

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS,
EMPLOYEE POLITICAL SKILL AND JOB STRESS AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE
GHANAIAN PRIVATE SECTOR

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DECLARATION

I, Esenam Ofori, the author of this thesis do hereby declare that except for the references to other peoples' work, which I have duly acknowledged, the study herein presented is the first kind to be carried out in the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon, during the 2013/2014 academic year under the supervision of Dr. Maxwell Asumeng and Dr. Benjamin Amponsah. This work has never been submitted in any form, whole, or part for a degree in this University or elsewhere.

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This work has been submitted for examination with our approval as supervisors.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between Perceived organisational politics, Employee political skill and Job stress and further sought to explain the context of Organisational politics from the perspective of the individual. The transactional stress model guided this research. This model acknowledges that individuals can have extremely distinct attitudinal and behavioral responses to the same situation. Using a cross sectional survey design and convenience sampling, questionnaires were administered to 250 employees from the private formal sector across various industries in Ghana. Findings indicated that lower level employees perceived more politics compared to employees at high organisational levels. Political skill was found to moderate the relationship between Organisational politics and Job stress. It was also found that among the dimensions of Political skill, Networking Ability was the most predictive of Job stress. It is recommended that Political skill should be used to improve or reduce stress by training the political skill of the employees. Human resource personnel should use political skill as a determinant of higher level of performance or employee success during selection and recruitment.

DEDICATION

To

Rev. Dr. and Dr. Mrs. Ofori

Sefakor Ofori

and

Seewoe Ofori

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List of Abbreviations

POP- Perception of organisational politics

PS- Political Skill

JS- Job Stress

IV- Independent variable

DV- Dependent variable

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Organisational politics

There is a general belief that politics in organisations is a reality. Conflicts that arise as an outcome of scarce resources, decision making challenges, and the need to survive in the competitive market have all made the existence of politics very common in the work area. Organisational politics involves actions by individuals, which are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others or their organisation (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999). Pfeffer (1992, p.30) also defined politics as “the processes, the actions, the behaviors through which potential power is utilized and realized”. Another author (Dubrin, 2001, p.192) defined organisational politics as “informal approaches to gaining power through means other than merit or luck”. A definition frequently cited in the politics perceptions research is that of Mintzberg (1983). Mintzberg (1983) described organisational politics as “individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all in a technical sense, illegitimate-sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise (although it may exploit any one of those)” (p. 172). Inherent in this definition is the fact that political activity can occur, and subsequently be perceived by others, at more than one level in the organisation. Gandz and Murray (1980) define organisational politics as “a subjective state in which organisational members perceive themselves or other as intentionally seeking selfish ends in an organisational context when such ends are opposed to those of other” (p. 248).

Gandz and Murray (1980) were among the earliest researchers to suggest that a more subjective conceptualization of organisational politics is the most appropriate.

Over the years, organisational politics has been researched as a perceptive and subjective phenomenon because it involves one's perception or judgement about another's behaviour. Thus, in perception of politics, the observer is the perceiver and the one being observed is the political actor. Perception is "a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment" (Robbins, Judge & Sanghi, 2008, p. 139). Perception of organisational politics involves an individual's observation of others' self-interested behaviours, such as the careful manipulation of organisational policies (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). A person's perception could be different from the real or objective view on ground. In organisations, employees behave on the basis of what they perceive as real, not reality itself. Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989) emphasized that "organisational politics is a subjective perception, but not necessarily an objective reality" (p 157). The reason is that if an individual's perception or judgement of political behaviour in the organisation is a misinterpretation of actual events, this perception is part of his reality and so will determine the associated cognitive and behavioural responses (Porter, 1976). However, perception of organisational politics has negative work outcomes and is destructive for employees as well as for organisations (Byrne, 2005). In an organisation, the perception of politics is a measure of how political the environment is.

Research has showed that political activity is mostly perceived at higher organisational levels (Gandz & Murray, 1980). This might be because employees at managerial levels are in the position to make decisions than those at lower levels hence their actions are

perceived to be political. In their study of perceptions of and reactions to self-serving and self-promotional behaviours, Gandz and Murray (1980) found variations in the perceptions of politics across different hierarchical levels of the organisation. For instance, at higher levels of the organisation, political activity was perceived as more strong and less strong at lower levels, senior management respondents perceived the level of political activity to be less at higher levels. Similarly, the results of a study conducted by Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick, and Mayes (1980) agreed with those of Gandz and Murray, in that the level of political activity was perceived to be higher in the upper levels of the organisation. The conception that behaviour is based on subjective evaluation rather than reality means that individuals observing the same event, or operating in the same environment, may form significantly different perceptions of that event or environment. Heider (1958) noted that social perception is a constructive process that incorporates perceptual filtering, selection, and interpretational errors.

There has been a recent course of interest in the study of Perception of politics even though researchers have been studying this concept in the last twenty years (Ferris et al., 1989). Numerous articles have been published in top management and psychology journals (Atinc, Darrat, Fuller, & Parker, 2010; Breaux, Munyon, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2009; Chang, Rosen & Levy, 2009; Ferris & Treadway, 2012; Hochwarter, Ferris, Laird, Treadway, & Gallagher, 2010; Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, & Zivnuska, 2011; Kacmar, Collins, Harris, & Judge, 2009; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Thus, organisational politics continues to be a relevant topic of interest to organisational scientists.

According to Ferris et al. (1989) the perception of organisational politics consists of three factors which are described as; 'General Political Behaviour', 'Go along to get ahead' and 'Pay and Promotion'. 'General political behaviour' refers to where political behaviour is high in organisations because no rules and regulations are available or are not clearly defined to govern actions (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997). Most organisations have limited resources that must be allocated to meet their various needs. Individuals and groups might not agree on how these resources should be apportioned, some may seek to gain those resources for themselves or for their interest groups, which gives rise to organisational politics. They will involve themselves in behaviours such as bargaining, alliance building, and resolving conflicting interests in order to gain these resources. 'Go Along to Get Ahead' involves employees remaining silent or no action in order to get valuable resources. Kacmar and Carlson (1997) further said that 'go along to get to the ahead', can be a logical and favourable approach to take in order to precede one's own self-interests and benefits when working in a political environment. 'Pay and Promotion Policies' is the last dimension of perception of politics. It involves how organisations and employees behave politically through policy implementation and decision making (Ferris et al., 1989a). Normally, performance evaluation is the basis of pay and promotion policies in organisations. It has been found that performance evaluation and promotion systems are often quite political in nature (Dyke, 1990).

According to Dubrin (2001) a number of individual and organisational factors contribute to political behaviour. They are;

Pyramid-shaped organisation structure

A pyramid-shaped organisation has power concentrated at the top of the hierarchy. Each hierarchy on the organisational chart has more power than the one below it. Employees at the very bottom of the hierarchy have little or no power. Most modern organisations have fewer layers in the organisational chart than they previously had which makes the competition for power more intense.

Subjective standards of performance

When employees perceive that there is no objective or fair means of judging their performance and suitability for promotion, they tend to indulge themselves in politics. In the same way, when leaders or managers have no objective way of determining best performers from non-performers, they will resort to favouritism.

Environmental uncertainty and turbulence

People who work in an ambiguous and unpredictable environment tend to behave politically. They rely on organisational politics to create a favourable impression because ambiguity makes it difficult to determine what they have to accomplish. The uncertainty, and insecurity created by organisational change (i.e. mergers or downsizing) is a major contributor to politics at work.

Emotional insecurity

Some workers lack confidence in their own skills and abilities. They therefore resort to political behaviours to ingratiate themselves with superiors.

Manipulative tendencies

Others engage in political behavior because they want to manipulate others, sometimes for their own personal advantage.

Also, in their model of upward influence behaviour, Porter, Allen, and Angle (1981) suggested that the decision to engage in political activity was partly driven by individuals' need for power, Machiavellianism, locus of control, risk-seeking propensity, and lack of personal power. Research has also shown that what is political in one organisation may not be considered political in another (Mintzberg, 1983), meaning that individuals take organisational context into account when making evaluative judgments of the political nature of their environment.

Aside the fact that political behaviours are informal unlike the formal job requirements in organisation, Sussman, Adams, Kuzmits, and Rocho (2002) found that different channels of communication are used by employees for sending politically motivated and task related messages. While written communication was preferred used to communicate work related messages, Face to face communication was preferred for conveying political messages. Thus, at least two people are necessary to show some political behaviour.

Organisational Politics and Job Outcomes

Studies have found that perception of politics in an organisation has several outcomes. The research on perception of organisational politics shows that it has a negative influence on numbers of job outcomes including job stress (Azeem, Mahmood, Ul-Haq, Sharif, Qurashi, & Hijazi, 2010), turnover intention (Byrne, 2005), and contextual performance (Witt et al., 2002). Voyer (1994) also found out that employees with higher levels of somatic tension, burnout and general fatigue were more likely to perceive their work environment as political. These outcomes are normally triggered by the sense of

inequity and unfairness in the organisation. Perception of politics creates a lot of uncertainties and employees do not know what to expect since decisions are no longer made based on rules and policies.

Job Stress

Stress is an unavoidable effect of socioeconomic complexity and to some extent; it's a stimulant as well. Job stress also known as work stress or occupational stress has been defined as the experience of negative emotional states such as irritation, frustration, worry, anxiety and depression due to aspects related to work (Kyriacou, 2001). According to Beehr (1990), stress can be defined as any feature of the workplace that causes an employee to experience discomfort. There are different causes of stress in the workplace. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the main factors that lead to stress at the workplace are; heavy workloads, lack of opportunity for growth and advancement, unrealistic job expectations, lack of job security, lack of participation in decision-making, work life balance, ineffective management style and unpleasant work environments. Job stress affects both men and women, although there are some gender differences in certain aspects. Stress is a highly personalized phenomenon and can vary widely even in identical situations for different reasons. The severity of job stress depends on the degree at which demands are being made on an individual and the individual's sense of control or ability he or she has in dealing with them. Studies show that workers who perceive they have high demands and have little control over these demands are at increased risk of psychological disorders (depression, anxiety, post- traumatic stress disorder), maladaptive behaviours (substance abuse, aggression), cognitive impairment (memory, concentration problems), high blood

pressure, immune system dysfunction and cardiovascular diseases. In turn, these conditions may lead to poor work performance, higher absenteeism, less work productivity or even injury. Selye (1975) treated stress as the response of the organism to stressful events, which may be psychological, physiological, or behavioural. In essence, employees who perceive perception of organisational politics as stressful and have little or no control over it will try to cope with the stress by putting up behaviours which are detrimental to the growth of the organisation. These behaviours as mentioned earlier are lower morale, lower commitment and satisfaction, turnover, and work deviance.

Political Skill

According to Perrewe et al. (2000), political skill is a remedy for workplace stressors; the use of political skills can decrease job stress. Political skill is conceptualized as directly reducing executive's perceptions of organisational and extra organisational stressors (Perrewe et al., 2000). That is to say if people have political skills they would be in the position to control the incidences and interactions at work thereby being able to cope and reduce stress. Political skill is characterized by "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and organisational objectives" (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas, & Frink, 2005: 127). People with political skill understand social interactions well and accurately interpret their behaviour and behaviour of others. They are keenly attuned to diverse social settings and have high self-awareness. Pfeiffer (1992) referred to this characteristic as being sensitive to others and he argued that the ability to identify with others is critical to obtaining things for oneself. Politically

skilled individuals have an unassuming and convenience personal style that asserts a powerful influence on others around them.

Dimensionality of Political Skill

Literature indicates that the political skill construct has four critical sub dimensions (Ferris et al., 2005). They are; social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity.

Social Astuteness - Individuals possessing political skill are smart observers of others. They understand social interactions well and accurately interpret their behaviour and the behaviour of others. They are keenly attuned to diverse social settings and have high self-awareness. Pfeffer(1992) referred to this characteristic as being sensitive to others, and he argued that the ability to identify with others is critical to obtaining things for oneself. Socially astute individuals are often seen as ingenious, even clever, in dealing with others.

Interpersonal Influence - Politically skilled individuals have an unassuming and convincing personal style that exerts a powerful influence on others around them. Interpersonal influence allows people to adapt their behaviour to different situations to elicit the desired responses from others. The interpersonal influence dimension captures what Pfeffer (1992) referred to as “flexibility,” which involves adapting one’s behaviour to different targets of influence in different contextual settings to achieve one’s goals.

Networking Ability - Individuals with political skill are proficient at identifying and developing diverse contacts and networks of people. People in these networks tend to hold assets seen as valuable and necessary for successful personal and organisational

gains. They easily develop friendships and build strong, beneficial alliances and coalitions. Also, individuals high in networking ability ensure they are well positioned to both create and take advantage of opportunities (Pfeffer, 1992). Finally, they are often highly skilled negotiators and deal makers and are adept at conflict management.

Apparent Sincerity - Politically skilled individuals appear to others as having high levels of integrity and as being authentic, sincere, and genuine. They are, or appear to be, honest and forthright. This dimension of political skill is important if influence attempts are going to be successful because it focuses on the perceived intentions of the behaviour exhibited. Perceived intentions or motives are important and have been argued to modify the interpretation and labeling of behaviour. As noted by Jones (1990), influence attempts will be successful when actors are perceived to possess no ulterior motives. Individuals high in apparent sincerity inspire trust and confidence in and from those around them because their actions are not interpreted as manipulative or coercive.

The four dimensions of political skill are assumed to be related to one another. Although the dimensions are presumed to correlate, they remain separate constructs.

Organisational Politics, Employee Political Skill and Job Stress

Scholars have characterized organisations as political arena and thus, a major source of stress. A process that can be used to cope with stress is the use of political skill which is a built-in antidote to the consequences of stressful environments. Employees who have political skill are less likely to perceive their organisations as stressful. Also, political skill is seen as a moderator between stressors and strain. Thus, even when employees perceive the organisation as being stressful, political skill can be used as a coping

mechanism to reduce the negative effects of stress. In essence, one needs to be politically skilled to reduce and cope with stress which results from perceived organisational politics.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Organisational Politics seems to be an unavoidable part of the human institution. Generally speaking, studies on organisational politics have shown politics perceptions to predict a host of adverse outcomes. However, instances have surfaced where these relationships have been inconsistent (Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson 1995). Ferris et al. (2002) suggested that level-of-analysis issues may be one explanation for these conflicting findings. It is in line with this argument that this research seeks to find out if perceptions of politics differ at different organisational levels and how these employees react to politics at different organisational levels. Also, the relationship between organisational politics and job stress is not linear as suggested by some studies. Harris et al. (2007) noted that political activity might be more stressful if individuals believe they have little power or ability to influence political outcomes. A newly developed construct 'political skill' has been found to buffer workplace stress and Mintzberg (1983) described it as the networking abilities and social skills needed to navigate complex environments successfully. This study will find out the moderating role of employee political skill in the relationship between perception of organisational politics and job stress.

