) adds that an individual who had experienced injustice is more likely to develop negative views of the organisation and his or her superior. This can in turn, shape their perception of organisational politics. Byrne (2005:178) makes the point that under certain circumstances or in the right organisational context (e.g. very politically charged environment), high levels of interactional justice are perceived as manipulative attempts that fall under the current notion of perceived organisational politics. Just as individuals become sceptical when “something is too good to be true,” perhaps they become sceptical when someone is treating them with much more fairness than the situation calls for. It could be that high
levels of interactional justice can be perceived as the positive side of organisational politics (Byrne, 2005).

Othman (2005) surmises that the implication for managers is that the unjust treatment of employees can undermine a trusting climate. Justice is an important element in developing trust. Othman (2005:51) states that justice, especially procedural justice and interactional justice, is something that is directly shaped by a manager’s behaviour. He goes on to say that managers must use justice to help foster trust and reduce the perception of organisational politics. On the other hand, injustice and the subsequent lack of trust are more likely to erode cohesiveness. This in turn will more likely lead to political behaviour and adverse consequences such as a high turnover rate among employees (Othman, 2005). Byrne (2005:196) notes that by implementing fair procedures and fair treatment, managers can reduce the effects of politics in their organisations in an effort to reduce turnover intentions of employees. He claims that fairness can help managers buffer their employees from the politics that are necessary for organisational functioning, but are often perceived negatively and therefore result in negative consequences for employees and organisations (Byrne, 2005).

2.3.6 Additional factors leading to organisational politics

In his book entitled 100+ Tactics for office politics, Hawley (2008) points out that office politics has changed and those old management handbooks are outdated. He goes on to point out that several factors play a part influencing the way professionals need to deal with corporate politics in the future business environment.
Table 2.4 Factors Leading to Corporate Politics (Hawley, 2008)

| Influence of Generation X, Generation Y, and the Digital Generation | Do not try the old Managing by Objective with these employees or it will backfire. |
| E-commerce, e-mail, and other Internet influences | Technology is separating the old culture employees from the more liberated, new, Internet-savvy employee. Younger employees are quite literally more plugged in. Their techniques for gathering information are largely better and faster. Learn to work with these folks effectively or become a dinosaur. |
| Fast rate of change | Mergers, going public, fierce competition and a million other forces are making today’s corporations change everything constantly. Change with it or kiss your career good-bye. Companies used to look for strategies that were long-term investments. Now, most look for what is the best move for the present quarter. You must change your strategies, too. |
| Globalisation | Even small companies can do business all over the world thanks to the internet. Learn to deal effectively with all kinds of cultures, values, and people. |

2.4 OUTCOMES OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

Work carried out on the subject of organisational politics (Vigoda, 2002:573), identified a large amount of work related outcomes, as well as stress related outcomes of organisational politics. He identified several studies in the field on politics in the work environment which includes outcomes ranging from Job Involvement (Ferris and Kacmar, 2002; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandley and Toth,
1997, as cited in Vigoda, 2002:573); to work related trust studies (Kumar and Ghadially, 1989, as cited in Vigoda, 2002:573); to job performance (Vigoda, 2000, as cited in Vigoda, 2002:573). Vigoda (2002:573) also makes mention of and introduces stress-related outcomes such as tension (Cropanzano et al., 1997); anxiety (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson and Anthony, 1999); and job stress (Valle and Perrewe, 2000, as cited in Vigoda, 2002:573).

Based on the large amount of outcomes on offer to the researcher, it was decided to focus only on those outcomes which displayed a strong correlation with organisational politics. Outcomes which indicated conflicting, weak or no relationships to the perceptions of organisational politics were ultimately ignored.

2.4.1 Job satisfaction

Kacmar and Baron (1999, as cited in Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:42) noted that job satisfaction has been the most frequently examined outcome of politics. They cited 11 studies (Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:42) that reported a relationship between politics and job satisfaction. Thus, to understand what causes people to be satisfied with their jobs, the nature of the work itself is one of the first places for practitioners to focus on.

Job satisfaction is a positive emotional state that arises when people appraise their job or job experiences (Locke, 1976:1300, as cited in Poon, 2003:143). Ferris et al. (1989, as cited in Poon, 2003:141) suggested that an increase in perceived organisational politics is associated with a decrease in job satisfaction. One possible explanation for this association is that decisions, such as resource allocation decisions, that are governed by political considerations are usually viewed as unfair. If employees perceive decisions to be unfair, they will be unhappy. Furthermore, the stress that follows from working in a politically charged environment will add to employees’ dissatisfaction with their job (Poon, 2003).

Curtis (2003:296) makes the point that organisations will experience decreased job satisfaction if competent people feel that their performance at work is based on the
ability to be political rather than produce good work. He further remarks that this will result in employees feeling less satisfied and committed in their work.

### 2.4.2 Job performance

In order to use job performance as an outcome of organisational politics, the nature of job performance must first be understood. According to Samad (2011:120) there are many different definitions of this variable with regards to its usage in empirical research and its acclaimed relevance in the field of industrial or organisational psychology. For the purpose of this paper the definition of job performance will be based on studies done by Samad (2011) who proposed viewing job performance from two dimensions, namely task performance and counterproductive work behaviour.

Task performance as defined by Borman and Motowidlo (1997, as cited in Samad, 2011:120) has as many as five dimensions:

- Job-specific task proficiency;
- Non job-specific task proficiency;
- Written and oral communication proficiency
- Supervision – in the case of a supervisory or leadership position; and
- Management.

In contrast to task performance, voluntary behaviours that are deviant and damaging to the organisational goals are also deemed a part of performance, but as a negative form of it (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002; O'Brien and Allen, 2008, as cited in Samad, 2011:120). Such dysfunctional behaviours are generally labelled as counterproductive work behaviours. Counterproductive work behaviour refers to actions that adversely affect the well-being of the organisation (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002, as cited in Samad, 2011:120).
Curtis (2003:296) pointed out that performance in organisations would be reduced when people experience negative consequences of political behaviour over a sustained period of time, which could also lead to burnout. In addition, the organisation itself may experience reduced performance from political behaviour. Politicking takes up a considerable amount of time. It restricts information sharing between colleagues and creates communication barriers. Political behaviour has the potential to disrupt organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Curtis, 2003).

Samad (2011) states that job performance has been affected by a multitude of factors, amongst these factors is organisational politics, which empirical studies found negatively affects job performance (Kacmar et al., 1999; Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwart and Ammeter, 2002; Rosen, Chang and Levy, 2006). This simply means that in organisations where there is a higher level of organisational politics, there will be a lower level of job performance, and therefore organisations characterised by lower levels of organisational politics will consist of employees enjoying higher levels of job performance.

Samad (2011:124) found that all components of organisational politics namely, general political behaviour; going along to get ahead and pay and promotion policies overall were negatively and significantly related to job performance. Previous studies (Aryee et al., 2004; Byrne, 2005; Chen and Fang, 2007; Zivnuska et al., 2004) provide further evidence that organisational politics has direct influences on the job performance.

Samad (2011:124) makes the point that leaders must recognise that organisational politics will subsequently harm the organisation and measures must be taken to minimise perceptions of organisational politics. He claims that leaders need to provide clear and accurate performance assessments, empower subordinates where possible, promote workplace openness and foster appropriate freedom of ideas. At macro level, effective communication must be adopted to minimise misinterpretations and adverse perceptions among employees.
Emotional intelligence is another important factor for organisations to consider when wanting to improve job performance. Samad (2011) found that there was a positive and significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job performance. His findings suggest that Emotional Intelligence is one of the important factors that can be linked to job performance and the construct would have a direct impact on job performance. Hence, Emotional Intelligence could be considered as one of the potential variables to be integrated in organisational politics studies and management practices (Samad, 2011).

2.4.3 Turnover intention

Ram and Prabhakar (2010:44) comment that turnover intention refers to employees’ thoughts of quitting their present job. They go on to say that people tend to view organisational politics as undesirable and are therefore unlikely to want to remain permanently in a workplace they perceive to be politically charged.

Ram and Prabhakar (2010:44) observe that employees may choose to withdraw physically or psychologically. One physical form of withdrawal is to quit the job. Not all employees, however, have the immediate luxury of such an option. The likely short-term option for those with less job mobility is psychological withdrawal such as thinking about quitting. Heightened levels of organisational political demands have been suggested as being predictive of employees’ intention to quit their job (Ferris et al., 1989, as cited in Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:44). There is also past evidence that perceived organisational politics is significantly related to turnover intention as indicated by Cropanzano et al., 1997; Kacmar et al., 1999; Randall et al., 1999, as cited by Ram and Prabhakar, (2010).

Curtis (2003:296) makes the point that in situations where politicians successfully gain access to scarce resources such as pay rises, promotions, budgets and project responsibilities over more competent people, the good people will leave the organisation. They will seek an environment in which their hard work and talents are recognised, so that they can work with integrity and openness (Curtis, 2003).
2.4.4 Job stress

According to the job demands resource model of work stress (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, 2001, as cited in Chang, Rosen and Levy, 2009:782) employees who perceive that job demands exceed their coping resources feel overwhelmed. This emotional strain requires additional coping efforts which are taken away from resources that could otherwise be devoted to job performance.

Psychological stress arises when people face situations that they appraise as taxing or exceeding their resources and endangering their wellbeing (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, as cited in Poon, 2002:143). A politically charged workplace is indicative of such a situation. When a workplace is politically charged, employees cannot be certain that their efforts will be rewarded or confident that they will not be put at risk by the actions of others (e.g. the risk of losing valued rewards) (Poon, 2002). This unpredictable, risky, and threatening workplace context increases the level of job stress experienced (Cropanzano et al., 1997, as cited in Poon, 2002:143) for those who are unable to avoid such contexts as well as for those who choose to join in the politicking. Poon (2002) therefore concludes that it is often the case, that employees report higher levels of work stress when they perceive their work environment to be political in nature. Byrne (2005:178) makes the point that politics is considered a source of stress in the work environment and thus carries with it the harmful consequences of stress.

Ivancevich and Matteson (2002:273) make the point that high levels of political behaviour in organisations can be a source of stress for many employees. They surmise that office politics are consistently cited as a primary stressor in organisations. Political activity, game playing, and power struggles can create friction, heighten dysfunctional competition between individuals and groups, and increase stress.
2.5 THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

Morgan (1998) makes the point that to achieve greater effectiveness, managers must become skilled at reading organisations from different perspectives, and developing action strategies that are consistent with the insights they glean. He adds that managers who are skilled in the art of reading organisational life have a capacity to remain open and flexible, suspending immediate judgements until a more comprehensive view of the situation emerges.

Morgan (1998) remarks that structure, leadership, and work can create “enriched,” motivating jobs that would encourage people to exercise their capacity for self-control and creativity. Managers must pay attention to making jobs meaningful by giving autonomy, responsibility and recognition. He concludes that job enrichment combined with a more participative, democratic, and employee-centred style of leadership need to take preference over more authoritarian and dehumanising approaches generated by scientific and classical management theory.

2.5.1 Leadership in organisational politics

Curtis (2003:293) states that some individuals and groups will naturally take advantage of circumstances at work, which will benefit them personally. Many organisations do not have a highly political culture due to the nature of the work, the management style and availability of resources. Some individuals tend to be more political than others due to personality characteristics such as Machiavellianism and locus of control (the belief that you can control your environment), and the expectation of success (Curtis, 2003).

According to DuBrin (2010:2) leadership can be defined as the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organisational goals.

Pfeffer (1981, as cited in Ram and Prabhakar, 2010:41) suggested that the primary function of leadership is the management of the perceptions and meanings that
influence organisational outcomes. Among these perceptions, perception of politics is an influential type of organisational phenomenon. According to Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, Chen (2005:421) leadership is considered a factor that has a major influence on the performance of organisations, managers and employees.

A point worth mentioning, which is also echoed by DuBrin (2010:3), is that leadership is not only found among people in high positions, but at all levels in organisations, even if the person is not assigned to a leadership position.

