Leader political skill and employee reactions: A social-political perspective

by

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SUPERVISOR

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Ethics statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of the thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares having observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's code of ethics for researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible research.

The ethics clearance letter is attached as appendix D.

Abstract

Organisational leaders have used political skill to influence employees who are similar to the leader. Yet, extant literature has directed little attention to leaders who exert political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader, particularly when considering the process of transformation of an organisation. Leaders face political tensions when using political skill to transform organisations to become more diverse and inclusive, based on race and gender. Anchored in political influence theory and drawing on social identity, the study examines employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to manipulate resistant employees if a leader is different from employees. In contrast, the employee may cooperate with a collaborative leader who uses political skill to influence employees, where the leader is similar to the employees.

This research conducts a survey to collect data of junior lecturers to full professors' perceptions of direct managers who exercised political skill to influence academic employees during the transformation of two public higher education institutions located in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Leaders have influenced employees who were divided according to race and gender during apartheid, and integrated during democracy, amid workplace transformation tensions. The study shows that employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill are influenced by social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language differences. This research closes the gap by contributing social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language differences to the political influence perspective characterised by irrational leaders who oversee limited resources distributed amongst competing employee interests in the workplace.

In contrast, the study demonstrates that employees are likely to act cooperatively towards a collaborative leader who uses political skill to influence employees if the leader and employees have a similar gender identity, rather than race, nationality as well as language identities. Employees prefer to work with a leader who shares a similar gender identity with employees if the leader is collaborative towards employees for the transformation progression in the workplace. Since employees prefer to socially interact with a collaborative leader of a similar gender to the employee for a sense of belonging, leaders ought to promote gender difference as a mechanism to build gender transformation beyond race, nationality, and language differences, to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

Keywords: Leader political skill; social identity; differences; political influence; influence tactics; manipulation; collaboration; employee reactions, cooperation; resistance

Declaration

I, Baphiwe Daweti, declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my work and has not been submitted by me previously for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Baphiwe Daweti
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I present this thesis to the great *Rhadebe* people of the Xawuka location, where I come from. *Enkosi.*

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I am my parent's legacy.

Dedication

This doctoral degree is dedicated to my beloved dad, Mhlangenqaba Howard Daweti, and my beloved mom, Nozipho Essential Daweti.

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Chapter one: Overview of the study

1.1. Introduction

The study considers leaders who exercise political skill to influence employees. Leaders have used political skill to influence employees who are similar to the leaders. Yet, little is known about a leader who exerts political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader (Ferris, Ellen III, McAllister & Maher, 2019; Hochwater, Rosen, Jordan, Ferris, Ejaz & Maher, 2020; Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi & Thatcher, 2019). The study examines whether a possibility exists that an employee perceives a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees as manipulative if the leader is different from the employees. Employees are more likely to show resistance against a manipulative leader if the leader is different from the employees.

An alternative possibility is that the employees perceive a leader as exercising political skill to influence them through collaboration if the leader shares similarities with them. Employees are more likely to cooperate with a collaborative leader who uses political skill to influence employees with whom they share similarities. These two alternating possibilities give rise to the primary research question of the study: *What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?*

I became interested in organisational politics when black African leaders came to be increasingly reported as incompetent, corrupt, and self-serving, amid allegations of political interference, after the transformation of state-owned enterprises in post-apartheid South Africa. It was a question as to whether political interference contributed to leaders who failed to deliver basic services of electricity, water, and sanitation, particularly to underprivileged communities, as a result of the transformation in democratic South Africa's state-owned enterprises. Examining both the literature and practice (Ferris et al., 2018; Mintzberg, 1985; Smit, 2022; Smith, 2022), I observed the organisational politics inherent in state-owned enterprises, where leaders and employees strive for access to resources and opportunities amid organisational political tensions. This was the case in both state-owned enterprises as well as higher education institutions.