A limitation of most political skill studies was that they used only self-assessments of political skill. Although self-reports of political skill have been shown to be significantly related to peer and supervisor assessments (Ferris et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2007), it would

have been more informative if both measures had been included in the study (Blickle et al., 2011; Connelly & Ones, 2010). Political skill is a self-report measure and so is subject to several biases which question the reliability of previous results. This present study will collect data from multiple sources (job incumbent and peer) to reduce the biases and consequently increase the reliability and validity of findings.

Political skill researches have generally focused on managers or employees in managerial positions. There is little knowledge on subordinate use of political skill to cope with stress. In this study, the researcher would compare the use of political skill among employees at all levels.

Also, political skill is a multi-dimensional construct which has four sub-dimensions. It is likely that some dimensions have greater impact than others. One of the main goals of the present study is to gain a better understanding of how the various dimensions of political skill contribute to the prediction of job stress. Most prior research has not yielded results to indicate which of these dimensions are the most important, instead focusing only on the contribution of a single overall political skill dimension (Ahearn et al., 2004; Semadar et al., 2006).

Most of the studies on organisational politics have been conducted in the USA (Vigoda, 2001), a country that has been classified to be high on individualism and low on power distance (Hofstede, 1983). Studies by Romm and Drory (1988) and Ralston et al. (1994) on organisational politics in different cultures have provided the implication that reaction to perception of politics may differ across countries. This study seeks to expand such research in a different cultural setting (Ghana), one that is characterized by lower individualism and higher power distance (Hofstede, 1983).

In sum, this study seeks to research the relationship between organisational politics, employee political skill and job stress in Ghanaian Organisations.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to contribute to the organisational politics literature by understanding better the context of organisational politics and to examine the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics and stress. Also, this study seeks to comprehend political skill which is an individual characteristic and to determine its ability to reduce or cope with stress.

1.4 Aims or Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to understand the relationship between organisational politics, employee political skill and job stress. Specifically, the following objectives are proposed:

- i) To examine the relationship between organisational level and perception of politics
- ii) To determine the relationship between organisational politics and stress
- iii) To determine if political skill moderates the relationship between perception of politics and stress
- iv) To examine the relationship between political skill and job stress
- v) To determine if certain dimensions of political skill exerts more impact than other dimension on stress.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will be useful to organizations and their employees. This study will be addressing the limitations in previous studies. It will also create awareness on the importance of political skill in dealing with workplace stress. The study will therefore aid in creating selection processes and development programmes that will identify employee political skills as a component of job performance. This study will also be a piece of contribution to the current knowledge in the area of organizational politics in Ghana.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter details the theoretical framework of the study, review of related literature, statement of hypothesis and operational definition of key terms.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Transactional Model of Stress and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

Transactional Stress Model

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping is a framework for evaluating the processes of coping with stressful events (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). Stressful experiences are seen as person-environment transactions. These transactions depend on the influence of the external stressor. It is mediated firstly by how the individual appraises the stressor and secondly by the social and cultural resources at his or her disposal (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977).

When an individual is confronted with a stressor, the person evaluates the potential threat. Thus, this model asserts that the stress process begins with an appraisal of whether a stressor is threatening to personal well-being. This is known as primary appraisal. *Primary appraisal* is a person's judgment of an event as to whether it is stressful, positive, controllable, challenging or irrelevant. This initial assessment involves the question, "Am I in trouble or being benefited, now or in the future, or in what way?" The individual then determines the degree to which the event poses a potential threat, harm, or

opportunity. Facing a stressor, the *second appraisal* follows, which is an assessment of the coping abilities or resources and options of the individuals (Cohen, 1984). Secondary appraisals address what one can do about the situation. Actual *coping efforts* aimed at regulation of the problem give rise to *outcomes* of the coping process. If labelled a threat, the individual assesses “What if anything can be done about it?” Lazarus and Cohen's model proposes that the individual then evaluates if the threat exceeds coping capabilities, subsequently influencing selection of coping strategies. This model acknowledges that individuals can have extremely different attitudinal and behavioural responses to the same situation.

Evaluation of the Transactional Stress Model

The transactional stress model integrates personal and environmental issues and focuses on cognitive appraisal to evaluate the threat posed by the encounter which can result in stress. This theory therefore suggests that the interpretation of an event is more important than the event itself. It also recognizes the fact that individual differences exist, thus the manner in which we appraise a stressor varies.

In applying this theory to the current study, observers or employees take steps to interpret information and categorize them. For instance, if an employee notices that his subordinate who is his manager's friend has been given a promotion when he does not deserve it, he might perceive this act as political and therefore threatening and stressful. He interprets it as ‘only the manager's friends get rewards, performance in the organisation does not matter and since he was not a friend of the manager, he would

never get a promotion'. He can either decide to lower his commitment, or quit the organisation or become a friend of the manager.

The Transactional Stress Model by Lazarus and Cohen (1977)

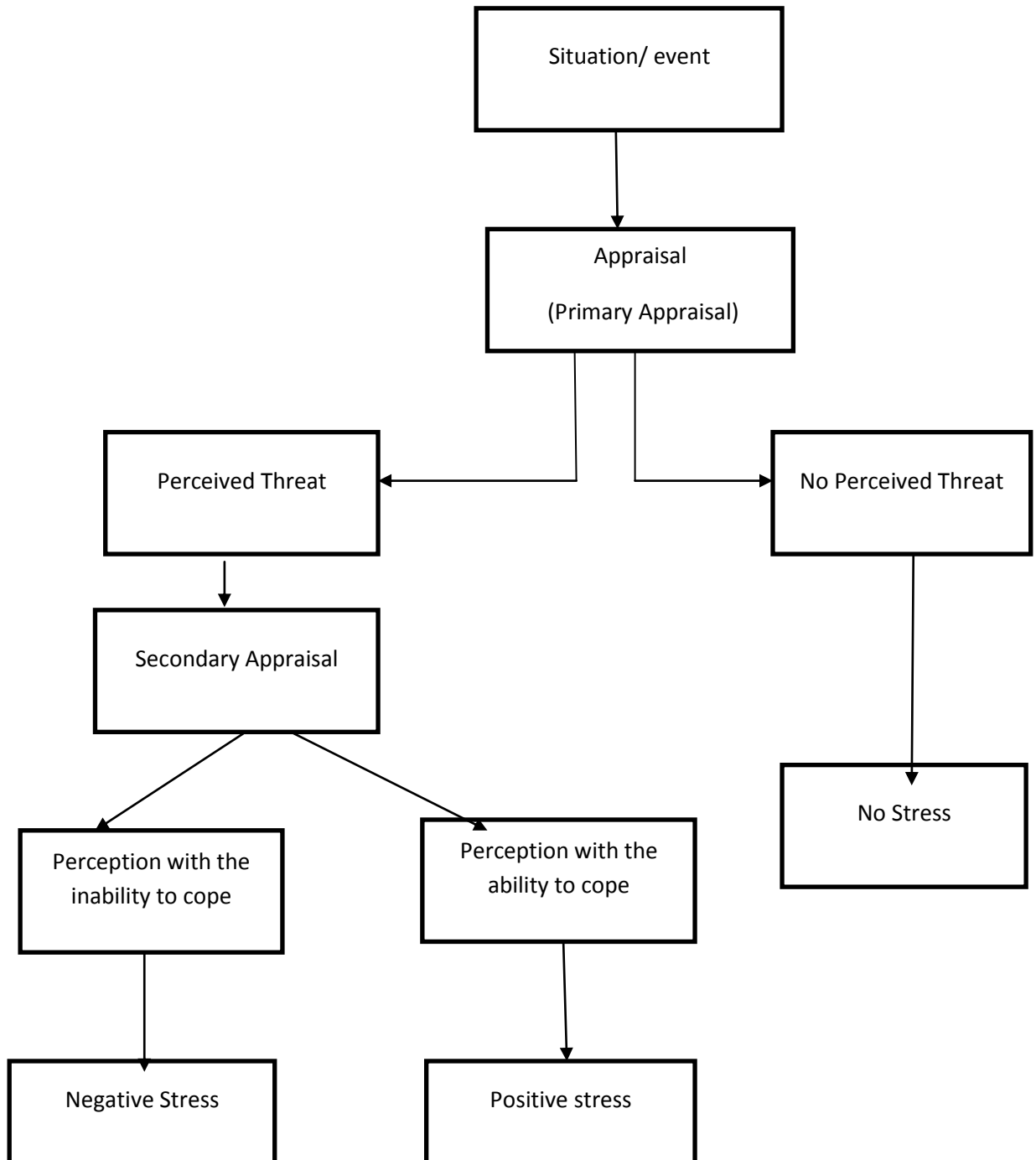


Fig 2.1 The Transactional Stress Model

Figure 2. 1 is a conceptual model of the transactional stress model by Lazarus and Cohen (1977). As can be seen, when individuals encounter a situation or event, they assess or evaluate the event to see if it is a threat to their well being or not. Individuals who do not evaluate the event as a threat will not be stressed (no stress). On the other hand, if the event is perceived as a threat, there is then a second appraisal. In the second appraisal, individuals assess themselves as to whether they have the ability to cope with this threat. If individuals perceive that the threat exceeds their coping abilities, it leads to negative stress, but if they are equipped with the ability to cope with the threat then this is referred to as positive stress.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Model

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Model (Hobfoll, 1989) is an integrated model of stress that encompasses several stress theories. This model asserts that, individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources, including objects (homes, clothes, food), personal characteristics (self-esteem), conditions (being married or living with someone provides social support, more financial security), and energies (time, money, and knowledge). The study of how people gain, use, and deplete their resources has been largely concerned with the individual's ability to cope with stress and strain (Hobfoll, 1989; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). However, the acquisition and protection of resources is comparable to the motivational goals of the political processes in organisations. Similar to Pfeffer (1992) and Mintzberg's (1983, 1985) arguments regarding political activity, COR theory suggests that individuals seek to garner, protect, and retain resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

Furthermore, this theory stipulates that stress occurs when resources are lost or threatened or when there is a failure of gain after a significant investment of other resources. According to COR theory, resources can be objects, conditions, personal characteristics, or energies (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1998). Objects are things such as clothing and other material possessions, conditions encompass things such as material status and organisational tenure, personal characteristics include such things as self-esteem, hardiness, and skills, and they help safeguard individuals from stress, and energy resources include such things as money, time, and knowledge, and they allow the acquisition of other resources (Hobfoll, 2002).

Evaluation of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

The COR theory's framing of resources in this manner appears to present a paradox in relation to political skill (Hobfoll, 1998). Political skill is a personal resource in itself. However, when activated by resource threat or opportunity, political skill serves as a critical internal resource that facilitates the acquisition of valued resources in organisations. This line of reasoning is consistent with COR theorists' arguments that internal resources, those resources "possessed by the self or are within the domain of the self" (Hobfoll, 1998, p. 57), may assist in the management of external resource pools. As such, politically skilled individuals are in a better position to accumulate and protect scarce organisational resources.

2.2 Review of related literature

The literary discussion concerning organisational politics began in the 1970's with a focus on aspects of power and bureaucracy in the work place which focused on

management and leadership (Drory & Romm, 1988). Mintzberg (1985) acknowledges that the topic received only a little exposure in the literature prior to the 1980's and associates the phenomenon primarily with conflict. The initial literary explorations attempted to justify its existence and relevance and struggled with defining the experience (Drory & Romm, 1988). In recent years, organisational politics have been expansively studied. Organisational politics has been defined as actions that are inconsistent with accepted organisational norms and are designed to promote self-interest even at the expense of organisational goals (Valle & Witt, 2001). Gandz and Murray (1980) asserted that politics perceptions are the result of several individual and organisational characteristics. They argue that organisational politics is a subjective, rather than an objective reality. Thus, perceptions of politics can have an effect upon employee attitudes and behaviours. Ferris et al. (1989) provided the theoretical model on which much of the empirical literature rests. The model positions perceptions of politics as a product of the organisation (centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, span of control), the job/environment (autonomy, skill variety, feedback, advancement opportunity), and individual influences (age, sex, Machiavellianism, self-monitoring). The model proposed by Ferris et al., (1989) was the first to provide a conceptual understanding of the potential outcomes of perceptions of politics in organisations.

Organisational Politics

Research has consistently shown that political activity is higher under conditions of low formalization (Fedor, Ferris, Harrell-Cook & Russ, 1998). Although organisational politics can be self-serving and are sometimes destructive, political activity is required to move organisations beyond the status quo (Kanter, 1983; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Pichault,

1995). Under these circumstances, political behaviour is seen to be functional, rather than dysfunctional, and this functionalism is what characterizes politics as positive. Holden (1998) also suggests that positive politics are behaviours designed to help others with the goal of helping both the organisation and the person playing the politics. For instance; portraying a professional image, publicizing ones accomplishment and complimenting others. Negative politics are manipulative behaviours designed to achieve personal gain at the expense of others and the organisation. Examples are backstabbing, withholding important information, and spreading rumours. Fedor and Maslyn (2002) noted that political behaviour can be considered positive when it is the only means available to organisational members to get things accomplished or to raise issues that the dominant coalition deems inappropriate at a particular time. Just like the traditional views of organisational politics, the perceived behaviour is still not sanctioned and may be pursued at least partly for self-interest, but the outcomes can be seen as beneficial to the actors, the work group, or the organisation. For example, this could occur in a situation in which a member of an organisational team bypasses the chain of command to address a key problem facing the organisation. As such, positive and negative political behaviour may be similar forms of behaviour, often unsanctioned and self-serving. The major differences lie in who benefits from the outcomes. As with the functional approach, individuals can and do perform similar acts, but for very different reasons (Snyder, 1993). Alternatively, if employees perceive high levels of political activity, regardless of whether the outcomes are positive or negative, may yield to negative effects, suggesting an additive relationship between positive and negative politics. This explanation relies on the assertion that what is most distressing about politics to individuals is not its outcomes, but its predictability

or controllability (Ferris et al., 1993), so positive outcomes for political activity will still result in negative relationships with individual attitudes and behaviours.

Kakabadse and Parker (1984) stated that the intention behind using politics in organisations is the changing the balance of power. Pfeffer (1992, p.30) defined power as “the ability to influence behaviour, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do” where as politics was defined as the processes through which this potential power is utilized (Pfeffer, 1992). Buchanan and Badham (2007) defines power as the ability to get people to do what you want them to do and politics is using different kind of techniques to put power in action.

Organisational Politics and Job outcomes

Several researches have attempted to identify the outcomes of politics perceptions in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2002; Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Generally, these studies have shown politics perceptions to predict a host of negative outcomes. For instance; the relationship between perception of organisational politics, job attitudes, and several other work outcomes was examined among 303 public sector employees in Israel by Vigoda (2000). Results indicated that perception of organisational politics was found to have had a negative relationship with job attitudes (job satisfaction and organisational commitment), a positive relationship with intention to leave the organisation (exit), and a stronger positive relationship with negligent behaviour (neglect). A weak negative relationship was found between perception of organisational politics and employees’ performance as reported by supervisors. Perception of organisational politics also made a unique contribution to explaining variance among the work outcomes, beyond the

variance explained by job attitudes and personal variables. Another research was conducted by Gull and Zaidi (2012) to identify the effect of organisational politics on employees' job satisfaction in the health sector of Lahore Pakistan. With a sample size of 250 employees, the research determined the relation, association and impact of organisational politics and its dimensions on employees' job satisfaction. Findings of the study showed an inverse relationship between the perception of organisational politics and job satisfaction. Thus the higher perception of organisational politics leads to decrease the level of employees' job satisfaction and lower perception of organisational politics leads to increase the level of employees' job satisfaction.