In the current competitive business environment, organisational leaders are constantly faced with decisions which will have ethical or unethical outcomes. DeLuca (2002) states that there is a fine line between political savvy, and the balance between leadership and power. He goes on to make the point that to become an active participator in work politics, ethical players must use political savvy as a key dimension of leadership.

![Figure 2.1: Leadership behaviour model of organisational politics, conceptualising political behaviour as the "shadow side" of leadership action (Sheard, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2011)](image-url)
The above political behaviour model categorises the behaviour of managers, with one of the four quadrants characterising the behaviour of any individual manager as he/she switches from one situation to another. To achieve desired outcomes, managers must expect to progress though the quadrants of the political behaviour model, starting at the top left, moving to the bottom left, then bottom right and finally top right. This will lead to the adoption of politically intrinsic behaviour and facilitate effective leadership action.

Corkindale (2007), in an article written for the Harvard Business Review entitled *Reinventing Office Politics*, summed up the role of leaders and organisational politics aptly. She starts the article off by saying how she is constantly surprised by the number of executives who say, "I don’t do politics." Regardless of nationality or organisation, they claim that politics plays no part in their work and they flaunt this refusal as a badge of pride. She makes the assumption that politics are a fact of life and managers who believe they can simply ignore or circumvent politics are naïve. The present working environment is intricate in nature, from charities to the local bridge club, they are all political organisations. It becomes important for leaders to understand all the forces that shape these environments; from the diverse personalities they meet, to the changing environment and competing agendas. Corkindale (2007) uses a quote by Winston Churchill to sum it up. He said: *"When you mix people and power, you get politics."*

Leaders need to accept that they are working in a fast-moving environment with competing agendas for attention and resources. Unless they engage with the right people and learn how to influence them, they risk jeopardising their team and career. Refusal to engage in politics is both naïve and irresponsible (Corkindale, 2007).

In the article, *Reinventing Office Politics*, Corkindale (2007) contends that people’s understanding of politics is muddled. What they recoiled from was negative politics - the sort of behaviour that is self-serving, destroys trust, and reduces productivity. They are not aware of positive politics, the sort of behaviour that can be beneficial for the individual and others. Managers with these types of political skills
distinguish themselves as effective strategists, skilful influencers and powerful leaders.

This inability to distinguish between constructive and destructive politics results in many "good" managers being left behind in the race to the top of the organisation. They leave the way clear for "negatively political" peers to reach the top and in doing so lose their ability to influence the organisational culture. What separates the winners from the losers in corporate life is an understanding of politics (Corkindale, 2007).

Work conducted in the field of organisational politics and leadership by Ram and Prabhakar (2010) links leadership, as well as leadership styles, to various antecedents and outcomes of organisational politics. The results provide relationships between Perceptions of Organisational Politics and various work-related outcomes, including, Job Involvement, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intentions and Job Stress. Most studies in the field of leadership, leadership styles and organisational politics (Ram and Prabhakar, 2010; Barbuto, 2000; Vigoda, 2007; Wang et al., 2005) identify different types of leaders, including transformational, charismatic and transactional leaders. Further studies (Chiva and Alegre, 2008; Samad, 2011) make mention of emotional intelligence and organisational politics, and how leaders of the future need to have emotional intelligence to deal with the perceptions of politics in the workplace.

It is therefore important for leaders in organisations to possess a range of leadership styles, including self-leadership, in an effort to better manage the negative perceptions resulting from politics and harness the positive politics in the organisation.

One of the best ways to understand leadership styles is to make use of the full range leadership model. The full range model of leadership was developed by Bass and Avolio (Bass, 1985; Avolio and Bass, 1991; Bass and Avolio, 1993). According to this theory, there are two basic levels of influence evident in the interaction between the leader and the led. One influence comes from the
understanding that the leader creates a cost-benefit interaction in his constituency. The second influence of the leader is an emotional excitement called transformational or charismatic leadership. It must however be remembered that the best leaders display both approaches of leadership to remain effective.

2.5.2 Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership focuses on clarifying employees’ role and task requirements and providing followers with positive and negative rewards depending on performance. It encompasses the fundamental managerial activities of setting goals, monitoring progress towards goal achievement, and rewarding and punishing people for their level of goal accomplishment (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002, as cited by Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008:359). According to the full range leadership model, Transactional behaviours include laissez-faire (hands-off leadership), management-by-exception (putting out the fires) and contingent rewards (let us make a deal).

2.5.3 Transformational leadership

According to Kinicki and Kreitner (2008:359) transformational leadership engenders trust, seeking to develop leadership in others. It involves self-sacrifice and there is a moral agenda towards the needs of the group. They go on to say that transformational leaders can produce significant organisational change and results because this form of leadership fosters higher levels of intrinsic motivation, trust, commitment and loyalty from followers than does transactional leadership. According to the full range leadership model, Transformational behaviours include individualised consideration (compassionate leadership), intellectual stimulation (thinking outside of “the box”), inspirational motivation (exciting the masses/sharing the vision), and idealised influence (walking the walk). Research conducted in Nebraska (Barbuto, 2000) shows that leaders able to practice these four behaviours tend to gain extra effort from employees, experience higher employee satisfaction and higher productivity and greater organisational effectiveness.
### Table 2.5 Full Range Leadership Model (Adapted from Barbuto, 2000)

#### Transactional Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Laissez-Faire</strong> (Hands-off leadership)</th>
<th><strong>Management-By-Exception</strong> (Putting out the fires)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Absence of leadership.</td>
<td>• Takes corrective actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoids taking a stand on issues.</td>
<td>• Sets standards, but waits for problems to arise before doing anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doesn’t emphasise results.</td>
<td>• Stresses what people are doing wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refrains from intervening when issues arise.</td>
<td>• Enforces rules, dislikes challenges to the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unaware of employee performance.</td>
<td>• Only hear from the leader when something is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “That leader doesn’t even care if we do or if we don’t”.</td>
<td>• “Uh oh, here he/she comes again!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Contingent Rewards</strong> (Let’s make a deal!)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Constructive transactions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Makes clear expectations of outcomes and rewards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exchanges reward and recognition for accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Actively monitors employee’s progress and provides supportive feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “If you do as we agreed, you’ll get the reward”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformational Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualised Consideration</th>
<th>Intellectual Stimulation (Thinking outside of the box)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Compassionate leader)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empathising with individual needs.</td>
<td>• Encouraging the imagination of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making interpersonal connections with employees.</td>
<td>• Challenging the old ways of doing things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Genuinely caring and showing this compassion in actions.</td>
<td>• Looking for better ways to do things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging continuous development and growth of employees.</td>
<td>• Encouraging followers not to think like him/her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sending the message, “I care about you and am looking out for your best interest”.</td>
<td>• Willing to take risks for potential gains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sending the message, “If we change our assumptions, then…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspirational Motivation</th>
<th>Idealised Influence (Actions speak louder than words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Exciting the masses/Sharing the vision)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inspiring others to perform.</td>
<td>• Demonstrating an inclusive vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clarifying where the organisation will be in the future.</td>
<td>• Walking the walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating a strong sense of purpose among employees.</td>
<td>• Exhibiting great commitment and persistence in pursuing objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aligning individual and organisational needs.</td>
<td>• Expressing confidence in the vision of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helping followers achieve more than even they thought was possible.</td>
<td>• Developing trust and confidence among employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sending the message, “If we focus on what this organisation stands for…we can achieve whatever we desire!”</td>
<td>• Symbolising the goals and mission of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sending the message, “I believe that this is truly the right thing to do”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Laissez-Faire (LF) is the most inactive and generally least effective of the leadership behaviours. Research shows that leaders using this style of leadership are rarely viewed as effective on the job.

Management-by-exception (MBE) is more effective than Laissez-faire, but is generally ineffective leadership. Management-by-exception behaviour is often related to high employee turnover and absenteeism, poor satisfaction and poor perception of organisational effectiveness.

Contingent rewards (CR) can be an effective style of leadership. However, leaders will not get more than they bargain for when practicing this style of leadership.

It is only with the remaining four behaviours that leaders are able to motivate followers to perform above expectations and transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organisation.
The four — individualised consideration (IC), intellectual stimulation (IS), inspirational motivation (IM), and idealised influence (II) — have all resulted in extra effort from workers, higher productivity, higher morale and satisfaction, higher organisational effectiveness, lower employee turnover, lower absenteeism and greater organisational adaptability to changes in the environment.

Based on these findings, leaders are generally most effective when they regularly use each of the four transformational behaviours (individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealised influence) to build on contingent rewards.

2.5.4 Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence has been around for more than a century when several articles were published on the importance of emotional expression in survival (Noriah, Ramlee, Zuria and Rahayah, 2006; Cherniss, 2004, as cited by Samad, 2011:121). Emotional Intelligence owes its current state of popularity, as many researchers believe, to the book ‘Emotional Intelligence’ by Goleman which was published in 1995 and sparked exponential-like growth of emotional intelligence research.

Emotional Intelligence is an ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate between them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990, as cited by Chiva and Alegre, 2008:680).

Poon (2003) advocated that emotional intelligence has the potential to buffer the effects of organisational politics on work related outcomes such as job performance.

Poon (2003:151) makes the point that people with a high level of emotional intelligence may be less likely than people with a low level of emotional intelligence to perceive a politically charged environment as stressful, and even if they did, they have the emotional maturity to cope and deal with it.
Samad (2011:124) suggests that emotional intelligence is one of the important factors that can be linked to job performance and therefore emotional intelligence would have a direct impact on job performance. Hence, according to Samad (2011) emotional intelligence could be considered as one of the potential variables to be integrated into future organisational political studies or models and to be applied in management practices in dealing with organisational politics.

According to Diggins (2004, as cited in Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:208) the best managers need to possess emotional intelligence to make decisions that are based on a combination of self-management and relationship skills and an awareness of how their behaviour affects others in the organisation. He maintains that emotional intelligence plays a greater role than “traditional” intelligence in determining the success of leaders and organisations and concludes that emotional intelligence helps people to:

- Be more aware of their interpersonal style;
- Recognise and manage the impact of emotions on their thoughts and behaviour;
- Develop their ability to judge social dynamics in the workplace; and
- Understand how well they manage relationships and how to improve.

Mayer, Goleman, Barrett and Gutstein (2004, as cited by Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:209) stated that superiors need to manage the mood of their organisations and that a mysterious blend of psychological abilities known as emotional intelligence is what leaders need to accomplish that goal.

Suliman (2003, as cited by Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:209) argued that the sophisticated methods used these days by most organisations in order to develop structures, departments and to arrange jobs have increased the growing of counterproductive organisational conflict.
Suliman and Al-Shaikh (2007:210) claim that conflict is a fact of life, in organisations just as everywhere else, as people compete for jobs, resources, power, acknowledgement and security. Dealing with conflict is difficult because it arouses such primitive emotions. People feel threatened (rightly or wrongly) and this creates a version of the age-old stress response – fight or flight (Bagshaw, 1998:206, as cited by Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:210).

Abraham (1999, as cited by Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:210) hypothesised that Emotional Intelligence would have a positive effect on the organisational outcomes of work-group cohesion, congruence between self- and supervisor appraisals of performance, employee performance, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship. Abraham found that the participants who reported higher levels of EI tended to show higher levels of job performance.

Likewise, Langhorn (2004, as cited by Suliman and Al-Shaikh, 2007:210) argued that emotional intelligence can improve management performance. He reported that emotional intelligence was able to predict the performance of general managers.

According to Coetsee (2002:69) competencies may be defined as the underlying individual traits that lead to superior performance. Manager-leadership competencies include knowledge, intelligence, abilities, skills, values and personality traits such as drive, internal commitment, self-confidence and integrity. It speaks for itself that manager-leaders also need to know the business and business environment in which they operate very well. This knowledge, according to Coetsee (2002) gives them an intuitive understanding of which decisions to make, to recognise opportunities and which ideas are sensible for the organisation’s survival and success. What has become clear over the past few years is that effective leaders have a high level of emotional intelligence.