I witnessed leaders grapple to influence diverse employees where I work, between Zulu people and Indian people, who were the largest social groups, reflective also of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I attended tense meetings between leaders and employees as competition for deploying resources and positions was distinctly laced with racial, gendered, nationality, and language undertones. I became more curious about whether leaders and employees were respectively manipulating or collaborating, based on Zulu or Indian identity.

Labour strikes over salary increases against management resulted in a no-work-no-pay stance, and some employees and leaders characterised employees who were Indian to be resisting leaders who were black. This presented a question as to whether the long strike affected leadership influence over employees in terms of race, gender, nationality, and language aspects, amid politics that remain ever-present in any organisation, but particularly during tensions over requisite post-apartheid transformation.

As apparent identity-difference-based tensions continued, employees and leaders were divided between support for or against transformation. Some leaders and employees seem to either manipulate and collaborate and either support or be against transformation. Leaders and employees who were against transformation were isolated and dismissed, while others who lacked the behaviours required for transformation were isolated and dismissed. Questions arose about whether non-South African nationals ought to hold institutional positions over South Africans. As I observed the tensions, I was curious as to whether the political dynamics and power shifts were changing along with the identity of leaders and employees with the effect on political skill and manipulation, as well as collaboration for better employee reactions.

A leader who exercised political skill to influence employee reactions was likely to be affected by similarities or differences with employees based on race around the world. In one instance in North America, the murder of an African American male citizen by a white American policeman ignited racial tensions and calls to transform the public police force (del Rio, Eligon & Hassan, 2021; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Yo-Jud Cheng & Groysberg, 2020). In another instance in Europe, a black African Credit Sousse chief executive officer resigned from his employment term, after race difference tensions (Kelly, 2020). Both instances highlight tensions that arise when a leader influences diverse employees regarding aspects of race in private and public institutions.

The presidents resigned after being perceived as antisemitic at ivy league universities in Pennsylvania and a top university in Boston, Massachusetts recently. Both presidents happened to be women, with one being black and a child of Haitian immigrants (Saul, Blinder, Hartocollis & Farrel, 2023; Schuessler, Hartocollis, Levenson & Blinder, 2024). Both cases highlight tensions about the political skill of leaders to influence race, gender, and nationality identity differences on higher education campuses and beyond. Leaders can be competent, and capable, and require political skill to influence different employees amid transformation tensions for better career and reputation outcomes in countries like South Africa.

South Africa has emerged from a history of apartheid to divide people according to race and language. The government passed legislation to enact transformation post-apartheid, which created tensions between leaders and employees in workplaces. In democratic South Africa, there is a mandate for both a leader and employees to promote diversity and inclusion. In one example, however, a black African chief executive officer did not complete his employment term at a large bank that grappled with transformation tensions (Smit, 2022; Smith, 2022). Similarly, a white male chief executive officer of an energy state-owned enterprise was labelled as being against transformation for demanding accountability for electricity shortages. Both private and public entity examples show tension arising where the leader influences diverse employees in a political climate characterised by the post-apartheid transformation of an organisation that includes the public higher education sector.

When the former deputy vice chancellor of a University in Cape Town showed the intention to promote the Dean of Health Sciences to a higher position for transformation purposes, the Dean resisted such a promotion, and eventually committed suicide (Davies, 2022; Nhlapo, Fikeni, Gobodo-Madikizela & Walaza, 2020). Meanwhile, at a university in KwaZulu-Natal, tensions have arisen between Zulu employees and Indian employees over the handling of appointment and promotion decisions.

As an employee at a higher education institution in KwaZulu-Natal, I witnessed the prioritisation of the appointment of South Africans ahead of other African nationals, which could be deemed xenophobic, rather than a form of diversity through internationalisation (Henderson, 2017; Jansen, 2022). Hence, race, gender, nationality, and language identity differences ignited social tensions regarding the influence of leaders on employees in the wake of the transformation of higher education since the dawn of South Africa's democracy. This justifies the need to conduct further research on leaders who exercise political skill to influence diverse employees.