However, instances have surfaced where these relationships have been inconsistent. For example, Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, and Toth (1997) did not find a significant relationship between politics perceptions and organisational citizenship behaviours, while Vigoda (2000) found that perceptions of politics did predict extra-role behaviours (organisational citizenship). Similarly, Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, and Anthony (1999) found that perceptions of politics predicted overall satisfaction, whereas Parker, Dipboye, and Jackson (1995) did not. Ferris et al. (2002) suggested that level-of-analysis issues may be one explanation for these conflicting findings.

Organisational Politics and Stress

Politics and stress are similar in characteristics. They are both characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty. Political behaviour is an undercover illegitimate and highly predominated by with uncertainty. Similarly, stress is characterized by ambiguity. According to Gilmore et al. (1996) politics and stress creates situations where people may

gain or lose depending on how they react to the situation. Organisational politics have been thought to function as a work-related stressor (Ferris et al., 1989; Jex & Beehr, 1991; Vigoda, 2002). Ferris et al. (1996) explained the relationship between political behaviour as a stressor that leads to job strain in several ways. Those facing political or stressful situations can view them as opportunities or threats. That is, individuals can gain or lose, depending on how they react to the situation (Gilmore et al., 1996). Those who are able to react constructively would have lower levels of job strain than those who fail to react or react in a negative manner. Second, exactly how people decide to react to a political or stressful situation is based on their perceptions of the situation, since both political and stressful situations are perceptual in nature (Lewin, 1936). Thus, a situation that one person views as a serious threat may be viewed as a trivial issue, resulting in completely different responses and outcomes by people. Finally, political and stressful situations share the characteristic of uncertainty and ambiguity (Ferris et al., 1996; Vigoda, 2002).

Organisational politics is not a passing event but a continuous activity that encompasses and operates in the organisational sphere, therefore, its impact on employees accumulates over time. Gilmore et al. (1996) proposed organisational politics as one source of stress at the workplace with the potential for dysfunctional outcomes at both the individual and the organisational level.

Several studies to date have mentioned the possibility that employees' political behaviour may lead to various stress-related impacts in the workplace (Ferris et al., 1996; Gilmore et al., 1996; Jex & Beehr, 1991; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). Stress arises when people face situations that they appraise as taxing or exceeding their resources and endangering

their wellbeing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A political work environment is one of such situations. 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. This uncertain, risky, and threatening workplace context increases the level of job stress experienced (Cropanzano et al., 1997) for those who are unable to avoid such contexts as well as for those who choose to join in the politicking. Cropanzano et al. (1997), Gadot and Talmud (2010) and Sowmya and Panchanatham (2011) for example, found two samples of employees to report higher levels of work stress when they perceived their work environment to be political. In another study by Poon (2002), a model of perceptions of organisational politics was developed and tested using a sample of 208 Malaysian employees from different occupations. Results of study showed that job ambiguity, scarcity of resources, and trust climate were significant predictors of perceptions of organisational politics. Perceptions of organisational politics also mediated the effects of these situational antecedents on job stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Specifically, employees who perceived a high level of politics in their workplace reported higher levels of stress, lower levels of job satisfaction, and higher levels of intention to quit than did employees who perceived a low level of politics. Similarly, in a recent study by Rashid et al. (2013), perception of politics was found to significantly predict job stress. There is enough evidence that there is a relation between organisational politics and job stress. According to studies conducted by Ferris et al. (1996) employees who feel that they cannot cope with an unfair, unjust and political environment and have other employment opportunities, usually adopt a 'flight' response and quit their jobs. Other employees, who do not have alternatives, choose to stay and

decide whether to 'fight' the system or adjust and abide by its norms (Selye, 1975). Either way, those who stay in the organisation are exposed to a greater risk of stress due to their inability to cope with the political realities of organisations.

Cultural differences in Perception of politics

Most of organisational politics studies were done in North America and Asia. Out of 32 empirical studies from academic databases, about 81% were based on North America Samples and 12.5% used Israeli samples, the exact cultural context of the remaining sample was not reported (Vigoda, 2001). Studies by Romm and Drory (1988) and Ralston et al. (1994) on organisational politics in different cultures have provided the implication that reaction to perception of politics may differ across countries. Similarly, in a comparative study by Vigoda (2001) to analyse the reactions to organisational politics in two cultures (Britain and Israel) supported the hypotheses of differences in reactions to Perception of politics across cultures. Ralston et al. (1994) compared ethical perceptions of organisational politics among American and Hong Kong managers. Differences were found on a variety of dimensions. They focused on ethical differences and actual influence tactics instead of perceptions of organisational politics. Their findings indicate that ethical perceptions of organisational politics changed according to employees' social background and specific culture. This finding is meaningful, providing solid ground for the assumption that reactions to organisational politics may also differ across cultures. A slightly different perspective was adopted by Rao et al. (1997) who compared actual political behaviour as represented by influence tactics used by Japanese managers with those reported by Kipnis et al. (1980) in a sample of North American managers. The researchers found that Japanese managers used some unique influence

tactics and strategies that were less common among American managers (socializing or personal development). Like Ralston et al.'s (1994) study, this research did not examine perceptions of politics directly. Nonetheless, it provided the rationality for the idea that culture plays an important role in creating an atmosphere of organisational politics.

In light of the above studies, the cross-cultural approach to workplace politics a promising and challenging research endeavour. Mintzberg (1983) suggested that the internal political game in a workplace is highly influenced by external forces relevant to the cultural, political and economic systems surrounding the organisation. This argument was supported by Peterson (1990) in an extensive interdisciplinary study of political behaviour. According to Peterson's idea, as well as subsequent rationalization by Sobel (1993), a spillover effect exists in social life that allows a transmission of political norms, values and codes of behaviour from one arena (the general social one) to another (the organisational one). People may respond to organisational politics in various ways and degrees, depending on their values, norms and understanding of reality. This idea is also supported by studies which examined the relationship between non-work and work domains. By this approach, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours in one social arena (non work) diffuse into other areas of social life (the workplace). Thus, a national political environment/culture may be reflected in the organisational environment/culture (Cohen & Vigoda, 1999). One's attitudes and behaviours regarding non-work aspects such as family, leisure activities and membership of social clubs can affect one's attitudes and behaviours in the work setting (Near, Rice & Hunt 1987).

This is a possible way in which national culture manifests itself in a more narrow organisational culture as represented by work attitudes and behaviours. There is a second

hypothetical explanation which is also logical. It arises from the theory of conflict management and its interpretation within different cultures (Hofstede, 1983; Triandis, 1994, 1995). According to this line of thought, cultural differences in values may determine how individuals prefer to deal with conflicts (Leung & Wu, 1990). These studies distinguished more individualistic from more collectivist cultures, and sought to relate the differences to a variety of organisational dynamics. Ohbuchi et al. (1999) suggest that people in highly individualistic cultures view interactions in a given sphere as occurring between independent individuals, so disagreements and conflicts are accepted as a natural and inevitable aspect of social life. In other cultures (collectivist or with high appreciation of tradition and social norms), on the other hand, people dislike social disagreements and therefore are expected to show less tolerance to individualistic influence tactics and to internal organisational politics that exceed traditional usage. Similarly, cultures in which aggressive political activities and offensive influence tactics are considered violations of desirable norms and acceptable codes of behaviour will differ from other cultures in which political behaviour by individuals is treated as a necessity stemming from environmental constraints or as acceptable human activity.

Political skill and job stress

Political skill is a recently developed interpersonal competency construct which is defined as “the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organisational objectives” (Ferris et al., 2005: 127). Research shows that the origin of political skill can be traced back to the early work of psychologist E.L. Thorndike who with his

entrepreneur friend, Dale Carnegie were interested in similar writings in the early 1900 in New York. In 1920, Thorndike introduced the concept of social intelligence which referred to understanding people and acting on that knowledge in influential ways. Carnegie (1936) through his famous teachings on interpersonal effectiveness taught certain basic principles on how to work with and through others. This scientific and applied work formed the foundation for the importance of social and interpersonal competence in organisations and specifically, political skill.

Politically skilled individuals know what to do in different social situations at work and they also know how to do such things in a manner that disguises other motives. It is not that politically skilled individuals have ulterior motives but regardless of their motives, their behaviour will always be the same. Political skill is a tool. It is independent from intelligence because it is a different kind of competency which does not depend for its effectiveness on mental acuity. Aspects of political skill can be dispositional or inherited but others can be developed or shaped.

Political skill is a social-cognitive predictor that indicates the extent to which an individual engages in self-regulation during interpersonal behaviours (Jawahar et al., 2008). As such, politically skilled individuals engage in each of the three cognitive sub-functions proposed in Bandura's (1991) social-cognitive theory of self-regulation: self-monitoring, self-judgement, and self-reaction. First, social astuteness allows individuals who are politically skilled to self-monitor their behaviour as well as the effect that their behaviour has on others. Second, apparent sincerity allows these individuals to self-judge their behaviour with regards to its ability to coerce others towards gaining results. The self-reactive sub-function is obvious in the way that politically skilled individuals learn to

adapt their behaviours to specific individuals and to groups in order to exert interpersonal influence within their networks. Therefore, politically skilled individuals maybe higher performers due to their ability to effectively monitor, arbitrate, and moderate their behaviours in a manner that elicits favourable responses from the interpersonal and organisational environments in which they operate.

Political skill is believed to have both developmental and dispositional influences (Ferris et al., 2007, 2001), and it is a competency that can be developed through training, mentoring, and socialization (Ferris, Anthony, Kolodinsky, Gilmore, & Harvey, 2002; Ferris et al., 2008; Pfeffer, 2010).

Political skill is suggested to be the coping mechanism which helps individuals cope with negative effects of stressors on job outcomes (Harvey et al., 2007). Organisations are inherently political arenas (Mintzberg, 1983), signifying that to be successful at work is not the result of performance alone. Based on the political characterizations of organisations by Pfeffer (1981) and Mintzberg (1983), Ferris et al. (2005) proposed that some individuals are better at understanding fellow employees and adjusting their behaviour to situational demands. These individuals are referred to as politically skilled. Persons who are high on political skill use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that promote personal and organisational goals.

Individuals with political skills are adopting at identifying diverse contacts and networks of the people. People in these networks tend to hold assets seen as valuable accessory for successful personal and organisational gains. Because of their typical subtle style, political skilled individuals easily develop friendships and build, beneficial alliances and collisions. With this self-confidence in their abilities to interact with others and achieve

objectives, politically skilled individuals are able to reduce the amount of stress felt at work.

According to Perrewe et al. (2000), a political skill is an antidote for workplace stressors; the effective use of political skills can reduce job stress. Thus, political skills were conceptualized as directly reducing executive's perceptions of organisational and extra organisational stressors (Perrewe et al., 2000). If there were more political skills, then people were more confident about their ability to control images, impressions and interactions at work, which in turn, help them cope up and reduce stress. In another study by Perrewe et al., (2004), they investigated the moderation of political skill to reduce negative effect of job stress. This means that the people having high level of political skill will easily adjust to and cope with negative effects of perception of politics and consequently their job stress will be lowered due to buffering effects of political skill.

Additionally, the model of Ferris et al. (2007) proposes that political skill should improve stress management through feelings of control over others and their environment. Those high in political skill perceive their environmental stressors as less threatening because they have personal security and self-confidence (Perrewe et al., 2004). Ferris et al. (2007) also asserted that it is possible that political skill enables stress management by allowing individuals to avoid those aspects of work that are potential stressors. For instance, perceptions of organisational politics are a pervasive hindrance stressor in organisations (Chang et al., 2009) and generally reflect self-interested behaviours (Ferris et al., 1989).

Politics are stressful and threatening because they create ambiguous links between performance and outcomes which introduces great uncertainty into the work environment (Breux, Munyon, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2009). Yet, politically skilled individuals have a

well-developed understanding of the workplace, which allows them to accurately gauge their work environment and the motives of others (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005). Furthermore, through their extensive networking ability and authentic nature, politically skilled individuals are able to gain access to information about their work environment and those around them (Ferris et al., 2007; Perrewe et al., 2004; Treadway et al., 2004). These factors, combined with their sense of personal security (self-confidence) to navigate political arenas (Ferris et al., 2007), likely result in politically skilled individuals not perceiving their environment as threatening, which should lead to lower perceptions of organisational politics.

Literature also shows that political skill also should affect psychological and physiological reactions to stressors (strain). Within the stress literature, political skill is categorized as an effective characteristic for coping (Hochwarter, Ferris, Gavin, Perrewe, Hall, & Frink, 2007; Perrewe et al., 2004; Zellars, Perrewe, Rossi, Tepper, & Ferris, 2008). Therefore, consistent with this body of literature, it is anticipated that political skill would attenuate personal evaluations of stressful circumstances (Ferris, Kane, Summers, & Munyon, 2011). Because politically skilled individuals are capable of securing needed resources (Perrewe et al., 2004), they can buffer themselves from the negative effects of stressors, resulting in reduced strain (Hobfoll, 1989).

On the other hand, individuals who possess low levels of political skill are more likely to experience adverse outcomes in strain-inducing environments as they do not have the same capability to secure resources. Low levels of political skill have been related to higher job tension and general anxiety (Perrewe et al., 2005). Moreover, individuals with

low political skill perceive more threats, less control, and less security in their environments (Ferris et al., 2007)

Political skill has been theorized to demonstrate neutralizing effects on the strain consequences resulting from workplace stressors. Politically skilled individuals are positioned to perceive workplace stressors as less threatening, perhaps due to their own sense of control and calm self-confidence, which tends to serve as an antidote to the potentially dysfunctional strain reactions such stressors, can produce (Perrewe et al., 2000). Given non-significant direct effect between political skill and psychological strain, meta-analytic moderator tests are needed when sufficient power exists.

There is therefore the evidence that political skill plays a role in determining how employees react to social stressors, such as Perception of politics. Brouer et al. (2006) identified Perception of politics as a work stressor and demonstrated that political skill attenuates the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics and feelings of depression. Similarly Kolodinsky, Treadway and Ferris (2007) demonstrated that the relationship between subordinate rationality (the use of reasoning and rational persuasion to influence others) and two outcomes (supervisor liking and perceived similarity to the subordinate) was stronger for politically skilled employees.

Political skill also has been found to affect perceptions that others have of the political actor. One study (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007) found that subordinates high on political skill who engaged in ingratiation were not perceived by their supervisors as using manipulation for personal gain. Others (Liu et al., 2007) have found that political skill is related to one's reputation in the eyes of others. Ferris et al.,

(2007) suggested that these findings are due to the beneficial effect that political skill has on the audience's impression of the actor, and the positive impact it has on the social identity of the actor.