Coetsee (2002) goes on to write that emotional intelligence implies a strong self-monitoring personality. Manager-leader must be very sensitive to situational and emotional cues from other people as well as his/her own. Coetsee (2002) remarks
that leaders need to readily adapt their own behaviour appropriately to these cues. It thus requires the ability to empathise with others, and the social skills necessary to build a rapport with other members of the organisation.

Coetsee (2002:70) goes on to say that according to Daniel Goleman, the best known scholar of emotional intelligence, the hallmarks of a high emotional intelligence include five characteristics:

- **Self-awareness**: Managers or leaders who have a high degree of self-awareness and self-insight, recognise how their feelings affect themselves, other people and their job performance. They are aware of their own limitations and strengths, are able to openly admit and discuss them and are open to criticism;

- **Self-regulation**: A self-regulated person senses bad moods, negativity and emotional impulses, similarly to other people. A self-regulated person will find ways to manage the impulses and even to channel them in constructive ways. A self-regulated person has a propensity to delay judgement, to think before acting, to be comfortable with uncertainty and open to change;

- **Motivation to achieve**: These managers or leaders are optimistic, have a strong achievement drive, a passion for work for reasons that go beyond money or status, are restless with the status quo, look for creative challenges and pursue goals with energy and persistence;

- **Empathy**: To be an emotionally intelligent manager or leader requires the ability to understand the emotional make up of other people, to treat others according to their emotional reactions and to be tuned into the subtleties of body language. These characteristics find expression in things such as expertise in building and retaining talent, cross-cultural sensitivity and service to clients and customers; and

- **Social skills**: Manager-leaders who have social skills are highly regarded in an organisation. They are friendly, approachable people by nature, have the
ability to mobilise people in the desired direction, are able to find common ground and to build relationships. They are good at managing teams and are expert persuaders. They know when to make an emotional plea, or when to appeal to reason.

DuBrin (2010:44) points out that political skill can be considered related to emotional intelligence. Many different aspects of emotions, motives, and personality that help determine interpersonal effectiveness and leadership skill have been placed under the comprehensive label of emotional intelligence. DuBrin (2010:44) adds that emotional intelligence refers to the ability to do such things as understand one’s feelings, have empathy for others, and regulate one’s emotions to enhance one’s quality of life. This type of intelligence generally has to do with the ability to connect with people and understand their emotions.

DuBrin (2010:44) makes further reference to work done on the subject by Daniel Goleman. He states that based on research in dozens of companies, Daniel Goleman discovered that the most effective leaders are alike in one essential way: they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Cognitive intelligence and technical skills are considered threshold capabilities for success in executive positions. Yet, according to Goleman, without a high degree of emotional intelligence, a person can have excellent training, superior analytical skills, and loads of innovative suggestions, but he or she still will not make a great leader. His analysis also revealed that emotional intelligence played an increasingly important role in high-level management positions, where differences in technical skills are of negligible importance. Furthermore, he observed that when star performers were compared to average performers in senior leadership positions, differences in emotional intelligence were more pronounced than differences in cognitive abilities.

If leaders do not have emotional intelligence, they may not achieve their full potential despite their high cognitive intelligence (DuBrin, 2010:45). Research on emotional intelligence and leadership has also focussed on the importance of the leader’s mood in influencing performance. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee believe that the leader’s mood and his or her associated behaviours
greatly influence bottom-line performance. One reason is that moods are contagious. A cranky and ruthless leader creates a toxic organisation of underachievers. In contrast, an upbeat and inspirational leader breeds followers who can surmount most challenges. Thus, mood finally affects profit and loss. The implication for leaders is that they have to develop emotional intelligence regarding their moods. It is also helpful to develop a sense of humour, because light heartedness is the most contagious of moods (DuBrin, 2010:45).

2.5.5 Communication

Another very important characteristic leaders in organisations need to possess is effective communication skills.

Cleary (2001) defines communication as a process of creating meaning between two or more people through the expression and interpretation of messages. Expression is indicated as a public demonstration of the idea or feeling initially within the mind of the communicator. Interpretation is indicated as the meaning the receiver gives to this message. Cleary (2001) adds that communication is therefore an endeavour to reach the minds of others. Leaders must be part of the informal communication loop, as well as channels that are more formal. People who thrive at office politics simply make a point of staying highly informed about work matters and staying in touch with co-workers up and down the ladder.

2.5.6 Trust as a Characteristic of Leadership

Muhammad (2007) remarks that one of the main tasks of leaders in the organisation is to create a sense of trust amongst workers. In situations characterised by behavioural uncertainties, trust can be defined as an employee’s expectation of positive and predictable outcomes that derive from their social interactions with other organisational members (Bhattacharya, Devinney and Pillutla, 1998, as cited in Muhammad, 2007:237).

When there is a high level of trust in the workplace, organisational members have positive expectations regarding motives, intentions, or prospective actions of other
members on whom they depend (Kramer, 1999, as cited in Muhammad, 2007:237). In situations, where there is a high level of trust in the workplace, employees find it unnecessary to use political tactics to defend their interests, and are less likely to perceive politics as a threat (Parker et al., 1995, as cited in Muhammad, 2007:237).

2.5.7 The Political Style Grid

The political style grid combines the three values (negative, neutral, positive) and action orientations (initiates, predicts, responds). The categories managers may fall in include: Cynic, Fatalist, Spectator, Protector, Speculator, Advisor, Machiavellian, Responsible and Leader.

DeLuca (1999:13) notes that there are characteristics associated with each category in the political style grid. For instance, the Cynic is associated with gossip, wants no part of organisational politics and uses the phrase “I told you so.” The Fatalist initiates little action, like the Cynic, but does not look negatively at politics. The Fatalist will typically view organisational politics as a fact of life. Finally, the Spectator likes to watch but does not like to participate in workplace politics. Managers with this type of spectator characteristic view the organisation as a vast human soap opera and root for their favourite characters.

DeLuca (1999:19) makes the point that at the other end of the grid are the groups of managers who are Responsible, Leader and/or Machiavellian. The Responsible feels a strong urge to do what is best for the organisation and views politics as coming with the territory. The Leader “assumes that the organisations are primarily people systems rather than technical ones”. Finally, the Machiavellians look out for their interests first and foremost, never putting the organisation ahead of their personal gain in a situation. They also tend to be manipulators and use people to get what they want.

Finally, political style is developed from a set of experiences early in a person’s career (DeLuca, 1999:23). The Political Style Grid helps avoid suspicious assumptions about politics. Underlying assumptions should always be examined
and conscious choices about the right political style should be voiced and made clear.

![Political Style Grid](image)

**Figure 2.3 Political Style Grid** (DeLuca, 1999:11)

It is important for managers to build relationships with employees in organisations. Curtis (2003:297) believes that managers are needed who want socialised power rather than personalised power.
Self-seeking managers need personalised power, and they:

- Exercise power impulsively;
- Are not good institution builders;
- Seek to dominate those around them;
- Seek advancement at the expense of others; and
- Want their subordinates to be loyal to them, not to the organisation.

Managers who want socialised power:

- Believe in the importance of centralised authority;
- Have a keen sense of justice, rewarding hard work;
- Enjoy the discipline of work and getting things done in an orderly way;
- Feel responsible for developing the organisations to which they belong;
- Seek to use their power for the common good, on behalf of the organisation as a whole;
- Exercise their power to create a good working climate for those around them; and
- Help others to understand and perform their tasks, and commit them towards organisational goals.

2.5.7 Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

The leader-member exchange theory is premised on notions of role making (Graen, 1976, as cited in Wang et al., 2007:421), social exchange, reciprocity, and equity (Deluga, 1994, as cited in Wang et al., 2007:421). The leader-member exchange theory provides a good explanation for a mediating role between leadership styles and organisational performance, as well as organisational citizenship behaviour.
Leaders convey role expectations to their followers and provide tangible and intangible rewards to followers who satisfy these expectations. Likewise, followers hold role expectations of their leaders with respect to how they are to be treated and the rewards they are to receive for meeting leader expectations. Followers are not passive role recipients; they may reject, embrace, or renegotiate roles prescribed by their leaders. There is a reciprocal process in the exchanges between leader and follower, wherein each party brings to the relationship different kinds of resources for exchange. Role negotiation occurs over time, defining the quality and maturity of a leader-member exchange, and leaders develop relationships of varying quality with different followers over time (Graen, 1976; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995, as cited in Vigoda, 2007:664).

Vigoda (2007:664) points out that in many respects, the LMX theory is in line with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Blau’s (1964) exchange theory that call for a stronger balance between managers and employees. According to these theories, better performance can be achieved only when there is a reasonable level of expectation-fit and when the social exchange between managers and employees is fair and equal. It is the leader’s responsibility to create an organisational atmosphere that is reciprocal, fair and fulfils the expectations and needs of the individuals and the managerial cadre, as well as the organisation as a whole (Vigoda, 2007:666). He goes on to say that a balanced relationship between leaders and members is essential, and the fair treatment of the individual must be advanced as an organisational strategy. The enhancement of these fair social exchange relations has the ability to reduce the level of organisational politics and positively influence the performance of employees.

Other studies (Ferris and Rowland, 1981, as cited in Vigoda, 2007:666) argued that the leader’s behaviour affects employee job perceptions, which then affect employee attitudes towards the job and performance. Thus, employees’ perceptions of the workplace, such as perceptions of politics, may be an intermediary between leadership and their working performance.
Vigoda (2007:667) states that transformational leadership pushes employees to contribute to the organisation beyond the basic requirements of their job description out of personal motivation, challenge, or the desire to emulate the leader and be regarded as part of his success. This idea is much in line with the leader-member exchange theory (LMX). Transactional leadership has the ability to strengthen the effectiveness of performance, especially formal performance, which can be quantitatively measured and accurately rewarded (Vigoda, 2007).

Wang et al. (2005:421) states that leaders exercising formal authority and allocating standard benefits in return for standard job performance characterise low-quality exchanges. The exchanges underlying these relationships are predominantly contractual. In high-quality LMX relationships, however, social exchange is moved to a higher level, nourished by mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995, as cited in Wang et al., 2005:421). In return for exemplary performance contributions (e.g., consistently volunteering to work extra hours to meet project deadlines), followers receive special privileges (e.g., access to key personnel or information), career-enhancing opportunities (e.g., special work assignments) and increasing levels of discretion in doing their jobs (Wang et al., 2005). Accordingly, task performance is a form of currency in the social exchange between leader and follower and a means of fulfilling obligations for reciprocity. Wang et al. (2005:421) observes that favourable treatment by the leader towards employees will in effect contribute towards a sense of respect, loyalty, and obligation between the two parties. In high-quality exchange, leaders appeal to the higher-order social needs of followers by getting them to place collective interests over short-term personal gratification (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995, as cited in Wang et al., 2005:422).
2.6 IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

DuBrin (2010:212) notes that in order to offset the negative effects of organisational politics and make effective use of organisational politics, leaders must be aware of specific political tactics and strategies. In the current economic climate, factors such as scarcity of resources and increased competition have meant that leaders need to formulate strategies and tactics to get ahead in the organisation. DuBrin (2010:212) goes on to state that leaders so frequently need support for their programmes that they search for innovative types of political behaviour. Political strategies and tactics are categorised as either ethical or unethical.

Hawley (2008:14) goes on to point out that amongst other things, there are various critical moves professionals must consider to offset the negative effects of politics. Some of the critical steps he includes are the valuable investment of time in the people working at the company. This could include networking, mentoring, supporting and encouraging others, attending company social gatherings, and being the best listener in the company. Hawley (2008) adds that another critical step to consider is to congratulate, acknowledge, and thank people for the successes and contribution they may make for the company.