In chapter one, I define and trace the background of a leader who exercises political skill to influence different employees. I explain the problem of limited research about a leader who uses political skill to influence employees, if the leader has a different social identity from employees, particularly during the transformation of the organisation. I formulate the main research question thus: *What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?*

1.2. Definitions of terms

1.2.1. Leader political skill

Political skill is defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, to use such knowledge to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational [sic] objectives" (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas & Lux, 2007, p. 292). The definition is applied to leadership positions.

1.2.2. Social identity

Social identity is defined as "individual self-concept which derives from knowledge of membership of a social group together with emotional significance attached to membership" (Tajfel, 1972: p. 272).

1.2.3. Leader influence tactics

Tactics are used to influence decisions and allocation of scarce resources (Yulk, Seifert & Chavez, 2008, p. 609). The study uses the definition of a leader's use of influence tactics on employees.

1.2.3.1. Manipulation

Owen (1986, p. 111) defined manipulation as "control or play upon as artful, unfair, or insidious means". The study uses a definition of a leader's use of manipulation tactics on employees.

1.2.3.2. Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as “the agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change” (Yulk et al., 2008. p. 610). The agent is the leader and the target is the employee in the study.

1.2.4. Employee reactions

Employee reactions are defined as the “response of all those workers who hold the type of jobs defined as paid employment job, where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts that give them a basic remuneration that is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work“ (International Labour Organisation, n.d.). The study uses the definition to explain employee responses to a leader.

1.2.4.1. Resistance

Resistance is defined as “any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo” (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977, p.63). The definition is applied from an employee's perspective towards a leader.

1.2.4.2. Cooperation

Cooperation is defined as the “wilful contribution of personal effort to the completion of interdependent jobs” (Wagner III, 1995, p.152). The definition is used from an employee perspective towards a leader.

1.2.5. Transformation

Transformation is defined as planned or managed change (Levy & Merry, 1986, p. 2). The definition is applied change in an organisation to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

1.2.6. Higher education

Higher education refers to all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than Grade 12 or its equivalent in terms of the national qualifications framework as contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No.58 of 1995), and includes tertiary education as contemplated in Schedule 4 of the constitution (Higher education act, 1997: xiv). The study draws insights from the higher education sector.

1.2.7. Academic employee

An academic employee refers to any person appointed to teach or to do research at a public higher education institution and any other employee designated as such by the Council of that institution (Higher education act, 1997: 6). The study highlights perspectives from academic employees.

1.3. Background of the study

1.3.1. Leader political skill

The early stream of research on organisational politics examined leaders who exercised power to influence employees to benefit the leader. An extensive body of knowledge highlighted that leaders who practised organisational politics were manipulative and self-serving, at the expense of the organisation. Drawing from the early works, Pfeffer (1981) coined and situated the concept of political skill in organisational politics literature. Around the same time, Mintzberg (1985) assumed that leaders and employees navigated political arenas in organisations.

Ferris and Judge (2001) developed a political influence theory, building on the mid-range organisational politics theory (Mintzberg, 1985) and the classic grand organisational theory proposed by Weber (1947). Ferris et al. (2007, p.292) further conducted a thorough scholarly review of the definition, components, and dimensions of political skill. Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas, and Lux (2005) developed a measure (Maher, Russel, Jordan & Hochwater, 2020) for the political skill concept within organisational politics scholarship.

In a bid to extend earlier works, a later stream of research on political skill examined leaders who exercised influence on employees to benefit the organisation. Hochwarter (2012) argues that organisational politics used to benefit a given organisation, where leaders influence employees to build support for an idea throughout the organisation. A body of knowledge probed leaders who used collaboration as a tactic to influence employees (Ferris et al., 2007). Since there were potential benefits, leaders were encouraged to participate in organisational politics, rather than avoiding it, where it was assumed to be either manipulative and self-serving.