A plausible explanation of these effects is that politically skilled employees have more resources (both internal and external) available for coping with stressors. Also there is evidence that political skill enhances the extent to which an actor's political behaviour influence the thoughts and actions of others as political skill provides the influencer with the skill to enact influence tactics for positive outcomes. These findings suggest that perceptions of organisational politics, political behaviour, and political skill should not be examined separately as consideration of each is necessary for understanding the relationship between organisational politics and stress. Hence, the need for the current study.

Self- versus other-reports of political skill

Almost all past studies have used only self-reports of political skill as a moderator, and researchers have noted the importance of using other-reports of political skill (Ferris et al., 2007; Perrewé et al., 2004). Further, despite the fact that political skill has been shown to demonstrate effects on both the self and others, most research to date have not examined whether self- and other-reports of political skill exhibit differential moderating effects. A study by Hayes and Dunning (1997) looked at how self and other reports of political skill might exhibit differential moderating effects. They found that agreement between unambiguous traits was high but the agreement rate for ambiguous traits was low. It is possible that for ambiguous traits, individuals have to create their own

interpretations. Political skill is a construct that is part social and part cognitive, and it is not easily observable dimensionality (Ferris et al., 2007).

Ferris et al. (2007) have published an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of political skill. They stated that the politically skilled have both a social astuteness and an ability to adjust behaviour to the demands of the situation. Also, they suggested that the link between politically skilled individuals' beliefs in their control over the environment and the effectiveness of political skill is the self-confidence that is expressed both to self and others. Politically skilled individuals gain both self-confidence and actual control over resources.

The conceptualisation of the construct political skill by Ferris et al. (2007) shows that political skill has both self and other relevant characteristics. Thus the self-relevant aspects can be captured through self-reports and the other relevant aspects through other reports. Political skill, when measured via self-report, is similar to perceived control, self-confidence, or a self-efficacy of social effectiveness. Whereas, when others report on a focal individual's political skill, it is reflective of actual resource control, interpersonal shrewdness, or reputation. These differences between self- and other-reports of political skill are substantive, in that they each reflect a different aspect of the construct of political skill.

It can be observed that one's evaluation of political skill can deviate from the evaluation of others. Although prior research has found moderate, significant correlations between self- and other-reports of political skill (Semadar, 2004), there remained a substantial area of non-overlap. Moreover, the confirmatory factor analysis results in one study (Ferris et

al., 2008), found an overlap between ratings of political skill by self and others. Possibly, the differences between the self- and other-reports of job performance could be substantive and this can be applied to the political skill construct. Thus, a substantive difference exists between the self and other reports of political skill.

These arguments raises the question of whether the one's own perception of his political skill is what moderates the relationship between organisational politics and stress or it is the others reports of one political skill that moderates this relationship. This allows for the testing of hypotheses of differential moderation between self- and other-reports which is one of the main goals of the current study. In other words, individuals could self-report that they have a high degree of political skill, and such self-beliefs could be useful in managing interpersonally stressful situations at work. However, those self-beliefs may or may not reflect the observations of others, who could be the keepers of that person's reputation or the evaluators of that individual's job performance. The qualitatively opposite evaluations also could be the case, where a person has low self-beliefs, but others have much higher evaluations of the focal individual's political skill.

Sub-dimensions of Political Skill

There is an unanswered question related to whether the dimensions of political skill have the same predictive abilities, whether they are best viewed as lower order constructs that only have predictive power when summed to a higher order variable or whether one or more dimensions dominate in the prediction of job stress. It is likely that some dimensions may have more impacts than others. Few studies have investigated how each of the dimensions of political skill relates to various job outcomes though none has

looked at stress as an outcome. Results indicated differences in the dimensions of political skill in predicting these outcomes. Thompson (2005) suggested that proactive employees obtain high performance through their network building activities which are related to one dimension of political skill (i.e networking ability). Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005) stated that networking ability would be related to influence and the resulting career success because of the alliances, connections, and control over social capital that those high in networking ability have. Their empirical findings supported this notion as networking ability was more strongly related to the outcomes of upward appeal, coalitions, and assertiveness than were the other political skill sub-dimensions. Findings from a study by Blickle et al. (2011) demonstrate that networking ability was a strong driver of the sales performance–political skill relationship. There is therefore the need to find out if these dimensions relate to job stress differently.

Organisational Politics and Political astuteness in the public and private sectors

According to Pfeffer (1981), managers use politics as a functional tool in the organisation to get the work done through political environment. Other researchers also suggest that individuals use politics to achieve their self-interest (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997). In a study by Hartley, Alford, Hughes and Yates (2013) public managers reported that they did not exercise political astuteness lightly or for the sake of personal advancement. In the main, they did so in situations or activities where it helped them do their jobs; either by garnering support for a particular policy, program or project, or by helping enlist other actors to contribute to the achievement of the public purposes in question. Consequently, it was possible for them to claim a degree of legitimacy for their

exercise of political astuteness. To them, it did not entail the ‘illegitimate, self-serving political activities’ that are the focus of much of the private sector management literature. In essence, since the public sector is political, being political is accepted. However, politics in the private sector needs to be understood better.

2.3 Hypotheses

In the light of the literature discussed, the following hypotheses are proposed;

- i) Employees at lower organisational levels will perceive more politics than employees at middle and top organisational levels.
- ii) There will be a significant positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress
- iii) Political skill will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress
- iv) There will be a significant negative relationship between employee political skill and stress
- v)
 - a) Networking ability will negatively predict Job stress more than Interpersonal Influence
 - b) Interpersonal influence will negatively predict Job stress more than Social astuteness and Apparent sincerity

2.4 Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Organisational Politics, Employee Political Skill and Job Stress.

The model below is proposed.

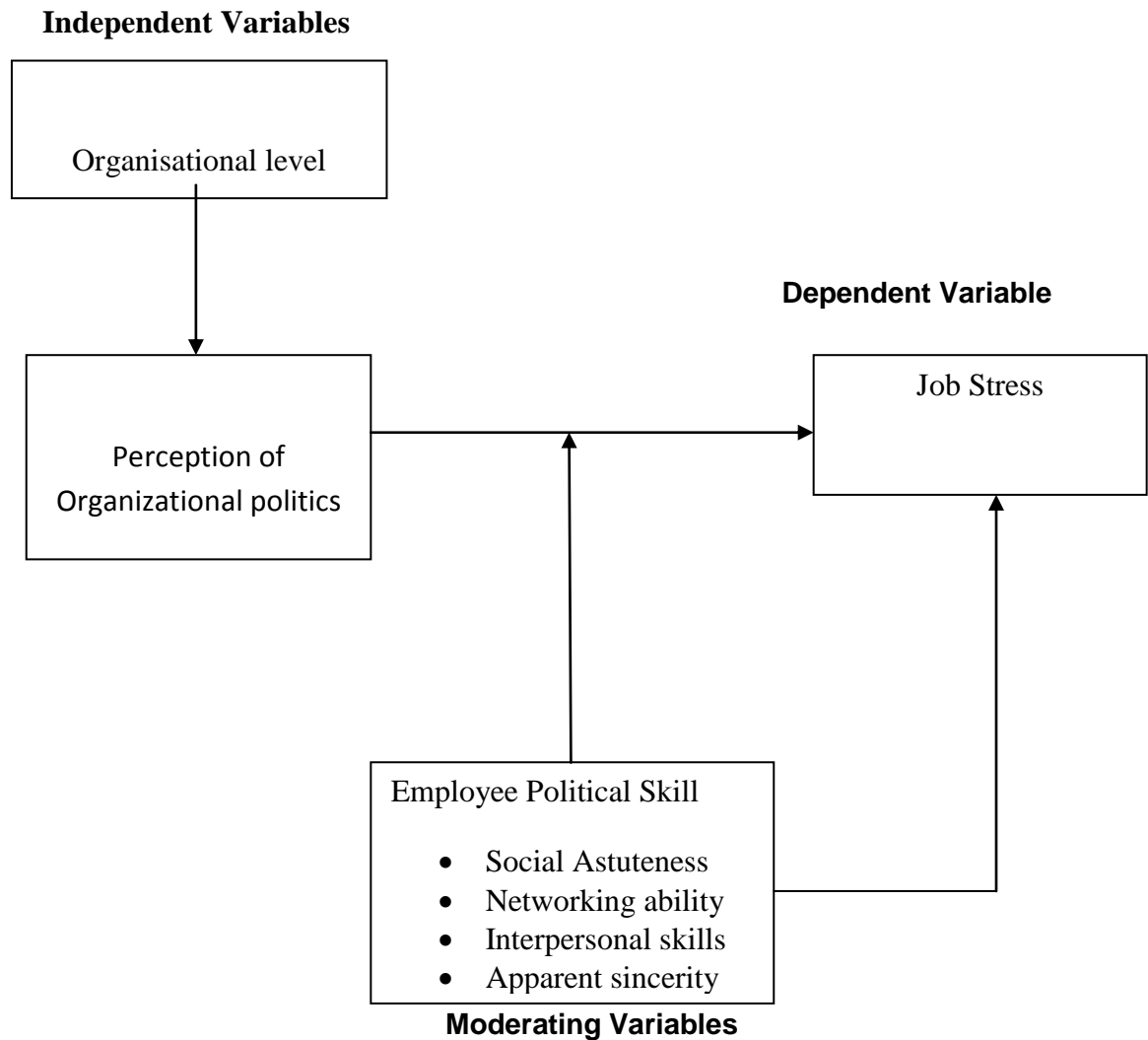


Fig 2.2 Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Organisational Politics, Employee Political Skill and Job Stress.

2.5 Operational Definitions

Organisational Politics - Involves actions by employees which are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others or their organisation

Perception of politics – Refers to employees perceiving others action as being political or to the self-interest of the actor

Political skill – A social skill which is characterized by the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and organisational objectives

Job stress - The experience of negative emotional states such as irritation, frustration, worry, anxiety and depression due to the perception of politics.

Social Astuteness - Smart observers of others. To understand social interactions well and accurately interpret the behaviour of others.

Interpersonal Influence - adapting one's behaviour to different targets of influence in different contextual settings to achieve one's goals.

Networking Ability - easily develop friendships and build strong, beneficial alliances and coalitions. Often highly skilled negotiators and deal makers and are adept at conflict management.

Apparent Sincerity - Politically skilled individuals appear to others as having high levels of integrity and as being authentic, sincere, and genuine. They are, or appear to be, honest and forthright.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is a detail of the method that guided this study. It includes the research design, target population, sampling technique and size, validation and reliability of research material, procedure and the scoring and analysis of instrument used.

3.1 Design

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method. According to Smith and Davis (2004) a cross-sectional study is a non-experimental method in which data is collected from two or more groups of participants at the same, rather limited time on an issue of interest. Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data. Cross-sectional surveys may be repeated periodically; however, in a repeated cross-sectional survey, respondents to the survey at one point in time are not intentionally sampled again, although a respondent to one administration of the survey could be randomly selected for a subsequent one. Cross-sectional surveys can thus be contrasted with panel surveys, for which the individual respondents are followed over time. Panel surveys usually are conducted to measure change in the population being studied. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2001), the design does not give a cause and effect relationships but rather gathers information about the sample on their beliefs, opinions and attitudes about the phenomena. Cross-sectional surveys can be conducted using any mode of data collection, including telephone interviews in which landline telephones are called, telephone interviews in which cell phones are called, face-

to-face interviews, mailed questionnaires, other self-administered questionnaires, electronic mail and observation.

3.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana since it has more private organisations compared to other regions.

3.3 Population

Employees in the private formal sector in Ghana constituted the population for the study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study employed stratified sampling and convenience sampling. Stratified sampling is a method of sampling that involves dividing the population into smaller groups. These smaller groups are known as strata. The strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics. It ensures that all subgroups within a population are represented in the sample especially small minority groups (Irwin, 2006). A random sample from each stratum is taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population. These subsets of the strata are then put to form a random sample. Simple Random Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are convenient sources of data for researchers.

In using stratified sampling, the private sector was divided into the various sectors within it. These sectors are financial sector, manufacturing sector, telecommunication sector, non-governmental organisations, educational sector, oil and gas sector and other services.

The quota allocations were as follows:

Financial sector – (50) 20%

Manufacturing sector – (50) 20%

Telecommunication sector- (40) 16%

Education - (40) 16%

NGO's- (40) 16%

Oil and Gas- (15) 6%

Services (others) - (15) 6%

Participants for the study in the various organisations within the strata were then sampled by convenience since getting all the participants together for a simple random sampling was impossible. Individuals from the selected organisations who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate were sampled

3.5 Sample Size

A sample is a subset of individuals/cases selected from a larger population (Bordens & Abbott 2005). In all, 250 employees in the private formal sector in the Greater Accra Region constituted the sample size for this study. For a study of this nature, Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p.609) suggested that for a population of 1000 the acceptable sample size to give 95 % certainty of what the result would have been if the entire population is surveyed is 278. For a study involving regression analysis the rule of Green (1991) on the minimum acceptable sample size suggests that when testing for the overall fit of the regression model (R^2) the sample size is given by $50 + 8k$ where k is the number of predictors and secondly when testing for the individual predictors within the model (b -

values) is given by $104 + k$. But if the interest is in both the overall fit and the individual predictors then the one with the largest sample be used. The interest of this study was in both the overall fit and the individual predictors within the model therefore the minimum sample size should be $104 + 3 = 105$. This however, depends on the effect size of interest (Cohen, 1998; Miles & Shievelin, 2001).

3.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria/Justification

The participants of this study were male and female employees of the private formal sector across all organisational levels in the Greater Accra Region. The study was not limited to one sex because the variables of study were common to all sexes. The researcher chose the private formal sector because certain major decisions such as increase in salary, transfer and promotion in the public sector are influenced by the government in power. The private formal sector was therefore appropriate for this study. Participants needed to have been working in their current organisation for at least six months to be assessed by their peers accurately. It was assumed that after six months of working together, colleagues would have known themselves better. Employees who could not read or write were excluded from the study. New employees did not also qualify to participate in the study. The researcher did not want to limit responses to a particular organisation because the phenomenon of study affected all kinds of workers. Thus, all the key sectors in the private formal sector were included in this study. Within these sectors, participants were selected at the convenient of the researcher.

3.7 Measures

The questionnaire used for the study was mainly self-report measures made up of 3 instruments. The questionnaires were presented in 5 sections from A– E. Section A measured respondent's demographic data such as gender, age, tenure and organisational level of employees, while instruments measuring perception of organisational politics, employee political skill, job stress and peers' assessment of employee political skill were presented as sections B, C, D and E respectively.

- ***Organisational level***

A single question which was employed by previous studies was used to identify participants' organisational level (Bell et al., 1990; Dillard, 1987; Mao, 2006). The question is as follows: If the hierarchy of your firm is divided into three levels from low to high (low, middle, and high-levels), which level are you working in?'

- ***Perception of Organisational Politics***

This is the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair. A 12-item scale by Kacmar and Carlson (1997) which has become the most accepted measure of POPS in the literature was used. The items were used to measure employee's perception of politics in the organisation. Sample items included '*Favouritism, rather than merit determines who gets ahead in this organisation*', '*There has always been an influential group of employees in this organisation that no one ever crosses*', '*People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down*'. Respondents were asked to report how much they agreed with the items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher

score meant higher perception of organisational politics and a lower score meant a low or no perception of politics in the organisation. The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for the scale was 0.78 (Kacmar & Carlson, 1997).