Corkindale (2007), in an article she wrote for the Harvard Business Review entitled *Reinventing Office Politics* notes that: “Of course, there will always be those who will guard their turf and abuse power, but for those who want to develop personal political strategies to manage change effectively, improve their teamwork and networking and getting by during difficult decisions, there are a few pointers to consider”:

- Learn the system and work around it;
- Cultivate relationships with the right people;
- Understand individual agendas;
- Act in a principled way;
- Develop a network of information sources;
- Avoid making enemies;
- Build support for constructive ideas;
- Build a personal reputation;
- Treat everyone fairly;
- Influence rather than using direct authority;
- Learn how to steer meetings;
- Negotiate in tough situations; and
- Manage conflict (Corkindale, 2007).

In an article written by Ouellette and Associates (2004), five key steps leading to political savvy are identified in the table below:

**Table 2.6 Political Savvy Steps** (Ouellette and Associates, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extend your radar</th>
<th>Make sure you know all the key players who might influence your organisation, even if you don’t think they should! Pay attention to the connections they have with each other. Network all the time, viewing even informal meetings as opportunities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note who has the power</td>
<td>Learn which key players have power or influence over which others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify friends and foes</td>
<td>Determine who will gain and who may suffer when things go according to plans, and don’t ignore your enemies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart your course</td>
<td>Considering what you’ve learned about your key players, predict political difficulties and plan mitigation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay your course</td>
<td>Keep in touch with key players to monitor your progress. Expect the unexpected and adapt as necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key issue for leaders is to become masters at the art of office politics. Leaders need to gain political skills. One way this could be achieved is through making use of mentoring. Leaders should hone their political skills and expand their network by seeking mentors. Leaders can also reinforce and grow their network by acting as a mentor themselves. By tapping into the network grapevine, without gaining a reputation as a gossip, leaders could find themselves in the informal communication loop as well as more formal channels. Leaders and employees need to avoid conflict and stay out of trouble by refusing to repeat or add to gossip or unfounded rumours. People who thrive at office politics simply make a point of staying highly informed about work matters and staying in touch with co-workers up and down the ladder.

Another way organisations can offset the negative effects of organisational politics is through the introduction of teams and encouraging teamwork. Valle and Witt (2001:386) found that job satisfaction was higher amongst workers who placed a considerable importance on teamwork. If management can create a work environment where employees value teamwork, employees will have a greater control over the workplace, leading to lower levels of organisational politics. Valle and Witt (2001:386) go on to recommend that the best way to achieve this is through the development of work teams with sufficient training in resolving conflict, building trust and commitment and learning effective group processes. The training will provide team members with information regarding group functioning and an increased understanding of organisational events and ultimately leading to workers being equipped with a sense of control.

Studies done by Valle and Witt (2001) conclude that workers experiencing high levels of organisational politics were the same workers who reported low levels of team importance. It therefore becomes important for managers to make a greater effort to support teamwork behaviour and to emphasise the importance of teamwork.
Subsequently, researchers have examined perceptions of organisational politics and their adverse effects on workers (Maslyn and Fedor, 1998, as cited in Valle and Witt, 2001:380).

According to DuBrin (2010:222), when organisational politics is carried to excess, politics can hurt an organisation and its members. Too much politicking can result in wasted time and effort, thereby lowering productivity. The human consequences of excessive negative and unethical politics can also be substantial. DuBrin (2010:222) claims that examples of these excesses include, lowered morale and loss of people who intensely dislike office politics. To avoid these negative consequences he observes that leaders are advised to combat political behaviour when it is excessive and dysfunctional.

Dealing with, and becoming familiar with the factors leading to organisational politics can go a long way towards helping leaders, as well as management, in organisations to develop their own strategies to deal with these issues. Once the organisation has identified what the political issue is, it becomes a lot easier to use strategies to deal with those issues head-on. By using the above literature, leaders are able to know what style of leadership is appropriate at a given time and they are able to use the strategies identified to deal with problems at the core.

Proposed model for the influence of leadership on organisational politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Organisational Politics</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Ambiguity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scarcity of Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairness/Justice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Job Performance
Turnover Intention
Job Stress
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Workplace politics is a reality for all organisations. The primary objective of this study was to identify how leadership can be used to influence organisational politics in an effort to help the organisation become more effective.

In order to achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives were pursued:

Secondary objectives:

- Assess the outcomes of strategies used by leaders in the organisation to manage organisational politics;
- Conduct a study on the factors influencing office politics;
- Conduct a study on the functional use of office politics;
- Conduct a study of the organisational environment favourable for positive influences of political behaviour; and
- Identify how leaders can gain power through politics and how they can avoid political blunders and build relationships in a political organisational environment.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In chapter 2, the concept of perceptions of organisational politics was discussed. In order to solve the secondary objectives around the subject of office politics, the author had to investigate the perceptions of staff in the selected companies of the Scanix Group towards politics. The author also needed to assess whether or not the issues discussed in chapter 2 were prevailing in the selected companies.
In order to achieve these findings, a questionnaire was given to employees of the Scanix Group, situated in the Garden Route (Eden District) area of South Africa (a description of the Scanix group was provided in section 1.5.1). Interviews were also used as a means of data collection. The data was captured on Excel spreadsheet software to analyse the results and findings from the data were used to make conclusions. The conclusions were used to make recommendations to the company (Scanix group) as to the best ways to manage politics in the business environment.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Collis and Hussey (2009:192) a questionnaire is a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of respondents are asked a list of carefully structured questions, chosen after considerable testing, with a view to eliciting reliable responses. The questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the variables identified in the research question. The questionnaires were distributed via e-mail and through group distribution.

The questions in the questionnaires were based on the literature researched and discussed in chapter 2. The questions posed under each section seek to reveal whether the factors discussed in chapter 2 were present at the selected group of companies. As well as questions about the factors affecting organisational politics, it is also very important to gauge the perceptions people have towards politics in the workplace. The key issue when developing the Questionnaire is to remember that it is too difficult to explain Organisational Politics for what it is, but rather to explain it as a perception that people experience. In order to achieve this, three variables need to be questioned namely:

- General Political Behaviour, which refers to overt, self-serving political behaviours, that ensures advancement of personal gain. These behaviours are blatant actions (e.g., spreading rumours, belittling others) taken to advance oneself or one’s group;
• Go Along to Get Ahead refers to more covert, indirect behaviours used to gain advantages. This component of organisational politics emphasises individuals' compliance with actions taken by others, and

• Pay and Promotion Policies.

Politics in organisations should be understood in terms of what people think the politics is, rather than what it actually is. More recently (Kacmar and Ferris, 1991; Kacmar and Carlson, 1994, as cited in Vigoda and Cohen, 2002) tried to better conceptualise perceptions of politics by developing a scale called POPS developed to measure people’s attitudes to politics at work more accurately.

According to Kacmar and Carlson (1997:628) the perceptions individuals hold about the political nature of their work environment influence the way they do their job. These political perceptions affect the relationships of employees towards the company and the people involved in the company. They assert that these perceptions workers have towards organisational politics will ultimately influence their satisfaction and productivity levels, as well as their intent to leave the organisation. When managers are faced with the above scenario, the role organisational politics play becomes a very important issue.

The questions used in the questionnaire measuring the perceptions of organisational politics is based on the scale first developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and later re-examined by Kacmar and Carlson (1994). In this scale the perceptions of organisational politics was defined as the degree to which the respondents view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

Collis and Hussey (2009:193) are of the opinion that it is essential to pilot or test the questionnaire as fully as possible before distribution. Supervisors, friends and family can play the roles of respondents. They insist that even if they know little about the subject, they can still be very helpful in spotting a range of potential
problems. However, the best advice is to try your questionnaire out on people who are similar to those in your sample.

In this case the researcher chose to test the questionnaire on fellow MBA students as well as selected individuals at the selected company. The researcher then excluded these individuals working at the company from the responding group to the final questionnaires.

Feedback from the pilot study was used to make several changes to the initial questionnaire. Amongst these changes respondents proposed the inclusion of open-ended questions. The initial questionnaire comprised only of closed ended questions and the majority of respondents in the pilot study felt that the questionnaire's creditability would be enhanced with the inclusion of open-ended questions. It was for this reason that an additional section (Section D: General) was included in the questionnaire. One further change made to the original questionnaire was the changing of question 2.1 Section C. The original question read: “I don’t have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.” Respondents from the pilot study felt that the negative questioning would create confusion amongst respondents of the final questionnaire. It was therefore decided to change the question to: “I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.”

Other than the above-mentioned changes to the original questionnaire, the only other changes were grammatical in nature, including tense and vocabulary changes.

3.5 SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION

As previously mentioned the organisation researched, Scanix Group, consists of three companies, namely: Boardware (Pty) Ltd, Mustrade Nineteen (Pty) Ltd trading as Mustbuild (includes Mustbuild Roof Trusses) and Vest-Activ (Pty) Ltd trading as Timbercity Mossel Bay.

The three companies collectively employ about 120 people. It was therefore decided to distribute letters to the three companies enquiring about their intent to
partake in the questionnaire. With the feedback from these letters, a higher response rate to the actual questionnaire could be achieved.

With feedback received from the letters sent out to the three companies it was decided to conduct the questionnaire on 37 individuals working for the Scanix Group.

3.6 COLLECTION OF DATA

On completion of the questionnaires, emails were used to distribute the questionnaires to employees from the Vest-Activ (Pty) Ltd trading as Timbercity Mossel Bay. The remaining respondents from Boardware (Pty) Ltd, Mustrade Nineteen (Pty) Ltd were handed the questionnaires. The participants were requested to complete the attached questionnaires and return them to the researcher.

3.7 CAPTURING AND EDITING OF DATA

All the questionnaires received were captured on an Excel spreadsheet document. The spreadsheets were divided into 4 sections comprising of the individual’s demographic information, their perceptions of organisational politics, their views of the factors influencing organisational politics and finally general open-ended questions. This information was then used to generate bar graphs for analysis.

3.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis of the graphs from the results is covered in chapter 4.

3.9 RESPONSE RATE

A total of 37 questionnaires were distributed to participants. The response rate for the survey is shown on Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Questionnaires</th>
<th>Total Response</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter (3) an extended analysis of the methodology used to gather the information for the research was discussed. The aim of this chapter was to highlight the research methodology that was used during the study. This involved discussing the research design, questionnaire design and carrying out the pilot study. This was followed by analysing the response rate for the questionnaire.

In chapter 4 an analysis and interpretation of the response data obtained through the questionnaire will be extracted. This data will assist in determining to what extent organisational politics are prevalent at the selected company.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 certain theories and strategies pertaining to organisational politics were discussed. In chapter 3 the methodology was described on how the study was carried out. This chapter (4) will present the results of the empirical study carried out at the companies making up the Scanix Group.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

Section A: Demographic Information

Section B: Perceptions of Organisational Politics

Section C: Factors Influencing Organisational Politics

Section D: General

4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The results obtained from the questionnaire administered to individuals at the Scanix group will be analysed in this section. An analysis of the demographical information will be presented first, followed by the responses obtained in the other remaining three sections of the questionnaire.

4.2.1 Gender

The staff respondents comprised 68 per cent males and 32 per cent females. The large percentage of males was to be expected due to the nature of the company group concerned. This is seen in Figure 4.1.
4.2.2 Race

From figure 4.2, it can be seen that 41 per cent of the staff respondents are white, while respondents who are coloured comprise 47 per cent and black staff respondents make up 12 per cent.

4.2.3 Age

The largest percentage of the staff respondents consists of individuals falling within the age brackets of 29-38, making up 35 per cent of the respondents. Staff falling under the 39-48 and 49-59 brackets each made up 21 per cent of respondents. The remaining age groups namely 18-28 and individuals above the age of 60 each made up 20 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. Companies consisting of employees with varying age differences generally bode better in political environments. Malik, et al. (2009:27) make the point that as individuals become older, their experiences and skills of organisational members accumulate gradually.
and they react to changes in their environment in different ways as compared to their counterparts with less age. These changes would include the introduction of political antecedents into the work environment. It is therefore an encouraging sign to see such an even spread of age brackets in the Scanix Group.