Since contributors and outcomes of early and later research on political skill are largely known, scholars have called for the examination of intervening aspects of political influence in the recent stream of research. Extending this premise, Munyon, Summers, Thompson, and Ferris (2015) suggested intervening in aspects that measure the direction of relationships between political skill and stress outcomes. Similarly, Hochwarter et al. (2020) propose that intervening aspects affect the direction of relationships between organisational politics contributors and outcomes. In the same vein, Frieder, Ferris, Perrewe, Wihler, and Brooks (2019) are of the view that, among intervening aspects, scholars determine whether social identity differences such as race and gender between leaders and employees can affect organisational politics contributors and outcomes.

1.3.2 Social identity

Social identity literature has undergone an early stream of research on similarities between members of in-groups and out-groups. In particular, the focus of early research examined inter-group processes and conflict between members (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). A later body of research on social identity examined the formation of the self-concept of social group members. In addition, differences between characteristics of in-group members and outgroups were examined along the intergroup conflict dimension.

Social categorisation, concerning clustering group members, and social comparison, which entailed comparing groups, highlighted intra-group and inter-group similarities and differences between members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Nkomo & Cox, 1996). Furthermore, there is a multiplicity, simultaneity, and intersectionality of social identities of leaders and employees in the workplace (Drory & Beaty, 1991; Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005). For example, leaders gave higher marks to employees during selection interviews, higher performance appraisal scores, and promotions, if the employee was similar to the leader in certain aspects, exemplified by gender.

A recent stream of research determines whether there were differences between members of the same in-group or out-group, respectively, along with intra-group member differences. For example, Brewer (1991) argues that members face tensions about whether to maintain personal identity within a social group which might lead to ostracisation and marginalisation. Alternatively, members assimilate into social groups' norms and expectations to fit in and for a sense of belonging (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; McAllister, Ellen III, & Ferris, 2018; Pan, Gruber & Binder, 2019). Leaders and employees belong to multiple social groups at any given time with the salience or prominence of any singular identity or intersectionality dependent on context. Hence, social identity matters when members interact, and is likely to affect a leader who influences employees who are different from the leader.

Social identity acknowledges the multiplicity of identities residing in leaders and employees in the workplace. Identities can belong to the categories of race, gender, nationality, and language of the leader and employee respectively. In addition, the categories of identity exist simultaneously within, and across leaders and employees which affects the way leaders interact with employees (Booysen, 2018; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Ramarajan, 2014). Since the categories of identity exist within and across leaders and employees, the context becomes important to examine social and relational influences in the workplace.

1.3.2.1. Race, gender, nationality, language differences

The social identity of a leader and employee is likely to affect whether a leader exercises political skill on different employees along race, gender, nationality, and language categories. The study focuses on these four categories in the wake of the transformation of an organisation to become more equitable, inclusive, and diverse (Arnett, 2023; Fitzsimmons, Ozbilgin, Thomas & Nkomo, 2023; Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo, 2021; Powell & Butterfield, 2015; Yo-Jud Cheng & Groysberg, 2020). The leader and employees identify with members of social categories for a sense of belonging and to boost self-esteem. Hence, a leader who uses political skill may use a tactic of manipulation or collaboration with an employee, based on social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language differences and similarities.

1.3.2.2. Race, gender, nationality and language similarities

Contrary to the difference in social identity categories, the effect of race, gender, nationality, and language similarities is likely to occur in leadership decisions about employees and human resource functions such as recruitment and selection. Leaders and employees belong to an in-group that has similar characteristics that bring togetherness and a sense of belonging. Since social groups reflect a leader's self-image, the similarity between leaders and employees emphasises commonalities of the profession (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Therefore, leaders promote employees who are similar to the leader. Leaders and employees seek out in-groups in which they are aligned with leaders.