- ***Political Skill***

An 18-item scale by Ferris et al. (2005) was used to measure political skill. Sample items are '*I spend lot of time and effort at networking with others*', '*I am good at building relationships with influential people at work*' and '*I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others*'. Responses are anchored on a 7 point likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = disagree moderately, 4 = undecided, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = agree and 7= strongly agree).The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for the overall scale is .83 (Ferris et. al, 2005). The higher one scored, the higher the individual's political skill and vice versa.

- ***Job Stress***

A 32-item scale by Davis, Eshelman and McKay (1995) was used to measure employee job stress. Respondents were asked to report how much they agreed with the items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale refers to nine sources of stress. These nine sources are lack of control, conflict, cause and effect, information gap, environment, environment, value conflict, underload and alienation. Sample items are; '*I lack the authority to carry out certain responsibilities*', '*I am unable to influence decisions that affect me*', '*There is no relationship between how I perform and how I am rated*' and '*My progress on the job seems less than it could be*'. The higher one scored, the higher

the individual's stress level and vice versa. The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for the overall scale is .84 (Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1995)

3.8 Procedure

3.8.1 Pilot Study

An initial pilot study was conducted to retest the adapted instruments which were revised and refined for internal consistency and reliability and also to ascertain the applicability of the set of instruments in the Ghanaian work setting. Specifically, *item total statistics* method was used. Item total statistics is a measure of the relationship of individual items in a scale to the overall scale. It involves *corrected item-total correlation*; this is the correlation between an item and the rest of the items in the scale, without that item considered part of the scale. If the correlation is low for an item, this means the item is not really measuring the same thing the rest of the items are trying to measure. *Alpha if item deleted*; the change in Cronbach's alpha if the item is deleted. When the alpha value is higher than the current alpha with the item included, one should consider deleting this item to improve overall reliability of the scale.

The item total statistics was therefore used to test the reliability of all the scales to be used in the study. All items in the instruments were scales were relevant in predicting their reliability. Employees from the private formal sector in the Volta region specifically Ho was used. A sample size of 50 was used for the pilot study and these participants were not part of the main study.

For the reliability analysis done on the pilot sample, Cronbach's α for Perception of politics=0.92, The Cronbach's α for political skill was=0.93,Cronbach's α for job

stress=0.94,Cronbach's α for political skill assessed by peer = 0.97 which means that the instruments used were highly reliable.

3.8.2 Procedure for Main Study

Upon permission and consent of the management of the selected organisations and consent of the participants themselves using an authorization letter from the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, a set of questionnaires measuring employee's perception of politics, employee political skill and job stress level was administered. The researcher took time to explain the instruments to the participants and how responses according to their preference would be indicated. Names of participants were not taken to ensure anonymity. Participants who were willing to keep the questionnaires were allowed to do so for one week. Thus, participants filled and returned questionnaires between one (1) and seven (7) days. The data collection period lasted for 7 weeks.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

According to the APA Code of ethics for research and publication (2010) when institutional approval is required, psychologists should provide accurate information about their research proposals and obtain approval prior to conducting the research. They conduct the research in accordance with the approved research protocol. Also, the consent of participants must be sought. Psychologists must inform participants about; the purpose of the research, expected duration, and procedures; their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; the

foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects; any prospective research benefits; limits of confidentiality; incentives for participation; and whom to contact for questions about the research and research participants' rights.

Therefore in accordance with APA code of ethics, the researcher first got institutional approval from the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER). Also an authorization letter was taken from the Department of Psychology and with the letter, permission and consent of the management of the selected organisations was sought. The participants were then informed about the research and its purpose. They were also informed about the duration and procedures and their rights, such as; the right to decline to participate and the right to withdraw from the research. Participants were made to know that the study involved no risk or adverse effect. Finally, participants were informed that any information given was to be kept confidential. Their names were therefore not taken to ensure this anonymity.

3. 9 Statistical Analysis

Analysis was done with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 18). Hypothesis one (1) was analysed with One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) because there was one independent variable with three levels and one dependent variable. Hypothesis two (2) and three (3) were analysed with multiple regression because there were two independent variables and one dependent variable and the researcher wanted to find the relationship between these variables. Hypothesis four (4) and five (5) were

analysed with Step wise multiple regression to test for moderation and to assess the impact of the various sub-dimensions of the moderator.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The study seeks to understand the relationship among perception of organisational politics, employee political skill and job stress. A total of 250 employees from the private formal sector of the Greater Accra Region in Ghana participated in this study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 was employed to facilitate the analysis. The chapter begins with descriptive statistics of the data followed by hypothesis testing.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The tables below summarises the descriptive statistics of the variables in the study. These statistics are in the form of frequency tables, means, standard deviations, test for normality, and correlations between variables.

The demographic data in Table 1.1 below reveals that males were 157 and females 97 representing 62.8% and 37.2% respectively. With regards to age, 34(13.6%) participants were within the age ranges of 18-25years, 151(60.4%) participants were within the ages of 26-35years, 32(12.8%) participants were between ages 36-45 years and 33(13.2%) participants were above 46 years. 82 (32.8%) of participants had tenures ranging from 6 months to 1 year. 118 (47.2%) of participants had tenures above 1 year to 4 years. Participants who had tenures between 5 and 10 years were 26 (10.4%) while those who had tenures above 10 years were 24 (9.6%). Participants belonged to three levels in the organisational hierarchy. 44 (17.6%) of participants belonged to the low level,

137(54.8%) belonged to middle level and 69(27.6%) belonged to high level of the organisational hierarchy.

Table 1.1 Summary of Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Variables in the Study
(N = 250)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	157	62.8%
Female	93	37.2%
<i>Age</i>		
18-25years	34	13.6%
26-30years	151	60.4%
36-45years	32	12.8%
46years and above	33	13.2%
<i>Tenure</i>		
6 months -1year	82	32.8%
1-4years	118	47.2%
5-10years	26	10.4%
Above 10years	24	9.6%
<i>Hierarchy</i>		
Low level	44	17.6%
Middle Level	137	54.8%
High level	69	27.6%

Table 1.2 Summary of Descriptive Statistics of the Variables in the Study (N = 250)

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Job Stress	51.85	18.12	.51	-.62	.91
POP	15.29	6.54	.09	-.96	.96
Political Skill(self assessment)	91.26	22.03	-.51	-.43	.95
Political Skill (peer assessment)	85.50	26.30	-.30	-1.0	.97

POP - Perception of Organisational politics

From Table 1.2 above, the mean score of Job stress was ($M = 51.85$) with ($S.D = 18.12$). The mean score of Perception of politics ($M = 15.29$) with ($S.D = 6.54$) and the mean score of political skill (self-report) ($M = 91.26$) with ($S.D = 22.03$). The mean score of Political skill (as assessed by peer) had a mean of ($M = 85.50$) with ($S.D = 26.30$). Also, normality of a variable is established when skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable values of ± 1 . Statistical test of normality in this study showed that all the variables were normally distributed. Thus, the population from which the sample was taken formed the normal distribution therefore the data was analysed with parametric tests.

Table 1.3 Pearson-Product Moment Correlations between the Variables in the Study
Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Perception of Politics	-			
2. Political Skill (self-assessment)	-.651**	-		
3. Job Stress	.561**	-.737**	-	
4. Political Skill (peer assessment)	-.567**	.817**	-.657**	-

Source: field data, May 2014

N=250, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

The correlation results are given in Table 1.3 above. The results showed that perception of politics was positively related with job stress ($r = .561, p < 0.001$), but negatively related to political skill ($r = -.651, p < 0.001$) and negatively related to political skill as assessed by peers of the respondents ($r = -.567, p < 0.001$). Political skill was negatively related with job stress ($r = -.737, p < 0.001$), while the political skill was positively related with political skill as assessed by peers of the respondents ($r = .817, p < 0.001$). Job stress was also negatively related the political skill as assessed by peers of the respondents ($r = -.657, p < 0.001$).

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Two major statistical tests were used to analyse the hypotheses. These were the One Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression (Simple, Hierarchical & Step wise).

Hypothesis One (1)

Hypothesis 1 stated that ‘Employees at lower organisational levels will perceive more politics than employees at middle and top organisational levels’. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on this and the results are presented in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.4 *Descriptive Statistics of organisational levels of participants and their perception of politics in the organisation*

Organisational Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low level	44	17.54	3.97
Middle level	137	17.59	6.45
High level	69	9.63	4.10
Total	250	44.76	14.52

Table 1.4 of means and standard deviations showed differences in mean scores between the employees at various organisational levels. As can be seen above employees in the middle level ($M=17.59$, $SD=6.45$) appeared to have a higher perception of politics than employees at the lower level ($M=17.54$, $SD=3.97$) who also appeared to be superior to

employees at the high level ($M= 9.63$ $SD=4.10$). In order to test for significance in the mean differences, the One Way ANOVA was run and the results are displayed in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Summary Table of Results from the One Way Anova for the perception of politics of employees at different organisational levels

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square (Variance Estimate)	F	P
Between-group(Treatment)	3155.81	2	1577.90	51.96	.00
Within-group(Error)	7499.77	247	30.63		
Total	10655.85	249			

The ANOVA Table 1.5 showed a significant difference in the perception of politics at various organisational level ($F_{(2,247)}=51.96$, $p=.000$). However, the observed significance could be between two of the groups or all the groups. In order to test which group had a significant difference between them, Post Hoc Analysis was run.

Table 1.6 Summary of Multiple comparisons among the means for the perception of politics of employees at different organisational levels

Organisational level	Low level	Middle level	High level
Low level	-	.05	7.90*
Middle level		-	7.96*
High level			-

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The multiple comparison (displayed in Table 1.6) shows there is no significance difference between low level and middle level employee's perception of politics. However there was a significant difference between low level and high level employee's perception of politics and also a significance difference between middle and high level employee's perception of politics. In essence therefore, middle level and lower level employees perceived more politics compared to employees at high levels. Thus, the stated hypothesis that 'Employees at lower organisational levels will perceive more politics than employees at middle and top organisational levels' was partially supported at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Two (2) and Three (3)

Hypothesis 2 states that 'There will be a significant positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress'.

Hypothesis 3 states that 'There will be a significant negative relationship between employee political skill and stress'.

A multiple regression was conducted to see if perceived organisational politics and employee political skill predicted the stress level of employees. Results are indicated in the Table 1.7, Table 1.8 and Table 1.9 below.

Table 1.7 Model Summary Table of the relationship between Organisational Politics, Political Skill and Job Stress

R	R Square	Adjusted R square
.750	.562	.557

Table 1.8 ANOVA Summary Table of the relationship between Organisational Politics, Political Skill (self & peer assessment) and Job Stress

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	45990.28	3	15330.09	105.20	.00
Residual	35847.23	246	145.72		
Total	81837.52	249			

Table 1.9 Regression coefficients of variables (Organisational Politics, Political Skill (self & peer assessment) and Job Stress)

Variables	B	t	p
POP	.13	2.37	.01
PS(self assessment)	-.52	-6.60	.00
PS(Peer assessment)	-.15	-2.08	.03

POP-Perception of Political skill
PS-Political skill

Table 1.7 presents the model summary table. R, the multiple correlation coefficient is the measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable (Job stress). The table indicates an R value of 0.75 which indicates a good level of prediction. The R Square represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables (Organisational politics, political skill (self-report), and political skill (peer-report)). The value for the R-square is .562 which means that the independent variables (Organisational politics, political skill (self-report), and political skill (peer-report)) explain 56.2% of the variability in Job stress. The Adjusted R tells also explains the percentage of variation explained by only those independent variables that truly affect the dependent variable. The Adjusted R values obtained was .557 which indicates that the percentage of variation explained by the independent variables that truly affect the dependent variable is 55.7%.

The *F*-ratio in the ANOVA table in Table 1.8 tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable, $F_{(3,246)} = 105.20, p < .05$. Thus, the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Table 1.9 indicates the beta value, t-value and significant of each independent value when all other independent variables are held constant. Perception of Organisational politics ($b = .133, t = 2.37, p < 0.05$), is significant and the coefficient is positive which indicates that high perceptions of organisational politics are related to high levels of job stress. Political skill (self-report) ($b = -.526, t = -6.60, p < 0.05$) is significant and its coefficient is negative indicating that that high levels of political skills are related to low levels of Job stress. Also, Political skill (peer-report) ($b = -.153, t = -2.08, p < 0.05$) is significant and its

coefficient is negative indicating that that high levels of political skills are related to low levels of Job stress.

Thus hypothesis 2 and 3 which states that ‘There will be a significant positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress’ and ‘There will be a significant negative relationship between employee political skill and stress’ respectively were both supported.

Hypothesis Four (4)

Hypothesis 4 stated that ‘Political skill will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress’. The method for testing for moderation according to Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. The method is as follows;

- Identify the predictor of interest (IV_1), the potential mediator (IV_2), and the outcome variable (DV) based on the hypothesis or theory.
- Prepare the data set by (centering all continuous variables other than the outcome variable (compute $IV - \text{mean score for the IV}$) to eliminate multicollinearity effects. Then create a new variable for the interaction term (centered predictor by centered moderator).
- Perform a new regression analysis, with centered predictor and centered moderator in their appropriate order (within your regression model), and then the interaction term in a separate block. “Force enter” all variables. If the interaction term is significant, then there is a moderation effect. If not, there is no moderation occurring.