Figure 4.3: Age of the staff respondents

4.2.4 Education

As seen from figure 4.4, the majority of staff respondents hold a Matric qualification with 70 per cent holding this qualification. Six per cent of the respondents hold either a National Diploma or B. Tech respectively. The remaining staff members hold qualifications equal to a standard 8/9, making up about 18 per cent of the respondents. The staff respondents holding this qualification generally hold job positions in the production departments of the companies.

Figure 4.4: Education of the staff respondents
Figure 4.5 shows that the majority of staff respondents have between 4-6 years experience with the Scanix group totalling 35 per cent of all respondents. The company structure shows a good mix of new and old, with employees with 0-1 year experience and employees with 10 years and more experience, totalling 18 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. The remaining respondents comprise of employees with 1-3 years experience at 15 per cent and 12 per cent for employees having 7-9 years of experience.

4.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

Employees perceive political behaviour at varying levels throughout different organisations. It is important for managers to possess this kind of information. This can help managers better understand how employees perceive and react to political behaviour in their organisational environment. The perceived political behaviour employees act upon are divided into three factors, each of which are analysed in Section B of the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Factor 1: General Political Behaviour

General political behaviour includes the behaviour of individuals who act in a self-serving manner to obtain valued outcomes.
4.3.1.1  Building up of employees - Statement 1.1

The staff views on this statement, “People in this organisation attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down” are shown in Figure 4.6.

The majority of employees disagree with this statement. This is an encouraging sign for the company. Tearing fellow employees down is one of the major characteristics of a political environment. The company’s use of team and group work could be one of the contributing factors to this success. Through informal interviews it is clear that 30 per cent of the employees who either agree or strongly agree with the statement are all relatively new employees doing more elementary work.

4.3.1.2  Influential groups - Statement 1.2

The staff views on this statement, “There has always been an influential group in this department that no one ever crosses” are shown in Figure 4.7.
Fifty three per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement. This is another encouraging sign for the Scanix group. When people are not influenced by other groups in their company it often encourages free thinking and allows people to feel confident in sharing ideas. As with the analysis of Figure 4.6 further analysis confirmed the result that the 27%, who agree or strongly agree with the statement 1.2, are mostly elementary employees.

4.3.2 Factor 2: Go Along to Get Ahead

This factor consists of a lack of action by individuals in order to secure valued outcomes.

4.3.2.1 Employees speaking out - Statement 2.1

The staff views on this statement, “Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas” are shown in Figure 4.8.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 4.8: Employees encouraged to speak out**

The analysis of Figure 4.8 shows that the majority of employees recognise the fact that they are encouraged to participate in sharing ideas. In the literature contained in chapter 2, mention is made of perceptions of politics becoming a dominating force in organisations where employees are not encouraged to share ideas. It is important for employees to work on their interpersonal style, combining social awareness with the ability to communicate well. The important thing for management to remember is that when employees are critical of something, they should listen and consider the employees’ points of view.
4.3.2.2  Yes-men - Statement 2.2

The staff views on this statement, “There is no place for Yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even if it means disagreeing with superiors” are shown in Figure 4.9.

![Figure 4.9: Place for Yes-men](image)

More than half of the respondents agree with this statement. This again reiterates the notion that the companies, to a large extent, share a valued sense of teamwork where people are encouraged to speak out and share their ideas for the greater good of the company.

4.3.2.3  Agreeing with powerful others - Statement 2.3

The staff views on this statement, “Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in this organisation” are shown in Figure 4.10.

![Figure 4.10: Agreeing with powerful other people](image)
Despite the fact that 26 per cent of respondents agree, more than half of the respondents disagree with the above statement. This again shows a freethinking work force who prefers to work as a collective group. The results of Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 are very similar and management should look at implementing systems whereby all employees have opportunity to share their ideas.

4.3.2.4  Rocking the boat - Statement 2.4

The staff views on this statement, “It is best not to rock the boat in this organisation” are shown in Figure 4.11.

![Figure 4.11: Best to not rock the boat](image)

In many organisations employees quickly find themselves in a comfort zone and go to work hoping to do only want is expected of them without challenging the status quo. This question does however have both a negative and positive connotation for the companies involved. When employees ‘rock the boat’ they could either use political knowhow for their own personal gain or for the benefit of the company. Leaders in the organisation need to become familiar with the characteristics of these political behaviours that the employees are using in an effort to steer this behaviour towards the benefit of the company.

4.3.2.5  Avoid fighting the system - Statement 2.5

The staff views on this statement, “Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system” are shown in Figure 4.12.
Feedback from this question shows that more than half of the respondents are willing to speak their mind. In many organisations however, systems are put in place for a reason. These systems are generally tried and tested over many years and often seem irrelevant to employees. It is therefore important for management to understand employees reasoning for challenging the system. Often there is justification in employees’ requests and this should be noted and taken seriously by management. If the reasons for employees standing up against the system cannot be justified, leaders need to give employees valid reasons as to why their decisions cannot be considered. The information shared by leaders will allow employees to understand why their ideas are not accepted, rather than having employees feel that their ideas are just been ignored.
4.3.2.6 Telling others what they want to hear - Statement 2.6

The staff views on this statement, “Telling others what they want to hear is sometimes better than telling the truth” are shown in Figure 4.13.

![Figure 4.13: Telling others what they want to hear as opposed to telling the truth](image)

Almost two-thirds of the respondents at the Scanix group feel that telling the truth is the best way. Telling the truth reflects an environment of transparency and trust. When employees trust the leadership style incorporated in an organisation the perception of uncertainty and politicking are reduced. According to the literature, politics rules when certain people in the organisation withhold vital information from other employees which they could use to further their own personal gains. Leaders need to listen out for individuals spreading lies or withholding the truth.
4.3.2.7  Think what you are told - Statement 2.7

The staff views on this statement, "It is safer to think what you are told than to make up your own mind" are shown in Figure 4.14.

![Figure 4.14: Think what you are told rather than making your own mind](chart)

Half the employees feel that it is a better idea to be free thinking. The challenge to leadership is to channel the freethinking in such a way that the companies' goals and visions are positively influenced. Free thinking that leads to conflict may be regarded as negative to the growth of the companies, as conflict is related to organisational politics. The essence of the connection lies in the understanding that political behaviour is all about individual self-interest. When individuals choose to ignore people they view as political, in an effort to avoid conflict, they often find themselves acting political themselves. By not rocking the boat and seeming like a team player, individuals will find that a lack of action becomes a profitable approach, which will result in their own self-interests being enhanced.
4.3.3 Factor 3: Pay and promotion policies

This factor involves the organisation behaving politically through policies it enacts.

4.3.3.1 Pay and promotion applied politically - Statement 3.1

The staff views on this statement, “Since I have worked in this department, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied politically” are shown in Figure 4.15.

![Figure 4.15: Pay and promotion policies applied politically](image)

With regards to pay and promotion policies, companies will always find individuals who would feel that they are overworked and under paid. People are generally never happy with what they have and will always want more. It is for this reason that political behaviour normally surfaces when pay is involved. Figure 4.15 shows a very even spread of responses. The questionnaires were given to a variety of employees from different departments which could be the reason for the spread in results. It becomes important for leaders in the organisation to make the pay and promotion policies as transparent as possible in an effort to help employees understand the outcomes of these policies.
4.3.3.2  Inconsistent pay and promotion policy - Statement 3.2

The staff views on this statement, "I can’t remember when a person received a pay increase or promotion that was inconsistent with the published policies" are shown in Figure 4.16.

![Figure 4.16: Pay increase or promotion inconsistent with the published policies](image)

Despite the fact that 35 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement, half the respondents are either unsure or disagree with the statement. The question of a transparent policy once again becomes a major issue for the company. Management needs to educate employees at all levels of the organisation as to how increases are done and how promotion policies are implemented. When employees are educated as to the criteria used, it gives better clarity to the employees.
4.3.3.3 Consistency of raise policies - Statement 3.3

The staff views on this statement, “None of the raises I have received are consistent with the policies on how raises should be determined” are shown in Figure 4.17.

![Figure 4.17: Raises consistent with policies](Image)

Nearly two-thirds of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. This is a positive outcome for the companies who make the reasoning behind their decisions known to the individuals receiving the increase in pay or promotion. An important avenue top management needs to pursue is to make other individuals in the company aware as to why the person in question received the accolade. Political behaviour will always manifest itself in situations of uncertainty. A detailed structure, outlining the criteria for increases in pay or promotions and a proper channel for sharing the information creates a policy of transparency.
The staff views on this statement, “The stated pay and promotion policies have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined” are shown in Figure 4.18.

Through informal interviews with the respondents, the author was able to make the conclusion that the reason behind 41 per cent of respondents being unsure about this question was due to the fact that many people were just unaware as to how promotions and raises in the company were calculated. When analysing the questionnaires it was evident that individuals with many years of work experience in the companies generally disagreed with the statement. A conclusion one could reach based on this information, would be that as people move through the ranks of the company they are exposed to how this process takes place. Individuals with limited work experience at the company would therefore be unaware as to how these policies are determined. These individuals would also feel hard done by if they were excluded from the pay or promotion policies. Management must make all employees aware of the procedures in calculating pay and determining promotion in order to avoid political behaviour getting out of control.
4.3.3.5  Policies of promotion - Statement 3.5

The staff views on this statement, “When it comes to pay raise and promotion decisions, policies are irrelevant” are shown in Figure 4.19.

![Figure 4.19: When it comes to pay raise and promotion decisions, policies are irrelevant](image)

The almost equal spread in respondents’ feedback to this question again points towards employees either being unaware of the criteria regarding policies, feeling that the policies are outdated or feeling that the policies only benefit certain individuals.

4.3.3.6  Political nature of promotion policies - Statement 3.6

The staff views on this statement, “Promotions around here are not valued much because how they are determined is so political” are shown in Figure 4.20.

![Figure 4.20: How promotion is valued based on its political nature](image)
More than half of the respondents disagree with the above statement. This demonstrates that, despite the fact that people may be unsure of, or disagree with the current policies, they still value the fact that there are policies. Without even realising it, financial or enhancement politics could lead to political behaviour. Policies often reward individuals who engage in influential behaviour, and when this occurs political activities will become commonplace in every aspect of the decision making process. Many reward systems lead to political behaviour. This is often evident in the way companies reward individuals, leading to individually orientated behaviour as opposed to organisationally orientated behaviour, which then leads to self-interest. When these reward procedures are repeated and reinforced, individuals, including those who were not political, consider engaging in political behaviour in the future.

4.4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FACTORS IMPACTING ON ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

Various factors discussed in chapter 2, which are influenced by organisational politics, are now analysed.

4.4.1 Scarcity of resources

Examples of scarcity of resources could include pay raises or advancement opportunities. Politics plays a role when there is a lack of organisational resources and employees must resort to political tactics to obtain the limited resources.

4.4.1.1 Sharing of company resources - Statement 1.1

The staff views on this statement, “The different departments in this company compete for the same resources” are shown in Figure 4.21.
When organisational resources, such as financial rewards, become limited within the company, employees would have to compete against one another for such resources. One way to influence the outcomes of organisational resource allocations is to rely on political tactics in a self-serving fashion. In general, competition for scarce resources is likely to result in both real and perceived politicking. Based on the above figure it is evident that the Scanix group is faced with a problem with regards to the allocation of resources. Fifty-nine percent of respondents feel that they are in competition with one another for company resources. It must become a priority for management to address this issue in an effort to decrease the perceptions of political behaviour which limited resources will ultimately bring.

4.4.1.2 Advancement opportunities - Statement 1.2

The staff views on this statement, “The same advancement opportunities are available in all the company departments” are shown in Figure 4.22.
The split in the above figure may be the result of the good promotion policies the company has in place, but the Scanix group may struggle to afford the same advancement opportunities to all employees due to possible limited resources and unfavourable economic conditions facing the companies in the group. Jockeying for a position that will allow an employee to receive valuable resources is quintessential political behaviour. Organisations with limited resources will have a political environment. When leaders understand why the resources are scarce, they will be able to predict the targets and brace the company for the confrontations. When individuals have control over critical resources which cannot be secured elsewhere, the situation may lead to that person making use of political influence tactics.
4.4.2 Job/role ambiguity

When goals, roles and performance criteria are clear and all employees know what is expected of them there is less scope to engage in negative political behaviour.