1.3.3. Social-political perspective

A social-political perspective draws from literature on organisational politics and social influence. With regards to the social dimension, a leader and employee interact in the presence of social categories of identity. In the case of politics, the leader uses political skill to influence employees to meet the organisational goals. Scholars have used a social-political perspective to investigate innovation, performance, and leadership (Grosser, Obstfeld, Choi, Woehler, Lopez-Kidwell, Lablanca & Borgantti, 2018; McAllister et al., 2018; Munyon, Frieder, Satomino, Carnes, Bolander & Ferris, 2020). The current study draws insights from recent studies about conducting research at the nexus between social and political perspectives.

There is a dearth of research on a leader who exercises political skill to influence an employee who is different from the leader. The current study examines whether an employee perceives a leader who adopts political skill to influence the employee as manipulative if a leader is different from the employee. An employee is likely to show resistance against a manipulative leader if a leader is different. Meanwhile, an employee may perceive a leader as adopting political skill to influence an employee through collaboration, if a leader is similar to the employee. An employee is more likely to cooperate with a leader perceived as adopting political skill to collaborate with the employee if the leader and employee are similar, particularly during the transformation of an organisation for diversity and inclusion.

1.3.4. Transformation of an organisation

Transformation of the organisation creates political tensions between social groups in workplaces, as power dynamics shift, and jostling for access to resources changes. In the case of South Africa, a divisive history of apartheid based on racial and language social groups denied basic human rights to a majority of the population according to race identity, and differentiated access to quality education, and quality job opportunities. During the democratic dispensation, there have been calls for the integration of previously segregated social groups based on race and language categories. Since the dawn of democracy, organisations had to reflect the diversity in society to become more inclusive, diverse, and representative.

Integration of leaders and employees from different social groups caused tensions between diverse interests and access to limited resources shifted. Bringing leaders and employees together, who were previously separated created misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and outright conflict (Department of higher education and training [DHET], 2022). Hence, leaders require certain mechanisms to better influence employees who differ from the leader, when considering transformation as a goal. South Africa's higher education sector currently grapples with transformation tensions.

1.4. Transformation of higher education in South Africa

1.4.1. Transformation background

The higher education sector was categorised along former white and former black institutions during the apartheid system of segregation in South Africa. Former white institutions offered quality education, were well-resourced, and were well-managed when compared to former black institutions (DHET, 2019). Since the dawn of democracy, leaders have been under pressure to transform former white and former black institutions to become more diverse and inclusive (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016; Jansen, 2003; Soudien, 2010), creating a need for political skill to influence changing social group formations. Many institutions have been merged to restructure operations and integrate students as well as staff in diverse demographic groups, rather than segregated social groups. For instance, the former University of Natal and the former University of Durban-Westville merged to become the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where in both cases, transformation tensions persist.

1.4.2. Recent transformation

The South African government developed legislation to drive and enforce the transformation of previously divided higher education institutions. The objective of the Higher Education Act of 1997 was to enable the implementation of a transformation agenda through a mandated institutional forum (DHET, 1997). In addition, the Employment Equity Act proposed affirmative action as a mechanism for executing transformation (Wöcke & Sutherland, 2008) along race and gender social identity dimensions. To comply with legislation at the institutional level, the human resource function had to follow equity expectations to achieve the transformation goals. Institutional policies reflected legislation and guidelines to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the transformation agenda in higher education.

Recent organisational political tensions emerged from calls to implement transformation in higher education. Racial tensions occurred during the Fallist movements with the calls for decolonisation of curriculum and transformation, where leaders and academic employees were obligated to choose whether to support or resist these movements (Mbembe, 2019), creating a need for certain political skill. For example, a prominent black male professor at a University in Cape Town was manipulated to assume an unwanted senior executive position by a black female deputy vice-chancellor, for transformation, which saw the former ultimately committing suicide (Davies, 2022; Nhlapo, et al., 2020).

Similarly, at a university in KwaZulu-Natal, many senior executives collectively resigned after the council appointed a white and male vice-chancellor, which executives perceived as anti-transformation and politically motivated (Morrell, 2024). Both examples highlight relational tensions that arise if organisational politics exist with gender, race, nationality, and language identity during the transformation of higher education.