Below are the results;

Table 2.0 Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression for the moderation effect of Political skill (self-report) on perceived organisational politics and stress

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1						
	Constant	40.01	3.50		11.42	.00
	POP	.491	.197	.156	2.49	.01
Step 2						
	Constant	56.38	5.93		9.49	.00
	POP	.320	.199	.102	1.60	.11
	Political skill	-.166	.049	-.214	-3.37	.00
Step 3						
	Constant	12.87	10.99		1.17	.24
	POP	2.89	.588	.921	4.91	.00
	Political skill	.325	.116	.420	2.79	.00
	POP *PS	-.030	.006	-.941	-4.62	.00

Note. POP- Perception of organisational politics
R2 = .024, .067 and .142 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively, $\Delta R^2 = .021, .060$ and
.132 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

Table 2.1 Summary table of the One-Way ANOVA for the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
1	Regression	2768.87	1	2768.87	6.21	.01
	Residual	110513.19	248	445.61		
	Total	113282.06	249			
2	Regression	7643.60	2	3821.80	8.93	.00
	Residual	105638.45	247	427.68		
	Total	113282.06	249			
3	Regression	16103.55	3	5367.85	13.58	.00
	Residual	97178.51	246	395.03		
	Total	113282.06	249			

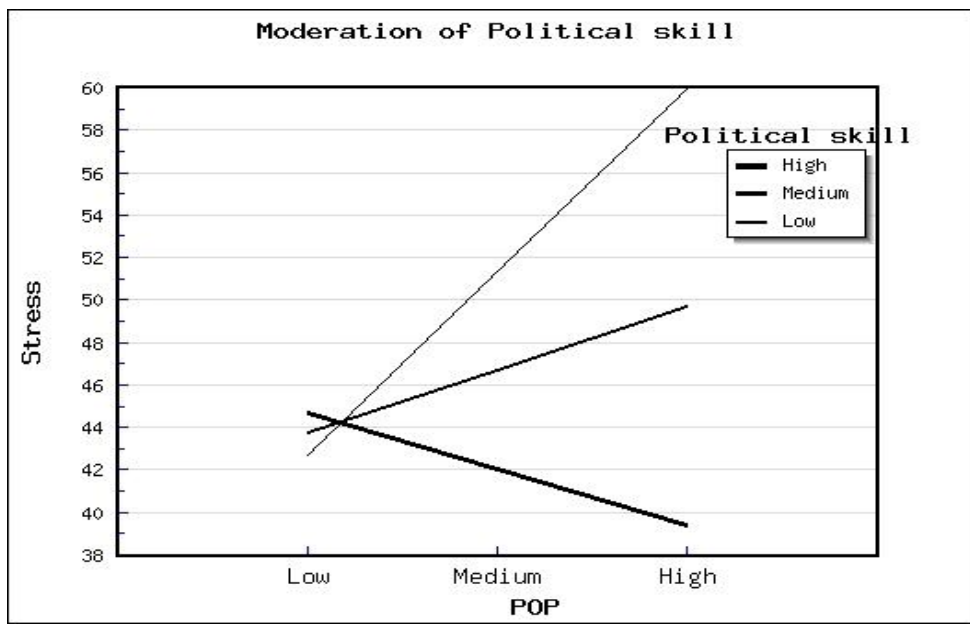
Table 2.0 showed the coefficient and model summary output of the hierarchical regression model. The beta value and its associated standard error, t value and its significance could be observed, as well as R^2 change and its associated significant value. The significant beta value was recorded for each step of the model. Model one (1) which included only Perception of politics accounted for 2.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2=0.21$) in Job stress. The inclusion of Political skill into the variance (at step 2 of the model) accounted for 6% of the variance in Job stress (R^2 change=.060). The final model, that is model three (3) also included the interaction, and this accounted for 13.2% of the variance in Job stress (Adjusted $R^2=0.132$). It could also be observed that Perception of

Politics alone significantly predicted Job stress ($\beta=0.156, p<0.05$). The interaction also significantly predicted Job stress ($\beta= -.941, p<0.05$).

Table 2.1 depicted the ANOVA results of the model summary. It showed an overall significance of the model at each step. It could be observed that model one (1), without interaction is significant, ($F_{(1,248)}=6.214, p<0.05$). Model two (2) with the inclusion of political skill was significant ($F_{(2,247)}=8.936, p<0.05$). Model three (3), with the interaction, was also significant ($F_{(3,246)}=13.588, p<0.05$). The model was statistically significant.

An interaction plot was graphed to show the interaction between Political skill and Perception of Job stress. Below is the result;

Moderation of Political skill (Self-report)



POP-Perception of Politics

Fig 4.1 Moderation of Political skill

From the interaction plot above, variability in stress scores seem to be affected by an interaction of Political skill and Perception of politics. At high levels of political skill, employees who perceive organisational politics have low levels of stress. At moderate levels of political skill, employees who had high perceptions of organisational politics had moderate stress levels. However, at low levels of political skill, high perception of organisational politics resulted in high levels of stress. This means that the strength of the relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV) depends upon Political skill (Moderator), such that when Political skill is high the relationship between Organisational politics and Job stress is weak. On the other hand, there is a strong positive relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV) when Political skill (moderator) is low.

Therefore, the hypothesis that ‘Political skill will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress’ was supported by the data.

Table 2.2 Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression for the moderation effect of Political skill (Peer report) on perceived organisational politics and stress

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Step 1	Constant	40.01	3.50		11.41	.00
	POP	.49	.19	.15	2.48	.01
Step 2	Constant	56.35	5.94		9.47	.00
	POP	.32	.20	.10	1.60	.11
	Political skill	-.16	.04	-.21	-3.36	.00
Step 3	Constant	12.11	10.99		1.10	.27
	POP	2.94	.59	.93	4.99	.00
	Political skill	.33	.11	.42	2.86	.00
	POP*Political skill	-.03	.00	-.95	-4.70	.00
	skill					

Note. POP- Perception of organisational politics, PS-Political skill
R2 = .026, .067 and .142 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively, $\Delta R^2 = .024, .050$ and
.114 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

Table 2.3 Summary table of the One-Way ANOVA for the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
1	Regression	2760.55	1	2760.55	6.19	.01
	Residual	110605.84	248	445.99		
	Total	113366.40	249			
2	Regression	7611.90	2	3805.95	8.88	.00
	Residual	105754.49	247	428.15		
	Total	113366.40	249			
3	Regression	16345.81	3	5448.60	13.81	.00
	Residual	97020.58	246	394.39		
	Total	113366.40	249			

Table 2.2 showed the coefficient and model summary output of the hierarchical regression model. The beta value and its associated standard error, t value and its significance could be observed, as well as R^2 change and its associated significant value. The significant beta value was recorded for each step of the model. Model one (1) which included only Perception of politics accounted for 2.4% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2=0.24$) in Job stress. The inclusion of Political skill into the variance (at step 2 of the model) accounted for 5% of the variance in Job stress (R^2 change=.05). The final model, that is model three (3) also included the interaction, and this accounted for 11.4% of the variance in Job stress (Adjusted $R^2=0.114$). The interaction also significantly predicted Job stress (beta= -.95, $p<0.05$).

Table 2.3 depicted the ANOVA results of the model summary. It showed an overall significance of the model at each step. It could be observed that model one (1), without interaction is significant, ($F_{(1,248)}=6.19, p<0.05$). Model two (2) with the inclusion of political skill was significant ($F_{(2,247)}=8.88, p<0.05$). Model three (3), with the interaction, was also significant ($F_{(3,246)}=13.51, p<0.05$). The model was statistically significant.

An interaction plot was graphed to show the interaction between Political skill (peer-report) and Perception of Job stress. Below is the result;

Moderation of Political skill (Peer-report)

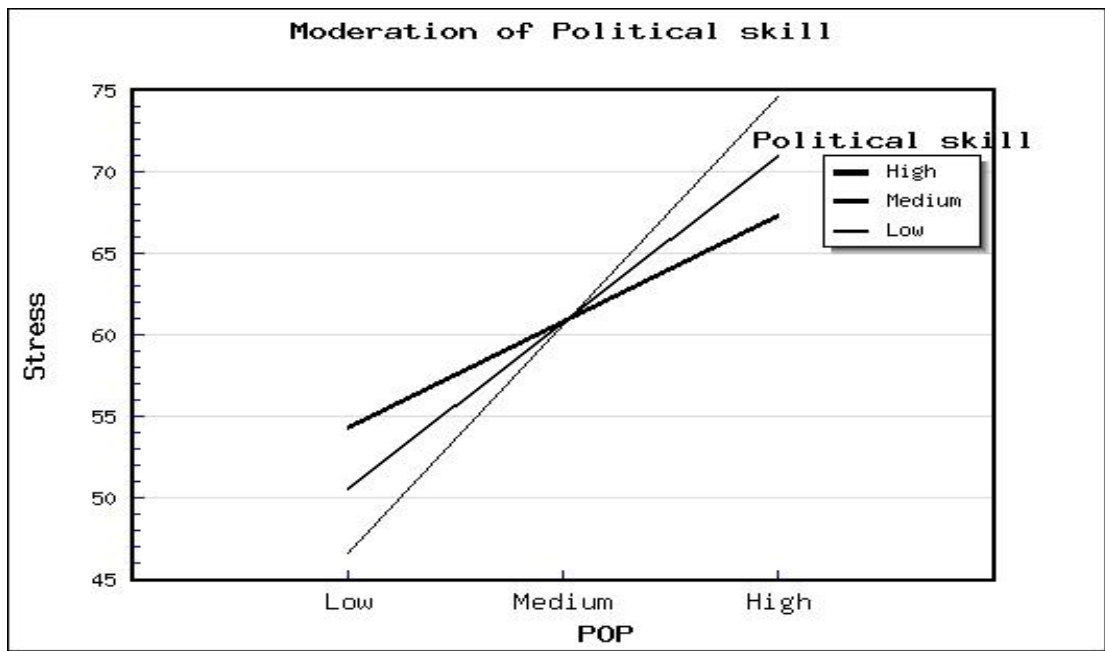


Fig 4.2 Moderation of Political skill (Peer-report)

Again, the hypothesis that 'Political skill will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress' was supported by the data. This means that the strength of the relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV)

depends upon Political skill (Moderator), such that when Political skill is high the relationship between Organisational politics and Job stress is weak. On the other hand, there is a strong positive relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV) when Political skill (moderator) is low.

Hypothesis Five (5)

Hypothesis 5 stated that a) 'Networking ability will negatively predict Job stress more than Interpersonal Influence' and b) 'Interpersonal influence will negatively predict Job stress more than Social astuteness and Apparent sincerity'. A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to see if various dimensions of political skill (Interpersonal skill, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness) predicted the stress differently. Results are indicated in the Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.4 Summary of Stepwise Regression for the difference in the dimensions of political skill (self-report) in its prediction of stress

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Constant	98.43	2.88		34.10	.00
Networking Ability	-1.62	.90	-.72	-16.77	.00
Model 2					
Constant	103.66	3.43		30.14	.00
Networking Ability	-1.23	.17	-.55	-7.17	.00
Social Astuteness	-.62	.23	-.21	-2.71	.00

R² = .531, and .545 for steps 1, 2 respectively, ΔR^2 = .530, and .541 for steps 1 and 2 respectively.

Excluded Variables

1. Interpersonal influence
Social Astuteness
Apparent sincerity
2. Interpersonal Influence
Apparent sincerity

Table 2.5 Summary table of the One-Way ANOVA for the Stepwise Multiple Regression Model.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
1	Regression	43496.34	1	43496.34	281.34	.00
	Residual	38341.18	248	154.60		
	Total	81837.52	249			
2	Regression	44609.50	2	22304.75	147.98	.00
	Residual	37228.02	247	150.72		
	Total	81837.52	249			

Results from the Table 2.4, Step 1 contains the variable Networking Ability, with an R of .729, producing an R² of .531 (accounts for 53.1% of the variance in Job stress) which is statistically significant at $p < .001$. Thus, Networking Ability had the strongest relationship with the dependent variable (stress). In Step 2, Social Astuteness was introduced into the model increasing the variance explained from .531 to .545 (both variables accounted for 54.5% variance in Job stress). However, the partial correlation was not significant for the remaining two variables (Interpersonal influence, $p=-.077$, Apparent Sincerity, $p=-.102$), so no additional variables were added to the model. In essence, networking ability and social astuteness were statistically significant in predicting job stress while interpersonal skill and apparent sincerity were not significant. Table 2.5 depicted the ANOVA results of the model summary. It showed an overall significance of the model at each step. It could be observed that model one (1), networking ability is significant in predicting stress, ($F_{(1,248)}= 281.345, p<0.05$). Model

two (2) networking ability and social astuteness was significant in predicting stress ($F_{(2,247)}=153.566$, $p<0.05$). The model was statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that a) ‘Networking ability will negatively predict Job stress more than Interpersonal Influence’ and b) ‘Interpersonal influence will negatively predict Job stress more than Social astuteness and Apparent sincerity’ was partially supported.

Table 2.6 Summary of Stepwise Regression for the difference in the dimensions of political skill (peer report) in its prediction of stress

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SEβ</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Constant	87.91	2.70		32.54	.00
Networking Ability	-1.30	.09	-.66	-14.07	.00
Model 2					
Constant	92.19	2.95		31.19	.00
Networking Ability	-.90	.15	-.46	-5.96	.00
Social Astuteness	-1.01	.31	-.25	-3.27	.00
Model 3					
Constant	91.61	2.94		31.14	.00
Networking Ability	-1.12	.17	-.57	-6.30	.00
Apparent Sincerity	-1.51	.37	-.37	-4.01	.00
Social astuteness	-.58	.25	-.24	2.27	.02

R² = .444, and .467, .478 for steps 1, 2, 3 respectively, ΔR^2 = .442, and .463, .472 for steps 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2.7 Summary table of the One-Way ANOVA for the Stepwise Multiple Regression Model.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36346.02	1	36346.02	198.14	.00
	Residual	45491.49	248	183.43		
	Total	81837.52	249			
2	Regression	38239.28	2	19119.64	108.32	.00
	Residual	43598.24	247	176.51		
	Total	81837.52	249			
3	Regression	39138.71	3	13046.23	75.16	.00
	Residual	42698.81	246	173.16		
	Total	81837.52	249			

Results from the Table 2.6, Step 1 contains the variable Networking Ability, with an R of .444, producing an R² of .442 (accounts for 44.2 % of the variance in Job stress) which is statistically significant at $p < .001$. Thus, Networking Ability had the strongest relationship with the dependent variable (stress). In Step 2, Social Astuteness was introduced into the model increasing the variance explained from .442 to .463 (both variables accounted for 66.3% variance in Job stress). In Step 3, Apparent Sincerity was introduced into the model increasing the variance explained from .463 to .472 (all three variables accounted for 47.2% variance in Job stress). However, the partial correlation was not significant for the Interpersonal influence (Interpersonal influence, $p=.773$, so no additional variables were added to the model. In essence, networking ability, social

astuteness and apparent sincerity were statistically significant in predicting job stress while interpersonal influence was not significant.

Table 2.7 depicted the ANOVA results of the model summary. It showed an overall significance of the model at each step. It could be observed that model one (1), networking ability is significant in predicting stress, ($F_{(1,248)}=198.143, p<0.05$). Model two (2) networking ability and social astuteness was significant in predicting stress ($F_{(2,247)}=108.320, p<0.05$). Model three (3) networking ability, social astuteness and apparent sincerity were significant in predicting stress ($F_{(3,246)}=75.163, p<0.05$). The model was statistically significant.

Therefore, the hypothesis that a) 'Networking ability will negatively predict Job stress more than Interpersonal Influence' and b) 'Interpersonal influence will negatively predict Job stress more than Social astuteness and Apparent sincerity' was partially supported.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The following were the findings from the study

1. Middle level and lower level employees perceived more politics compared to employees at high organisational levels.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress. This implies that employees who perceive high levels of politics in their organisations have high levels of stress and employees who perceive little or no organisational politics have low level of stress at work.

3. There is a significant negative relationship between employee political skill and job stress. Thus, employees who are highly politically skilled have low levels of job stress and employees who are not politically skilled/low levels of political skill have high stress levels.
4. Self and other assessment of political skill are highly correlated, thus it is reliable to use only self-report measures of the political skill construct.
5. Political skill (self and peer report) moderated the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress. This means that the strength of the relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV) depends upon Political skill (Moderator), such that when Political skill is high the relationship between Organisational politics and Job stress is weak. On the other hand, there is a strong positive relationship between Organisational politics (IV) and Job stress (DV) when Political skill (moderator) is low.
6. There is a significant difference in how the dimensions of political skill (networking ability, interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity and social astuteness) contribute to the prediction of job stress. For political skill as assessed by participants themselves, out of the four dimensions, networking ability negatively predicted stress most, followed by social astuteness. Interpersonal influence and Apparent sincerity was not significant in predicting stress. Similarly, with Political skill as assessed by peers, networking ability predicted stress negatively, followed by apparent sincerity and social astuteness. Again, interpersonal influence was not significant in predicting stress.