4.4.2.1 Clarity of job description - Statement 2.1

The staff views on this statement, “I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job” are shown in Figure 4.23.

![Bar chart showing staff views on goal clarity](chart)

**Figure 4.23: I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job**

When employees in a company are faced with unclear goals, roles and performance criteria, they become unsure about what to expect from one another. In these types of situations employees will engage in politicking and subsequently view the workplace exclusively as a political arena. When employees know what is expected of them, they are able to set personal and company goals for the future. The Scanix group has policies in place to make employees aware of their roles in the company and this has been reflected in the analysis of the respondents’ feedback on the question with a total of 91 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are clear about these objectives.
4.4.2.2 Work responsibilities - Statement 2.2

The staff views on this statement, “I know what my work responsibilities are” are shown in Figure 4.24.

![Figure 4.24: I know what my work responsibilities are](image)

When employees are aware of their responsibilities in a company it gives management a competitive advantage to set future objectives and implement strategies in the knowledge that they will have competent individuals and teams who know what is expected of them. With close to 90 per cent of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they know responsibilities; leaders are able to focus their energies in other areas where politics could become a problem.

4.4.2.3 Level of authority - Statement 2.3

The staff views on this statement, “I know how much authority I have in my job” are shown in Figure 4.25.

![Figure 4.25: I know how much authority I have in my job](image)
When employees exercise too much or too little authority, it may create an environment rife with political behaviour. Individuals who overexert their authority and try to control resources and communication channels create a political environment. Management should take the initiative to remind employees of their level of authority and monitor individuals who overstep the line.

4.4.3 Personality

Personality influences the process by which employees interpret their organisational environment.

4.4.3.1 Sense of teamwork - Statement 3.1

The staff views on this statement, “There is a good sense of teamwork in this company” are shown in Figure 4.26.

![Figure 4.26: There is a good sense of teamwork in this company](image)

Personality may influence the process by which employees interpret their organisational environment, thereby shaping the behaviours that are selected in light of those environmental interpretations. In every working environment leaders will be faced with individuals who may have conflicting personalities, which could place the company into a disadvantaged position. It becomes important for management to assess employee personalities and create an organisational fit between those individuals and the company’s objectives. More than half the respondents agreed that teamwork existed at the Scanix group. This strong sense
of teamwork discourages individuals trying to get ahead of others at the expense of certain employees.

4.4.3.2 Working towards collective goals - Statement 3.2

The staff views on this statement, “People in this company work towards collective goals” are shown in Figure 4.27.

![Bar Chart](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.27: People in this company work towards collective goals

One of the major contributing factors towards organisational politics is when company policies and procedures become unclear and uncertain. When management make their vision and mission as well as their future objectives clear to employees, it creates a sense of belonging which oftentimes offsets political behaviour. When people work towards common objectives, personalities and mindsets change from focusing only on individual interests towards focusing on the needs and best will of the company.
4.4.3.3  Encouragement of open thinking - Statement 3.3

The staff views on this statement, “Managers in this company encourage open thinking” are shown in Figure 4.28.

![Bar chart showing responses to encouragement of open thinking](image)

**Figure 4.28: Managers in this company encourage open thinking**

The even split in the results of the question can to a large extent be credited to how different departments are told to think and what is expected of them. Through informal interviewing it was determined that employees in the production departments had very autonomous job descriptions. This resulted in employees who were tunnel minded and who did not easily change their thought patterns. However, in the sales department, employees were encouraged to source new suppliers and products. This process encouraged open thinking.

4.4.3.4  Backstabbing - Statement 3.4

The staff views on this statement, “There are political practices such as backstabbing taking place” are shown in Figure 4.29.

![Bar chart showing responses to backstabbing](image)
Figure 4.29: There are political practices such as backstabbing taking place

When certain individuals in the company possess personality types that contradict the wellbeing of the company, they will resort to unethical practices such as backstabbing, spreading rumours and gossiping. Leaders need to discourage this type of behaviour and guard against partaking in the behaviour themselves. Although more than half of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the phenomenon of backstabbing, management must continuously guard against possible negative political behaviour.

4.4.4 Fairness

When leaders are fair in their judgements and decisions they create a sense of inclusion and trust amongst employees, which the employees perceive as being able to shield them from political behaviour. Employees’ negative reaction to perceptions of politics lessens because of the buffering effects of perceptions of fair procedures and treatment.

4.4.4.1 Acknowledgements for recommendation – Statement 4.1

The staff views on this statement, “If I make a recommendation I am acknowledged for it” are shown in Figure 4.30.

Figure 4.30: If I make a recommendation, I am acknowledged for it

Fairness affects people’s self-esteem, sense of identity and social or psychological needs. When leaders are able to create an environment where trust is created
between all parties involved, people’s perceptions of fairness is enhanced. When leaders reward and treat people equally, employee behaviours become less political in nature. Political behaviour becomes dominant in situations characterised by unfairness due to the fact that individuals feel they need to act politically in order to get ahead in the organisation. When individuals make recommendations, management needs to give credit to those individuals who make suggestions. If the ideas presented by individuals are not accepted, management needs to give feedback to the employee in question as to why these ideas could not be implemented. This line of communication will ensure that employees are empowered to bring future recommendations without reprisal.

4.4.4.2 Equal treatment of employees - Statement 4.2

The staff views on this statement, “All employees are treated as equal” are shown in Figure 4.31.

![Figure 4.31: All employees are treated as equal](image)

When employees perceive that favouritism is the norm in the organisation’s culture, they will feel that fairness and justice are impossible. They resort to political behaviour as a way to be promoted in the company. Most of the employees, comprising of 35 per cent believe that certain individuals in this company are treated differently to others. Leaders must make it a priority not to show favouritism to certain individuals. If certain individuals in the company outperform their colleagues, management should use them as examples as to what they expect from other people in the company, but at the same time guard against only singling
out those individuals for praise and recognition. The outcome of Figure 4.31 is in stark contradiction with the general results of the questionnaire. An informal interview revealed that most of the respondents disagreeing were recently reprimanded for declining levels of productivity.

4.4.4.3 Favouritism - Statement 4.3

The staff views on this statement, “There is favouritism in this company” are shown in Figure 4.32.

![Figure 4.32: Favouritism exists in this company](image)

It is evident that favouritism does exist in the Scanix group. It must be stressed that favouritism leads to political behaviour. By praising and rewarding employees at all levels of the organisation for their organisational achievements, leaders would be seen as showing less favouritism towards a select few individuals.

4.4.5 Uncertainty

Political behaviour surfaces in situations where job ambiguity exists and employees are faced with unclear goals and objectives. When there is uncertainty, certain individuals, because of their personality, take it upon themselves to control and manipulate situations. By increasing their control they ultimately increase their power and therefore they are able to hold greater political influence.
4.4.5.1 Policy changes communicated - Statement 5.1

The staff views on this statement, “Policy changes in this company are communicated to everyone” are shown in Figure 4.33.

![Bar chart showing staff views on policy changes communication]

Figure 4.33: Policy changes in this company are communicated to everyone

Political behaviour will increase when rules and regulations are not available to govern actions. In the absence of rules and policies for guidance, individuals have few clues as to acceptable behaviour, and therefore, develop their own. In these uncertain situations, individuals develop their own rules to benefit their own position. One of the most important things management should do is share policy changes, or any strategic changes in the company, with everyone in the organisation. This inclusion of all departmental heads in important decisions will reduce uncertainty and ultimately reduce political behaviour. It is often the case that when important information is withheld from individuals, those people with the information will use the added power to manipulate the situations to their benefit. One of the reasons for the even split between the respondents who agree and disagree with the statement could be due to the fact that policy changes at the companies are displayed on a notice board which is located in only one department.
4.4.5.2 Sharing of goals and objectives - Statement 5.2

The staff views on this statement, “Company goals and objectives are shared throughout the company” are shown in Figure 4.34 below.

Knowledge is power, and shared knowledge creates a sense of belonging in an organisation. Management needs to share goals and objectives with each department and with the same enthusiasm or level of intensity. The varying levels of feedback to this question could be an indication that certain departments might feel that they are left in the dark when important company decisions are made. Managers should explain the vision, values and missions/goals of the organisations to their subordinates in order to win their confidence and commitment to organisational goals.
4.4.5.3  Vagueness of performance measures - Statement 5.3

The staff views on this statement, “There are vague performance measures in this company” are shown in Figure 4.35.

![Figure 4.35: Performance measures are vague in this company](image)

In situations where uncertainty is the norm, certain elements in the company such as the criteria used for decision making become susceptible to political behaviour. Where no criteria exist, information to make decisions is lacking or ambiguous and, decision makers use their own interpretations and perceptions to make those decisions. Leaders need to display, or make everyone aware of how performance is measured in the company. Although the majority of the respondents know the criteria for the measurement of performance, a large number of the respondents know that criteria exists, but are not aware of the contents of the criteria.

4.4.6  Hierarchical structure/centralisation

According to Muhammad (2007:235), in highly centralised organisations, power is exercised by a very few people, whereas in highly decentralised organisations, power is shared by most. As the degree of centralisation increases, employees’ level of participation in decision-making regarding policy matters or task performance decreases. High levels of centralisation decrease perceptions of control. As the individuals lose control over their environment, perceptions of politics increases.
4.4.6.1  Having employees voices heard - Statement 6.1

The staff views on this statement, “The company structure makes it difficult to have my voice heard” are shown in Figure 4.36.

![Figure 4.36: Company structure makes it hard to have your voice heard](image)

In many organisations the structure creates a climate for political behaviour. Power is situated at the top in a centralised pyramid structure and only a limited amount of that power filters down. This is normally a characteristic of larger companies, but is also found in smaller companies where the boss makes all the decisions. From the feedback provided in figure 4.36 it is evident that the Scanix group shares the benefit of being a company where everyone has the opportunity to be heard. It is evident that management at the Scanix group values all the responses they get, at all levels of the companies. The literature in Chapter 2 supports the theory that politics increases when employees feel that their opinions will not be considered and that they have to resort to alternative means to have their voices heard.
4.4.6.2 Employee recommendations - Statement 6.2

The staff views on this statement, “Recommendations I make reach top level management” are shown in Figure 4.37.

![Figure 4.37: My recommendations reach the top](image)

Every individual at all levels of any organisation enjoy the sense of belonging. When a company treats the recommendations made by employees with a great deal of importance, it instils a sense of meaning and belonging. With half the respondents agreeing that their recommendations reach top management the challenge for the Scanix group is to take the recommendations made by employees and implement the suitable suggestions for the benefit of the company. Acknowledgement should be given to employees who provide ideas that move the company forward.
4.4.6.3 Permission from superiors - Statement 6.3

The staff views on this statement, “I have to ask my boss/manager before doing anything” are shown in Figure 4.38 below.

![Figure 4.38: Asking permission before doing anything](image)

Companies give varying degrees of autonomy to the staff they employ. A major characteristic of leaders is to empower employees in the company. Many organisations give autonomy to individuals based on the role they perform in the company. Through informal interviews it was concluded that employees in the sales and buying departments disagreed with the above statement meaning they acted on their own accord. It was however established that the employees in the production departments of the Scanix group agreed with the statement. This showed that employees felt they had limited scope to make up their own minds and thus had to get permission when they felt changes had to be made.

4.4.7 Leadership Styles

Throughout the literature discussed in chapter 2, it is evident that leadership styles play a role in the perceptions of workers towards organisational politics. The questions on leadership styles are based on the full range model of leadership developed by Bass and Avolio.
4.4.7.1  Rewarding of performance - Statement 7.1

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor rewards performance when his/her expectations are fulfilled” are shown in Figure 4.39.

![Figure 4.39: Performance is rewarded when leaders expectation are fulfilled](image)

According to the literature, leaders who reward performance have a transactional leadership style. It becomes important for leaders to inform staff of what their expectations are. Often employees are unaware of what managers or leaders expect of them. In many instances employees will perform a task but not to the specifications of the leader. This will result in the leader giving minimal praise or not rewarding the employee. This will result in the employee feeling discouraged and may result in the employee using political tactics to achieve different results. From the above figure 4.39 it is evident that employees are receiving mixed feedback from leaders. The key for leaders in this company is to establish fixed standards and allow leeway based on those standards.
4.4.7.2 Availability of supervisor - Statement 7.2

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor is not present when he/she is needed” are shown in Figure 4.40.

![Bar chart showing staff views on supervisor availability]

Figure 4.40: My supervisor is not present when they are needed

The most ineffective style of leadership according to the literature is a laissez-faire style. When leaders are not available to assist employees in the company, these individuals will seek out alternative means to achieve results. In most cases it is the individuals who are more politically inclined who move ahead at the expense of less political others. Close to 80 per cent of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. These results allow us to conclude that supervisors in the Scanix group are available to assist employees when the need arises.

4.4.7.3 Gaining of trust amongst employees - Statement 7.3

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor has the ability to develop trust and confidence among employees” are shown in Figure 4.41.
Figure 4.41: My supervisor has the ability to develop trust and confidence among employees

Building a trusting work environment is one of the main characteristics of a transformational leader and is an important strategy to minimise the negative effects of organisational politics. When leaders have the ability to develop high levels of trust in the workplace, employees will find it unnecessary to use political tactics to defend their interests. It is when this trust is broken that uncertainty prevails and political behaviour flourishes. The majority of respondents agree that there is a trusting relationship between leaders and employees.

4.4.7.4 Avoiding a stand on company issues - Statement 7.4

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor avoids taking a stand on issues and doesn’t emphasise results” are shown in Figure 4.42 below.

Figure 4.42: My supervisor avoids taking a stand on issues and doesn’t emphasise results
Another characteristic of a laissez-faire leadership style is the leader’s inability to take a stand on issues pertaining to the company. These leaders would rather avoid confrontation and distance themselves from challenging issues. Political behaviour will become the norm when this occurs. Individuals with personal agendas will generally take charge and manipulate circumstances to their benefit. Leaders must make a point to minimise manipulative practices by employees in the organisations. One way leaders could achieve this, is to display characteristics associated with a transformational type leadership style. This approach could contribute to leaders and employees having a say on all business and strategic matters, which could ultimately have a bearing on the success of the company. The respondents agreed upon the importance of having a leader who takes a stand on issues and emphasises results, both these characteristics are features of transformational leaders.

4.4.7.5  Enthusiasm towards goals - Statement 7.5

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor speaks enthusiastically about our goals as a team” are shown in Figure 4.43.

![Figure 4.43: My supervisor speaks enthusiastically about our goals as a team](image)

When employees are working in an environment where uncertainty becomes the norm, political behaviour will not be far behind. It is very important for leaders to share company and departmental goals with all employees. By getting employees thinking about achieving goals and enthusiastically striving to reach those goals,
Leaders create a culture where political behaviour is minimised and worker morale improves. Organisational goals should be explained to all employees as a strategy for getting employees to buy into the objectives of the company. When employees know the goals of the organisation they serve, they can then be expected to work towards the realisation of such goals. The majority of respondents at more than 65 per cent agree or strongly agree with the above statement. However 33 per cent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. The reason for this can be attributed to the different leadership styles found throughout the companies as well as in the different departments.

4.4.7.6 Awareness of employee performance - Statement 7.6

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor is unaware of employee performance” are shown in Figure 4.44.

A further trait of ineffective leaders is the inability to give recognition and praise effective employee performance. Employees perform tasks for different reasons. Some employees work for financial incentives and others work for recognition. It is important for leaders to understand what drives employees and base the performance recognition on what is important to employees. Employees who are not recognised for the work they deliver, will ultimately seek out alternative means to achieve the recognition they feel they deserve. From the result of Figure 4.44 the leaders of the Scanix group, give recognition to the employees of the respective departments.
The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor inspires others to perform” are shown in Figure 4.45.

When leaders are charismatic in nature, they inspire people to bring out their best. A goal most leaders should strive for is to have a workforce of like-minded employees who are focused on achieving the organisation’s objectives. The ability of leaders to bring out the best in employees contributes to the process of achieving those objectives. The majority of respondents to the above statement lean towards favourable outcomes, however, the split in feedback can be attributed to the different leadership styles in the various departments. Charismatic leaders have the ability to bring out the best in employees and encourage collective thinking, this style of leadership is therefore able to buffer the negative effects of politics in the job/workplace.
4.4.7.8 Creating a strong sense of purpose - Statement 7.8

The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor is able to create a strong sense of purpose among employees” are shown in Figure 4.46 below.

![Bar chart showing staff views on statement](chart)

Figure 4.46: My supervisor is able to create a strong sense of purpose among employees

Working towards a common purpose gives workers direction and allows them to focus on a clear set of goals and objectives. Transformational leaders have the ability to bring out the best in employees by emphasising the importance of the work they perform. When there is purpose in what employees do, they are driven to achieve the objective set before them by the organisation. Just over half the respondents agree with the statement. This is an encouraging sign for the Scanix group, however, the group should make an effort to carry this sense of purpose throughout the organisations in an effort to eliminate the 44 per cent of respondents disagreeing with the statement.
The staff views on this statement, "My supervisor has the ability of empathising with individual needs" are shown in Figure 4.47.

![Figure 4.47: My supervisor has the ability of empathising with individual needs](image)

The current work environment is characterised by scarce resources, layoffs and competition. More than ever management expects more input from employees with the limited resources at their disposal. It is often the case that this stressful environment spills over into employees' personal lives and reintroduces itself in the workplace. It therefore becomes important for leaders to identify when workers are under added stress or bring their personal problems to work. Leaders need to sympathise with employees and dissolve tense situations before they become a problem for the company. Through informal interviews it was established that the even spread of results could be attributed to the departments the respondents worked in. In departments where many employees work, managers found it hard to spend time and empathise with the employees.
The staff views on this statement, “My supervisor encourages continuous development and growth of employees” are shown in Figure 4.48.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 4.48: My supervisor encourages continuous development and growth of employees**

Leaders need to implement empowerment programs at all departments throughout the organisation. The development and empowerment of employees gives the organisation a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Having employees with the knowledge and expertise available allows leaders to utilise the talents of workers more effectively. The majority of respondents at the Scanix group agree or strongly agree with the above statement. Organisations characterised by power sharing and empowerment practices will generally enjoy a working environment where there is a minimal amount of negative organisational politics. It was found through informal interviews that many of the respondents who disagreed with the statement were employees in the production department. The role performed by employees in that department were very specialised and employees were hired based on mechanical qualification papers they possessed to operate certain machines. It is therefore against health and safety protocol to move these employees between the different machines. The Scanix group management did however recognise the need to implement empowerment practices to help employees obtain qualification papers for more than one machine, thus helping to achieve a reduction in job ambiguity.
4.4.8 Section D

In this section, the respondents were given open-ended question to invite spontaneous responses. They were asked to comment on a number of issues pertaining to organisational politics. The first question asked was: “In your opinion, what is the main role of leaders in your organisation?”

Staff comments included:

- Share company goals and strategies;
- Allocate resources fairly to all departments and employees;
- To make sure that favouritism does not exist;
- To motivate the workers;
- Help the employees grow in the company;
- To make strategic plans for the company;
- To be a problem solver; and
- To oversee team work.

A further question asked to ascertain workplace politics was: “To what do you attribute workplace politics?”

Staff comments included:

- People who put their needs above those of the company;
- When departments are competing for limited company resources;
- When doing your work just isn’t enough;
- When people want to climb the corporate ladder quickly;
- When people control communication lines; and
• When company policies are bypassed.

In order to determine additional factors contributing to turnover intention the staff were asked: “What political behaviour in this organisation will result in your consideration to leave?”

Staff comments included:

• When company rules are no longer followed;
• If people gossip about me;
• If I become aware of backstabbing in the company;
• If the political behaviour effects my pay check; and
• If I see my fellow workers getting hurt.

Finally, respondents were asked their personal opinion on how politics in the workplace could be minimised. “In your opinion is there anything you feel the company could do to reduce the perceptions of organisational politics?”

Staff comments included:

• Hold staff meetings to discuss future company plans;
• There must be transparency in decisions made;
• Good leadership;
• Encouragement from top management;
• More work must be done in teams or groups; and
• There must be humour in the company.
4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The response to the questions and statements were answered with honesty and consistency. The comments made by the respondents were very comprehensive. All of the questions asked by the researcher in the questionnaire, were linked to the literature in chapter 2.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of the research findings were presented in the previous chapter (4). The findings were integrated with the findings of the questionnaire, which examined leadership and the factors leading to perceptions of organisational politics. In this final chapter, the main findings will be summarised and conclusions will be drawn. The author will seek to provide solutions to the main problem and the sub-problem of this study. This chapter will also provide recommendations based on the findings of this research.

5.2 RESOLUTION OF THE MAIN PROBLEM

Based on the above discussion the main problem can be defined as follows:

What is the impact of leadership on Organisational Politics in the organisation?

An analysis of the main problems allows for the identification of the following sub-questions:

Sub question 1

What does the literature research reveal about the impact of office politics on the organisation?

Sub question 2

What political tactics and strategies does the literature reveal that will assist managers in effectively dealing with politics in the work environment?

Sub question 3
How can the results of this research of subproblems 1 and 2 be combined into effective outcomes which the management of the organisation can effectively use to manage organisational politics?

5.3 PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

Overall there are several limitations in the study that were noted by the researcher. This study would have made a better contribution to the understanding of organisational politics, if politics itself were measured instead of the perceptions of politics. Another point made by the researcher was that due to financial constraints, a small sample size was used. Different conclusions may have been reached with a larger sample size. One problem the study did not address was the issue of differentiating between genders. It is widely believed that gender plays a major role in the perceptions of organisational politics as it is commonly believed that males play the politics game far more readily than females. This could mean that the final outcomes of the study could have been different, if the study was conducted on a different gender ratio.

5.4 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This study was able to magnify the concept of organisational politics and help contribute to the understanding of, not only the outcomes, but also the factors leading to, and playing an influencing role on the perceptions of organisational politics. The concept of leadership was explained and the study approached leadership and its influences on organisational politics holistically. Three perceptions of organisational politics were used as a basis to measure the perceptions employees have towards politics. These perceptions were based on work conducted in the field of organisational politics by Kacmar and Carlson, (1997) whose updated work is based on initial work conducted by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). The perceptions of organisational politics fall under three headings namely; General Political Behaviour, Go Along to Get Ahead and, Pay and Promotion Policies. In order to truly measure the perceptions of politics in an
organisation questions based on Kacmar and Carlson (1997) need to be asked with regards to these headings.

The results of the perception of politics, under heading 4.3 in chapter 4, show that there is a relatively high level of politics in the Scanix Group of companies. When the general political behaviours were looked at, it was found that most people agree that certain members of staff move up through the corporate ladder by tearing others down. However, it was noted that staff did not feel that certain groups dominated. This was most likely due to the strong sense of teamwork present in the company.

When the subject of Go Along to Get Ahead was looked at, it was found that, although there was a general consensus towards working in teams, employees were clear that the company or top management do not want to get involved in conflict situations. By rocking the boat employees felt that they were putting themselves at risk of standing out and being considered by their fellow workers as not being team players.

Pay and Promotion Policies showed that employees trusted the policies put in place to reward and enhance the careers of those members.

Overall the study looked at various factors leading to the perception of organisational politics consuming the mindset of individuals in the company. Although many examples were given, there were a number of predominant factors which continued to surface in the study.