4.4 Observed Model

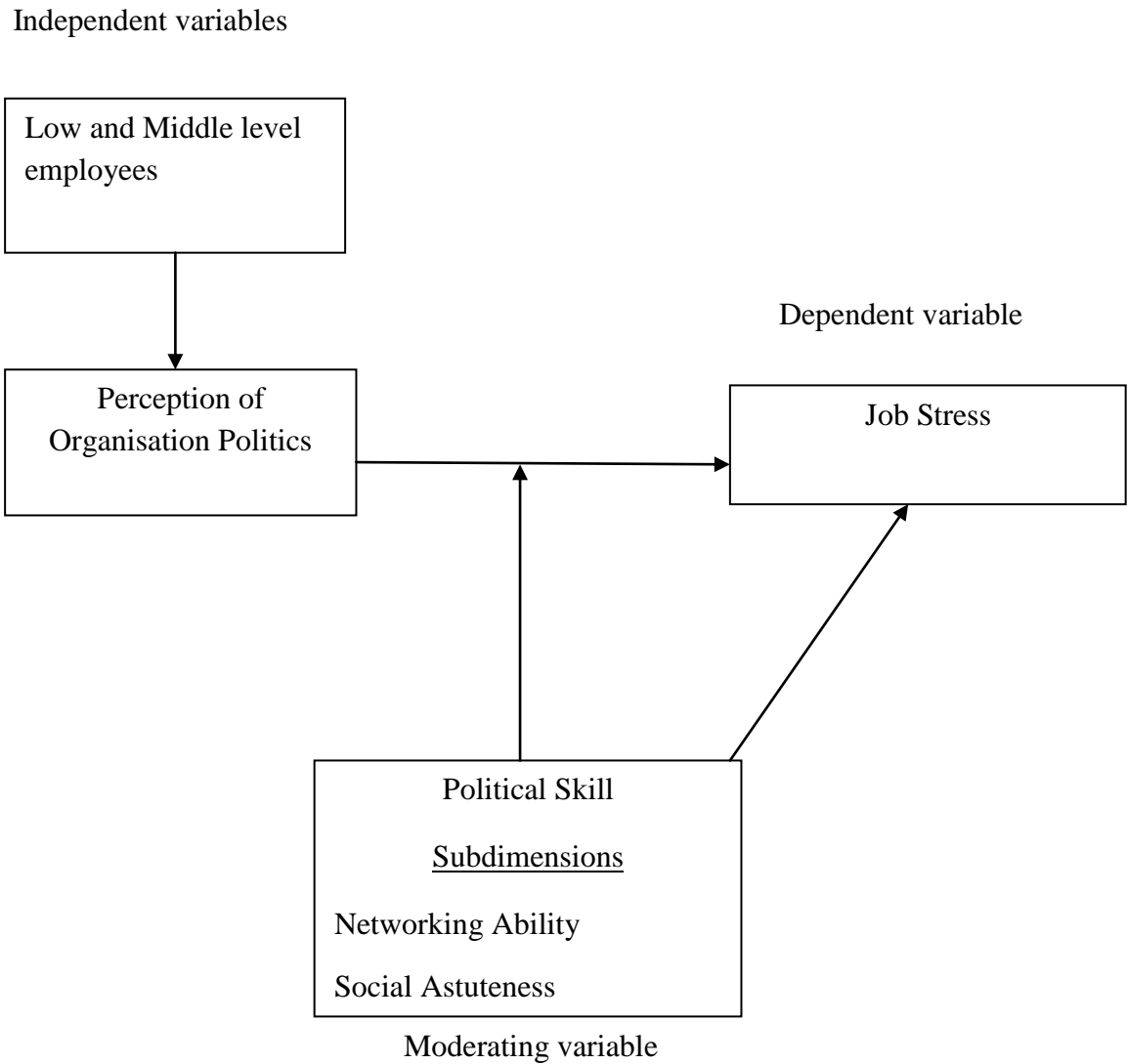


Fig 4.3 Observed Model of Relationship between organisational level, perception of organisational politics, employee political skill and job stress

The observed model in Fig 4.1 indicates that organisational politics is perceived most by employees at low and middle hierarchical levels of their organisations. Perception of organisational politics leads to job stress, however Political skill moderates the relationship. Political skill is also a buffer against stress. Out of the political skill dimensions, Networking ability and Social astuteness are the significant predictors of Job stress.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The study was aimed at exploring the relationship between perceived organisational politics and job stress. It was also aimed at finding out the moderating effect of employee political skill on the relationship between perceived organisational politics and job stress. The discussion is therefore based on the above objectives, related studies and findings in the frameworks of Transactional Stress Model and the Conservation of Resources Model (COR). Additionally, this chapter presents the strengths and limitations in the course of the study; summary and conclusions drawn from the study with its implications and finally the recommendations made for future research.

5.2 Discussion of Results

5.2.1 Politics Perception at various Organisational Levels

It was proposed at the inception of this study that organisational politics may be conceived as a state of mind rather than an objective state. It is therefore possible that employees in a particular organisation will have different perceptions of the existence of politics in their organization. This assumption is what led to the first hypothesis. The first hypothesis stated that ‘Employees at lower organisational levels will perceive more politics than employees at middle and top organisational levels’. This hypothesis was partially supported since low level and middle level employees did not differ significantly in their perception of politics in the organisations. However, there was a significant difference between low level and high level employee’s perception of politics and also a significance difference between middle and high level employee’s perception of politics.

Thus, middle level and lower level employees perceived more politics compared to employees at high levels.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Gandz and Murray (1980). In their study of perceptions of and reactions to self-serving and self-promotional behaviours, Gandz & Murray (1980) found that there were variations in the perceptions of politics across different organisational levels. They found out that participants of the study who were senior managers perceived the climate at each managerial level to be less political compared to other participants (non-managerial levels) who viewed the climate as more political.

Ironically, though most of the same research indicates that most of the employees at lower levels perceive that the organisation is more political than those in the upper levels of management, results of those same studies also indicate that organisational members perceive politics more likely occurring at higher hierarchical levels. Most of the employees of the three level management hierarchy thought politics was more likely to be found in the upper levels of the organisation (Bourgeois & Singh, 1983; Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison et al., 1980). Mintzberg proposed that senior level management often use politics to gain acceptance of their decision (in the preparation stage of decision making, the making of the decision themselves and the implementation of the decision).

Ferris et al. (1996) also found that employees at lower levels perceive their work environment as more political than employees at higher levels, possibly because they do not get involved or have no control over processes at their work places. This assertion was also supported by Drory (1993) and Drory and Romm (1988) who found that

supervisors who were more involved in organisational politics define it as a part of their job, so their perceptions of politics are low.

The results above can be explained by the fact that those in the upper levels of the organisation or decision making hierarchy are used to initiating and having informal influence attempts (politics) that they no longer think of them as out of the norm and consequently do not perceive the organisation as being political. They are the initiators of political behaviours while those at the lower levels or those not involved in decisions are recipients of political behaviours. Hence, organisational politics is thought to be most often used at upper levels of management although those at the lower levels are more likely to perceive their organisational environment as political.

Also, Participation in decision making reflects the power distribution in organisations. More participative employees also have more influence over decisions and processes at work. This might lead to a sense of fairness and justice, and this is expected to result in low perceptions of politics in organisations.

5.2.2 Relationship between Perceived Organisational Politics and Job stress

Organisational politics have been viewed to have detrimental effects on employees and job outcomes. It is assumed that one key detrimental effect of organisational politics is job stress since job stress can have short and long term effects on the both the health of the employee and productivity at work. The second hypothesis was to test this assumption. This hypothesis stated that 'There will be a significant positive relationship between perceived organisational politics and job stress'. This hypothesis was supported by the data of the study. Thus, employees who perceived high levels of politics in their

organisations also had high levels of stress and employees who perceived low levels of politics in their organisations had low levels of stress.

This finding is consistent with several other findings of previous researches. For example, Cropanzano et al. (1997) studied in detail the relation of politics with individual stress related variables like fatigue, somatic and job tension and found significantly positive relationship between politics and stress related aspects. That is, if an employee perceives the work environment to be political, he or she reports greater levels of anxiety and tension (stress) and lower levels of general health. On the other hand, if one perceives an environment that is supportive, stress levels are less intense. In addition, these authors found that organisational politics was positively correlated with burnout, which may be viewed as a late outcome of job distress and work stressors. Ferris et al. (1996) empirically examined the politics-stress relationship with a sample size of 822 university employees and found significantly positive correlation between perceived politics and stress. Ferris et al. (1996) predicted that there are some resemblances in both constructs (politic and stress), thus, they are perception based. Chang et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis on the Relationship between Perceptions of Organisational Politics and Employee Attitudes, Strain, and Behaviour. Results indicated that perception of politics had strong and positive effect on employee job stress. Literature gives strong support that the politics move towards different stress related impacts at job (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). Vigoda (2002) inferred that stress is an individual's response to work related environmental stressors, one of which can be politics. Vigoda further explained that employees who face high pressure on job due to perceived politics may also experience great stress and show nervous behaviour. Similarly, in recent studies by Rashid et al.

(2013) and Jam et al. (2011), perception of politics was found to significantly predict job stress.

These findings can be explained by the Transactional Stress model. Thus, psychological stress arises when people face situations that they appraise as taxing or exceeding their resources and endangering their wellbeing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A political environment (workplace) is one of such situations. 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. This unpredictable, risky, and threatening workplace context increases the level of job stress experienced.

5.2.3 Relationship between Political Skill and Job stress

The next hypothesis stated that ‘There will be a significant negative relationship between employee political skill and stress’. This hypothesis was also supported by the data. This infers that employees who had high levels of political skills had low levels of stress/less stressed while those employees who had low or no political skill had high levels of stress. Previous research in political skill had similar results.

Experienced strain is reduced as political skill helps individuals’ understanding of their work environment and the adverse stimuli encountered (Ferris et al., 1999; Perrewe et al., 2000). Perrewe et al. and her colleagues argued that political skill can have two types of effects related to stress and strain. First, individuals who are high in political skill would perceive fewer stressors compared to those low in political skill and secondly, when individuals high in political skill encounter stressors, it is unlikely to lead to dysfunctional consequences since they can cope with it. The findings of another study

(Harvey et al., 2007) demonstrated that political skill buffered the negative effects of social stressors on job and career satisfaction.

People high in political skill tend to view interpersonal interactions as opportunities rather than threats, and they evaluate and interpret environmental stimuli differently than those low in political skill (Perrewe et al., 2000). Political skill, thus, implies a facility in dealing with and through others, and feelings of enhanced control are gained by those with political skill as they are successful at influencing others at work. Ferris and his coauthors (1999) argued that political skill should generate a sense of self-confidence and personal security because people will experience a strong sense of being able to understand and control both other people at work and the tactics needed to get what they themselves want. It is this increased confidence and sense of control that explains why high-political-skill individuals should experience less anxiety and stress at work (Perrewe et al., 2000).

5.2.4 The moderating role of Political skill in the relationship between organisational politics and job stress

The fourth hypothesis stated that ‘‘Political skill will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational politics and stress’’. This means that in a political environment, where politics will increase one’s job stress level, a person who has efficient political skill will have low levels of stress or help to reduce the stress effectively. This hypothesis was supported since the presence of political skill (self report) caused a 13.2% variation in the politics-stress relationship and presence of political skill (peer report) caused an 11.4% variation in the politics-stress relationship. This means that even when employees

perceive the organisations as being political, political skill can be used to as a coping mechanism or to help reduce stress and its effects. It also means employees with political skill might not even experience stress at all though their organisations are political.

In relation to other researches with similar findings, Perrewe' et al. (2000) asserted that experienced strain/stress is reduced as political skill enhances individuals' understanding of their work environment and the adverse stimuli encountered.

A study by Perrewe et al. (2004) investigated moderation of political skill to reduce negative effect of job stress. That is, people having high level of political skill will easily adjust to and cope with negative effects of perception of politics and consequently their job stress will be lowered down due to buffering effects of political skill. Findings support the view that political skill serves as an antidote to the dysfunctional consequences of stress. As perceptions of role conflict increased, individuals with low political skill reported increases in psychological anxiety and somatic complaints at a higher rate than individuals with high political skill. Thus, it appears that high political skill can help to ameliorate the negative effects of role conflict.

Political skill is suggested to be the coping mechanism which helps individual cope up negative effects of stressors on job outcomes (Harvey et al., 2007). Organisational politics is a direct source of stress in atmospheres which carries out unexpected damages, consequences, disturbances of stress (Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou & Kacmar, 1996). In a political environment, politics will increase the job stress of the employees. In such an environment, a person who has efficient political skills will use its political skills to reduce its job stress effectively. This explains why political skill should moderate a perceived source of stressor-strain relationship. The negative effects arising from a

stressor should be reduced for individuals high in political skill because they feel more adept at handling such situations. Politics are stressful and threatening because they create ambiguous links between performance and outcomes which introduces great uncertainty into the work environment (Breux, Munyon, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2009). Yet, politically skilled individuals have a well-developed understanding of the workplace, which allows them to accurately gauge their work environment and the motives of others (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005).

5.2. 5 Dimensions of Political Skill and Job Stress.

Although it was expected that political skill will be negatively related to the job stress, the researcher was interested in the impact of the four dimensions of political skill: networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2005). *Social astuteness*; individuals with social astuteness are keenly attuned to diverse social settings and have high self-awareness. Pfeffer (1992) referred to this characteristic as being sensitive to others, *Interpersonal Influence*; individuals have an unassuming and convincing personal style that exerts a powerful influence on others around them. Interpersonal influence allows people to adapt and calibrate their behavior to different situations to elicit the desired responses from others, *Networking Ability*; they are adept at identifying and developing diverse contacts and networks of people. People in these networks tend to hold assets seen as valuable and necessary for successful personal and organisational gains. Because of their typically subtle style, politically skilled individuals easily develop friendships and build strong, beneficial alliances and coalitions, and *Apparent Sincerity*; individuals with apparent sincerity appear to others as having high levels of integrity and as being authentic,

sincere, and genuine. They are, or appear to be, honest and forthright. These four dimensions even though related are distinct constructs.

Currently, little is known concerning the differential impacts of the dimensions. Thus, there is an unanswered question related to whether the dimensions have the same predictive abilities, whether they are best viewed as lower order constructs that only have predictive power when summed to a higher order variable or whether one or more dimensions dominate in the prediction of job stress. It is likely that some dimensions may have more impacts than others hence, the development of the last hypothesis.