The results of the research revealed the following factors:

Job Ambiguity: Ambiguity in the workplace is one of the major contributing factors to political behaviour. Management at this company will need to make employees aware of the objectives of their jobs and establish clear and planned goals of where they see the future of the company. With a target in mind, employees will have something to work towards, making their job meaningful.
Scarcity of Resources: This was noted as a major obstacle for the company. Overall employees felt that the company had limited resources which were needed for the execution of their jobs. The lack of resources also led to staff feeling that advancement opportunities were not on par in all the departments in the company.

Personality: The results discussed in chapter 4 revealed that most of the individuals, who responded to the questionnaire, agreed that there was no conflict of personality at work. The teams worked well together and the manager’s personality did not clash with that of the employees and this gave them the opportunity to do their work at a high level.

Uncertainty: It becomes very important for top management to share the goals and objectives of the company with all the employees. Politics rules when employees are uncertain of what is expected of them. As soon as a handful of employees withholds information, they become politically dominant and will use this power to control others.

Fairness/Justice: Based on the questionnaire, employees generally feel that when they come up with ideas they do receive recognition but that the rewards or the outcomes of the recognition are not the same for each employee. This could have something to do with the way different employees view the rewards they receive based on the expectancy theory.

Leadership styles: In the current, modern business environment leadership plays an increasing crucial and influential role. The outcomes of this study paint a similar picture. Leadership, and more specifically, leadership styles, and the utilisation of those styles, play a major role on all facets throughout the organisation. Amongst these facets lie not only business strategies and organisational goals, but the management of the perceptions of organisational politics as well. There has always been a strong link between leadership and the perceptions on organisational politics. This study has only strengthened and echoed this sentiment.

When the results of the questionnaire were analysed, it became evident that the same people who selected certain leadership characteristics, were also the same
people who showed either a higher or lower perception of organisational politics. By this the author means that the same people who indicated preference towards a higher level of Transformational leadership style, found an overall lower level of politics in the organisation. Employees who found leaders to possess a more Laissez-Faire and Transactional leadership style generally viewed the organisation as having a higher level of politics. However, the author must point out that during general informal interview sessions at the company it was found that employees working in the production departments, or taking up lower levels positions, preferred Transactional leadership styles. These individuals enjoyed the concept of rewards and recognition and being able to persevere with the same job where set rules, regulations and policies existed to make the work a little more autonomous.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

As has been shown throughout the study, the perception of organisational politics exists in every company. It is only the level of politics that varies and whether it is perceived either negatively or positively. Overall this study has shown that managers need to be aware of, and raise their understanding of employees’ behaviour throughout various levels of the organisation. In addition, they need to be aware of the potential consequences political behaviour, displayed by employees, may have on the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation.

Organisations need to recognise the role of justice and trust in creating perceptions of organisational politics. For some organisations, the uncertainties in the environment may limit their ability to reduce factors such as job ambiguity. However, if elements of ambiguity can be managed, it has the chance to reduce the perception of politics. This can include minimising conditions where supervisors and managers make conflicting demands on employees, appraise and reward individuals unfairly because of differences in perceptions and expectations of the job, or resorting to harsh and abusive treatment of individuals when differences about the job arise.
Developing processes and human resource management practices that can address these issues will be important. The negative consequences of politics can be reduced by increasing organisational commitment. Tension in employees’ jobs resulting from a political situation, would be less when employees are committed and involved in their job. The involvement would enable them to understand the problems faced by the organisation and the political behaviour that emerged.

Leaders need to gain information about some personal and environmental factors that contribute to attenuating or magnifying the effects of perceptions of politics. Owing to the potential negative consequences of organisational politics perceptions to employees’ behaviour and attitudes, employers and leaders in the organisation must act to mitigate these negative effects of perceptions of organisational politics. This will contribute to the enhancement of organisation competitiveness and better serve the interest/objectives of the company. For a start, factors such as those examined throughout the study, can be targeted for intervention. For example, to reduce job ambiguity, management should ensure that employees are clear about their work objectives, roles and responsibilities. Management should also have clear and consistent policies and practices, including human resource policies on promotion and compensation. Performance criteria should also be specified for each job and made clear to all employees.

Valle, Kacmar and Zivnuska (2003:20) are of the opinion that supervisors and co-workers who behave opportunistically toward others should contribute to increased politics perceptions, whereas good relations with supervisors and co-workers should contribute to decreased politics perceptions. It therefore becomes important for leaders to communicate with their fellow employees. Communication throughout the organisation is one of the most underestimated means of regulating political behaviour. Social sources of information, specifically from supervisors and co-workers, may impact individual perceptions of politics.

Management may also improve employee perceptions of organisational political processes by making sure that organisational resources are allocated in an equitable or strategically justifiable manner.
Finally, management should devise strategies to develop and maintain a climate of trust within the organisation. For this purpose, management must first be aware of the factors that determine trust development or influence employees' perceptions of trust.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the current economic environment characterised by minimal resources, high competition and a trend towards a global market place, survival becomes an art in itself. Companies need to create competitive advantages wherever possible to compete in this changing environment. It is no longer good enough, or sufficient for companies to focus only on the hard business attributes like their strategies and marketing plans. Businesses must spend an ever-increasing amount of time fine tuning the softer attributes within. Employees are the most important asset a company could hope to have at their disposal. Part of the problem many companies face is that they view employees as expendable resources which can be disposed of at any given time. This could not be further from the truth. Employees cannot be viewed as mere company resources, they are people with their own emotions and perceptions, who could leave the organisation at any given time to utilise their competitive abilities elsewhere.

It therefore becomes important for organisations to invest in the wellbeing of their employees in any way possible. Companies who invest in their employees will have a better chance to achieve a greater competitive edge and ultimately succeed in the marketplace. It is for this reason that management in companies must find ways to reduce the perceptions politics plays in its organisation. Politics, if used constructively, and for the good of the organisation, has the potential to improve organisational effectiveness. On the flipside of the coin however, politics used for self-fulfilment and personal gain will damage the reputation and overall effectiveness of any organisation. Therefore, it becomes important for organisations to consider all the factors leading to politics, and to use the
resources at management’s disposal to reduce those negative political perceptions.

As identified throughout the study, one of the main resources management has at their disposal to curb the negative influences politics brings to employees, is the employees themselves. Earlier in the study the point was made that leadership is not only a role reserved for the top level of management. All employees in the organisation have the ability to lead without a title, and the role can be performed by staff throughout the organisation. Leadership gives all employees a sense of belonging and coupled with effective communication and teamwork, it will help organisations reach their full potential.

The interpersonal style, relational, and behavioural elements of leadership as a moderating influence between each of the demographic variables and political perceptions, is another interesting area for research. The role of leadership influences many key variables in the field of organisational politics. Teamwork is an appropriate managerial approach to reducing politics by increasing employees' understanding and control, particularly in organisations whose strategic objectives call for employees to work in teams.

Leadership strategies such as empowerment within transformational leadership, could serve to shift the traditional leadership approach from the leader to the employee, allowing the employees more control over the influence and outcomes within the organisational structure of the company. It is clear that if a leader wants involved and dedicated employees, he or she should find a way to lessen their negative perception of politics, or reframe those perceptions as part of an empowered, emotionally intelligent, and politically skilful workforce.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Hawley, C., 2008. 100+ Tactics for office politics, M.A. 2nd edition


Valle M, and Witt L., 2001. The moderating effects of teamwork perceptions on the


Dear Respondent

I am a post-graduate student studying towards my MBA (Masters in Business Administration) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Business School. The topic of my research project involves leadership and its influence on the perceptions of organisational politics. We believe that this study would make a contribution to increasing/improving organisational awareness of workplace politics. The empirical results of the study will be made available to the participants on request.

You are part of our selected sample of respondents whose views we seek on the above mentioned matter. We would therefore appreciate it if you could answer a few questions in this regard, which should not take more than twenty minutes of your time. Please note that the information gathered will not be used against any organisation in any way and that all your responses will be treated as strictly confidential. Please return the completed questionnaire by the 10\textsuperscript{th} of September 2011.

We thank you in advance for your highly appreciated contribution towards this study.

There are no correct or incorrect answers. Please answer the questions as accurately as possible. For each statement, mark the number which best describes your experience. For example, if you strongly agree or strongly disagree with the statement, mark that with an ‘X’. **Mark only one answer for each statement, but answer ALL QUESTIONS please.**

Thank you very much.
**ANNEXURE 2: THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT**

Questionnaire: Scanix Group Staff

Section A – Demographic Information

Please supply the following information by marking with an “X” in the appropriate box.

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your race?
   - Coloured
   - Black
   - White
   - Other (specify)

3. What is your age?
   - 18-28
   - 29-38
   - 39-48
   - 49-59
   - 60+

4. What is your highest educational level
   - Std 8/9 equivalent
   - Matric
   - National Diploma
   - B.Tech
   - Other (specify)

5. How many years of experience do you have with the Scanix Group?
   - 0-12 months
   - 1-3 years
   - 4-6 years
   - 7-9 years
   - 10 years and more
Section B: Perception of Organisational Politics

This section of the questionnaire is designed to assess to what extent politics may be found in organisations. Please indicate the degree to which you agree / disagree with the following statements by marking with an “X” in the appropriate box.

Factor 1: General Political Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Political Behaviour</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 People in this organisation attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 There has always been an influential group in this department that no one ever crosses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor 2: Go Along to Get Ahead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Go Along to Get Ahead</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 There is no place for Yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even if it means disagreeing with superiors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in this organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 It is best not to rock the boat in this organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Telling others what they want to hear is sometimes better than telling the truth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 It is safer to think what you are told than to make up your own mind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Factor 3: Pay and Promotion Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay and Promotion Policies</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Since I have worked in this department, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied politically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 I can't remember when a person received a pay increase or promotion that was inconsistent with the published policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 None of the raises I have received are consistent with the policies on how raises should be determined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The stated pay and promotion policies have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 When it comes to pay raise and promotion decisions, policies are irrelevant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Promotion around here are not valued much because how they are determined is so political</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section C: Factors influencing Organisational Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Scarcity of Resources

1.1 The different departments in this company compete for the same resources

1.2 The same advancement opportunities are available in all the company departments

#### Job/Role Ambiguity

2.1 I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job

2.2 I know what my work responsibilities are

2.3 I know how much authority I have in my job
### Personality

| 3.1 | There is a good sense of teamwork in this company |
| 3.2 | People in this company work towards collective goals |
| 3.3 | Managers in this company encourage open thinking |
| 3.4 | There is political practices such as backstabbing taking place |

### Fairness

| 4.1 | If I make a recommendation I am acknowledged for it |
| 4.2 | All employees are treated equal |
| 4.3 | There is favouritism in this company |

### Uncertainty

| 5.1 | Policy changes in this company are communicated to everyone |
| 5.2 | Company goals and objectives are shared throughout the company |
| 5.3 | There are vague performance measures in this company |

### Hierarchical Structure/Centralisation

| 6.1 | The company structure makes it difficult to have my voice heard |
| 6.2 | Recommendations I make reach top level management |
| 6.3 | I have to ask my boss/manager before doing anything |

### Leadership Styles

<p>| 7.1 | My supervisor rewards performance when his/her expectations are fulfilled |
| 7.2 | My supervisor is not present when he/she is needed |
| 7.3 | My supervisor has the ability to develop trust and confidence among employees |
| 7.4 | My supervisor avoids taking a stand on issues and doesn’t emphasise results |
| 7.5 | My supervisor speaks enthusiastically about our goals as a team |
| 7.6 | My supervisor is unaware of employee performance |
| 7.7 | My supervisor inspires others to perform |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.8</th>
<th>My supervisor is able to create a strong sense of purpose among employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>My supervisor has the ability of empathising with individual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>My supervisor encourages continuous development and growth of employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section D: General**

1. In your opinion, what is the main role of leaders in your organisation?

2. To what do you attribute workplace politics?

3. What political behaviour in this organisation will result in your consideration to leave?

4. In your opinion is there anything you feel the company could do to reduce the perceptions of organisational politics?

*Thank you for participating by answering this questionnaire.*