The last hypothesis stated that a) 'Networking ability will predict Job stress negatively than Interpersonal Influence' and b) 'Interpersonal influence will also predict stress negatively more than Social astuteness and Apparent sincerity'. This hypothesis was partially also supported. Results indicated that, for political skill as assessed by participants themselves, networking ability was the highest predictor of stress, which was followed by social astuteness. Interpersonal Influence and Apparent Sincerity were not significant in predicting stress. This means that employees high in networking ability and social astuteness would have low or no stress but interpersonal influence and apparent sincerity did not have any relationship with stress.

Results were a little different for political skill assessed by peers. For peers, networking ability was also the highest in predicting stress followed by social astuteness. Additionally, apparent sincerity also predicted stress. Thus, for both self and peer reports of political skill, networking ability and social astuteness predicted stress.

Few studies have investigated how each of the dimensions of political skill relates to various job outcomes though none has looked at stress. Results indicated differences in

the dimensions of political skill in predicting these outcomes. Thompson (2005) suggested that proactive employees obtain high performance through their network building activities which are related to one dimension of political skill (i. e networking ability). Ferris, Treadway, et al. (2005) stated that networking ability would be related to influence and the resulting career success because of the alliances, connections, and control over social capital that those high in networking ability have. Their empirical findings supported this notion as networking ability was more strongly related to the outcomes of upward appeal, coalitions, and assertiveness than were the other political skill sub-dimensions. Findings from a study by Blickle et al. (2011) demonstrate that networking ability was a strong driver of the sales performance–political skill relationship.

According to Ferris et al. (2008), of the four dimensions, apparent sincerity demonstrated the lowest correlations with the other dimensions.

In this study, networking ability predicted stress the most. Persons who are high on networking ability are able to successfully build an effective and advantageous partnership with others at work. They maintain networks with a large and diverse set of influential contacts that can be utilized to assist in achieving objectives. It is this increased confidence and sense of influence and control that explains why high-political-skill individuals should experience less anxiety and stress at work.

All the four dimensions of political skill seem to be related. An individual high in interpersonal influence and networking ability would be expected to be liked more than one lower in interpersonal influence and networking ability. One who is skilled in social

astuteness would know how to present him or herself in a positive way and, thus, be more liked. Last, those high in apparent sincerity appear to be sincere in their interpersonal interactions and would be expected to be well liked. It would have been more meaningful to have all dimensions predicting job stress. It is therefore interesting that the interpersonal influence and apparent sincerity dimensions were not significantly associated with job stress. These findings are in line with previous research that has shown the importance of an individual's networking abilities and behaviours (Ferris et al., 2005; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Podolny & Baron, 1997; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). This study provides the evidence that the relationship between political skill and job stress may be largely driven by the networking ability dimension of political skill.

5.3 Self- versus other-reports of political skill

Almost all past studies have used only self-reports of political skill as a moderator, and researchers have noted the importance of using other-reports of political skill (Perrewé et al., 2004; Ferris et al., 2007). It is possible that one's evaluation of political skill can deviate from the evaluation of others. The conceptualisation of the construct political skill by Ferris et al. (2007) shows that political skill has both self and other relevant characteristics. Thus the self-relevant aspects can be captured through self-reports and the other relevant aspects through other reports. Political skill, when measured via self-report, is similar to perceived control, self-confidence, or a self-efficacy of social effectiveness. Whereas, when others report on a focal individual's political skill, it is reflective of actual resource control, interpersonal shrewdness, or reputation. These

differences between self- and other-reports of political skill are substantive, in that they each reflect a different aspect of the construct of political skill.

In this study however, self-assessment and peer assessment of political skill did not differ significantly. Self and peer assessment were highly correlated. Prior research has found moderate, significant correlations between self- and other-reports of political skill (Semadar, 2004). Both self and supervisor reports of political skill demonstrated large correlations (beta=30 and beta=34 respectively). Although self-reports of political skill have been shown to be significantly related to peer and supervisor assessments (Ferris et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2007). This means that self-reports of political skill can be relied upon for further studies. However, it is possible that the sub dimensions of political skill when assessed by self would differ slightly from when assessed by peers or supervisors in predicting other job outcomes.

5.4 Strengths and Limitations

This study has a number of strengths that are worth noting. Political skill is a self-report measure and so to reduce common method variance or social desirability and to increase reliability; political skill was assessed by two ways (job incumbent and peers). This is considered strength of this study since all or most of previous researches measured political skill by self-reports only. Another strength of this study is that, Political skill was measured and analysed as a composite construct, but in addition, the four dimensions of political skill were also examined in this research. Future studies should continue to investigate the potential differential prediction of job outcomes from specific dimensions of political skill, and try to establish more well-developed theory in this area to support

predictions of specific political skill dimensions. Also, data was collected from Africa, specifically Ghana which is in contrast to most research on organisational politics. Most researches in Organisational politics had North American settings. The researcher considers this an advantage of the study. One important limitation of this study was that it utilised a cross-sectional design, and that it sampled respondents from different jobs. Nevertheless, this study reported good psychometric properties in terms of reliabilities and variances of all research variables, which firmly supports the validity of the data and the findings. Since neither organisational politics/perception of organisational politics nor job stressors are expected to diminish in modern organisations, it is essential that it is understood better to provide managers with practical tools for improvement. The findings of this study have demonstrated the usefulness of examining workplace politics in relation to stress factors.

5.5 Practical Implications and Recommendations

This study has several implications and future research ideas as well. This research highlighted the importance of political skill in predication of employee outcomes and as a buffering mechanism to reduce negative effects of perception of politics on job stress and other employee outcomes.

Scarcity of resources breeds politics. Consequently, politics in organisations will not cease to exist since organisations will always have limited resources. There is the need to allocate limited resources appropriately to ensure fairness and justice in the organisation. Also, some human resource practices such as performance evaluations can breed politics.

Organisations must ensure objectivity in performance evaluations and all other practices. In addition, employees should be clear about their job responsibilities.

Democratic and participative decision making should be encouraged in organisations decision making processes. This will help employees express their identification and acceptance with the organisation's norms and values. As a result, the perceptual and functional gap between the individual and his/her organisation narrows, expectations are more likely to materialize, and Perception of organizational politics is more likely to reduce.

Political skill can be used to improve reduce stress or stressors and organisations' performance either by training the political skill of the workforce in or by resorting to political skill assessments in personnel selection decisions. Recent research has shown that self-reports of political skill in the situation of a job application reflect the same criterion-related validity as self-reports without an acquisitive impression management incentive (Blickle et al. 2011). Also, based on the findings of this research, employees with high networking ability would be more successful at their jobs than employees high in other dimensions of political skill. Thus, management can focus on improving networking abilities of employees instead of political skill as a whole.

A longitudinal study is recommended to check the political skill of new hires at times of selection and their comparison of performance after a number of years. Also, the role of political skill (as a construct and sub dimensions) in prediction of different organisational outcomes should be studied in the future. The choice of whether to use a particular dimension(s) or the composite depends on the nature of the study's research question.

Organisational leaders need to equip key employees with the mentoring they need to acquire political skill. In sum, it is clear that political skill can be improved through the practices of an organisation, such as the mentoring (development experiences) provided to individuals.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to find out the moderating effect of political skills in the relationship between perception of politics and job stress. In order to achieve the purpose the theoretical framework was constructed. The study was employee oriented. In this study, the relationship between independent and dependent variables and how our moderator moderated between them were found. This research shows that politics in the organisation is positively related with job stress and employees must overcome this politics in the firm by using their efficient political skills. It is evident that politics is a universal phenomenon and no organisation exists, where politics and its perception is not present. Therefore, managers and organisations can try to minimize its effects on employee and organisational outcomes. Based on conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 2002), this study pitched the idea of the importance of political skill, how that play an important role in minimizing negative effects of politics perception on job stress; how organisations can focus on developing political skill in employees through training and development to get benefit in the form of buffering mechanism and also how human resource managers can use these findings to assess the political capabilities of new hires at the time of selection and recruitment. This study could be an effort to change the mindset of organisations that politics is always harmful.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



Official Use only Protocol number

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study:	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS, EMPLOYEE POLITICAL SKILL AND JOB STRESS
Student Investigator:	ESENAM OFORI
Certified Protocol Number	

Section B- CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
--

General Information about Research

The purpose of this research is to understand the perception of politics in organization and its relationship to stress. If you agree to be in this study, you will be given a questionnaire to fill out. The questionnaire will include questions about your job, and some personal skills. The questionnaire will take about 25 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years to complete this questionnaire.

Benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. However, organizations have become very stressful and this research may help us to understand certain organizational and personal concepts which may help reduce or cope with stress at work.

Risk of the study

This research is considered to be of a minimal risk. This implies that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Confidentiality

Any information given out will be kept confidential and any report made public will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You will not have to give out your name or signature.

Compensation

Although you are not going to be paid for the time you volunteer while being in this study, the researcher will appreciate your effort and time.

Withdrawal from Study

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact for Additional Information

If you have any question, concern or complaint about this study, you can contact Esenam Ofori at the University of Ghana, Psychology Department. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH), Institute of Statistics, Social and Economics Research (ISSER, IRB) on (233-032)512502 , +233 057-7699900/1/2. If you experience an unanticipated problem related to the research contact Esenam Ofori on 0243721975 or esenamofori16@gmail.com.

Section C- VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward

to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

Name of Volunteer

Signature or mark of volunteer

Date

If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

Name of witness

Signature of witness

Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

APPENDIX BQuestionnaire

The researcher is a student of University of Ghana conducting a study on Organizational Politics. The purpose of this research is to understand the relationship between Perception of Politics, Political Skill and Job Stress. The questionnaire will include questions about your organization, job, and some personal skills. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. There are no anticipated risks involved in participating in this research. Any information given out will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate in this study, please read the instructions and continue to fill out the questionnaire.

Instructions

The questionnaire is in five sections. Sections A, B, C and D should be completed by you. However, Section E should be given to work colleague with whom you have worked closely for at least 6 months. He/she should fill it and return to you after completion.

Please be truthful and accurate as possible in your responses to ensure true results of the study.

Thank you.

Section A

1. Gender
Male Female
 2. Age
18- 25 26-35 36-45 above 46
 3. How long have you worked with your current organisation?
Less than 6 months months-1 year 1- 4years 5-10yea
Above 10years
 4. If the hierarchy of your organisation is divided into three levels from low to high (low, middle, and high-levels, which level are you working in?
Low level Middle level High level
 5. What is your position or job title?
-

Section B

Using the following 5-point scale, please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement about your organization.

1 = *strongly disagree*

2 = *disagree*

3 = *neutral*

4 = *agree*

5 = *strongly agree*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Disagree Strongly	Undecided disagree	4	5
Favoritism, rather than merit, determines who gets ahead in this organization	1	2	3	4	5
There is no place for yes-men in this organization: Good ideas are desired, even when it means disagreeing with superiors	1	2	3	4	5
People in this organization are encouraged to speak out frankly, even when they are critical of well-established ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
There has always been an influential group of employees in this organization that no one ever crosses	1	2	3	4	5
Employees here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others	1	2	3	4	5
Rewards come only to those members who work hard in this organization	1	2	3	4	5
Promotions in this organization generally go to top performers	1	2	3	4	5
People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down'	1	2	3	4	5
I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization'	1	2	3	4	5
There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them'	1	2	3	4	5
I can't remember when a person received a pay increase or a promotion that was inconsistent with the organization's published policies	1	2	3	4	5
Since I have worked in this organization, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied politically	1	2	3	4	5

Section C

Using the following 7-point scale, please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement about yourself.

- 1 = *strongly disagree*
 2 = *disagree*
 3 = *slightly disagree*
 4 = *neutral*
 5 = *slightly agree*
 6 = *agree*
 7 = *strongly agree*

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I understand people very well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have developed a large network of colleagues and associates at work whom I can call on for support when I really need to get things done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am good at getting people to like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I try to show a genuine interest in other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am good at using my connections and network to make things happen at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I pay close attention to people's facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section D

Using the following 5-point scale, please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement about your organization.

1 = *strongly disagree*

2 = *disagree*

3 = *neutral*

4 = *agree*

5 = *strongly agree*

STATEMENTS	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I lack the authority to carry out certain responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel trapped in a situation without any real options.	1	2	3	4	5
I am unable to influence decisions that affect me.	1	2	3	4	5
There are a lot of requirements that get in the way of my doing certain tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't solve the problems assigned to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I am unsure about the responsibilities of my job.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have enough information to carry out certain tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
I am under qualified for certain tasks I'm expected to do.	1	2	3	4	5
Others I work with are not clear about what I do.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't understand the criteria used to evaluate my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
There is no relationship between how I perform and how I am rated.	1	2	3	4	5
I sense that popularity and politics are more important than performance.	1	2	3	4	5
I must do things that are against my better judgment.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't know what I am doing right and what I am doing wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
If I give suggestions, my supervisor does not include them.	1	2	3	4	5
I am expected to satisfy conflicting needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I disagree with co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
I disagree with my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5
I am caught in the middle.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't get what I need to get the job done.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel pessimistic about opportunities for advancement or growth in	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor or boss is critical.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel unaccepted by the people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5
My good work is not noticed or appreciated.	1	2	3	4	5
My progress on the job seems less than it could be.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel unsupported by my co-workers or boss.	1	2	3	4	5
I find I cannot be myself at work because I feel different from my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
I must make compromises in my values.	1	2	3	4	5
I find my work environment unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
I observe my co-workers doing things That I don't approve of.	1	2	3	4	5
The organization that I work for pressures employees to do things that are unethical or unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5
My values seem at odds with those of management.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E IS ABOUT YOU BUT WILL BE ANSWERED BY YOUR COLLEAGUE WITH WHOM YOU HAVE WORKED FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS. PLEASE GIVE IT TO HIM /HER TO FILL AND RETURN TO YOU

Section E

Using the following 7-point scale, please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement about **your colleague who gave you this questionnaire**.

- 1 = *strongly disagree*
 2 = *disagree*
 3 = *slightly disagree*
 4 = *neutral*
 5 = *slightly agree*
 6 = *agree*
 7 = *strongly agree*

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she spends a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she is able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around him/herself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she is able to communicate easily and effectively with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy for him/her to develop good rapport with most people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she understands people very well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she is good at building relationships with influential people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she is particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When communicating with others, he//she tries to be genuine in what he/she says and does.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she has developed a large network of colleagues and associates at work whom he/she can call on for support when he/she really needs to get things done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
At work, he/she knows a lot of important people and is well connected.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she spends a lot of time at work developing connections with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she is good at getting people to like him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to him/her that people believe he/she is sincere in what he/she says and does.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she tries to show a genuine interest in other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/ she is good at using his/her connections and network to make things happen at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she has good intuition or savvy about how to present him/herself to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

He/she always seems to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she pays close attention to people's facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No.....

19th March, 2014

Ms. Esenam Ofori
Department of Psychology
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Ms. Ofori,

PROTOCOL ECH 020 13-14: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS, EMPLOYEE POLITICAL SKILLS AND JOB STRESS

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date: 11/03/15
On Agenda for: Initial Submission
Description: 15/01/14
ECH Action: Approved

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev Prof. J. O. Y Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Director, ISSER



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