Organisational political tensions persist between leaders and academic employees who support or resist the transformation of higher education institutions. While university management has been dominated by black people nationally, the professoriate remains dominated by white professors. The South African government has implemented development and support programmes to address the shortage of black professors (DHET, 2019; DHET, 2022). A former vice chancellor was reported as pushing white people out, in favour of black people for transformation at a university in KwaZulu-Natal (Johnson, 2016). Many prominent white academic employees left the institution as a form of resistance against transformation.

A university of technology in KwaZulu-Natal experienced workplace political tensions between the chair of the council and the former vice-chancellor, where, more recently, the institution has employed a high number of Indian people and black African nationals.

Nationality has become a point of tension between leaders and academic employees regarding the appointment of black African nationals from abroad. At a university of technology in Durban, a vice-chancellor stopped the appointment of African nationals in leadership and academic positions, which in turn caused tensions between leadership and academic employees represented by trade unions. Some non-South African nationals have left a university of technology in Durban. The purge of black African nationals, who were sought after in early post-apartheid South Africa, may be perceived as motivated by xenophobia (Higher education institution [HEI] one, 2022; HEI two, 2022, McKune, 2009). On the contrary, black African nationals were appointed to leadership positions and as academic employees, under a recently appointed vice chancellor, who happens to be a black male African national, at a university in KwaZulu-Natal.

Male professors dominate higher education institutions, while female professors remain underrepresented. In the management of higher education institutions, there is one female vice-chancellor out of four vice-chancellors at public higher education institutions located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. More broadly, there are few women-rated scientists in higher education institutions, as contained in national research foundation (NRF) ratings and academy of science membership in South Africa. Yet, the number of female students graduating from higher education institutions has risen. Therefore, leaders were unable to appoint women scientists to higher education institutions opportunities, to be transformative, in preference for male appointments and similar language speakers.

Language tensions have appeared, with calls to entrench the isiZulu language as a prominent language in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, as a response to national language guidelines to decolonise knowledge production. The requirement has arisen for isiZulu language proficiency, to the exclusion of non-isiZulu speakers from work and learning opportunities. Hence, an isiZulu-speaking leader may influence a non-isiZulu-speaking employee in nuanced ways, based on language similarity. More broadly, a university in Cape Town faced challenges about the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. The university underwent a process of revising language use at a public higher education institution, where leaders and academic employees would have required political influence to transform language use. These cases highlight the problem of political influence tensions and social identity differences leaders face during the transformation of organisations.

1.5. Problem statement

A leader exercises political skill to influence employees similarly to the leader. Yet, little is known about a leader who adopts political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader (Ferris et al., 2019; Nkomo, et al., 2019). Extant literature overlooks to ask whether employees perceive a leader who applies political skill to influence employees as manipulative if the leader is different from the employee based on race, gender, nationality, and language. If an employee perceives a leader who exercises political skill as manipulative the employee is more likely to react with resistance towards the leader, if the leader is different from the employee.

By contrast, employees may perceive the leader as deploying political skill to influence employees through collaboration if the leader shares a similar social identity with the employee. The employee is more likely to cooperate, with the leader perceived as utilising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the leader and employee share a similar social identity. The two alternative perspectives highlight a need to examine whether social identity difference influences the exercise of a leader's political skill, as organisations transform to become more diverse and inclusive.

Leaders are under pressure to transform organisations to reflect the diversity of society. Instead of the leader using political skill to influence employees who are similar to the leader in categories such as nationality and gender, the leader could influence employees who are different from the leader for transformation (Nhlapo et al., 2020; Smith, 2022). Tensions emerge between the leader who may use political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader, rather than similar. Hence, leaders who are used to influencing employees who are similar to the leader encounter challenges in influencing different employees for the transformation of corporations, as well as in South Africa.

1.6. Research purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine whether social identity difference influences the exercise of a leader's political skill. The employee is more likely to show resistance against a leader who is viewed as adopting political skill to manipulate the employee if the leader is different from the employee. In contrast, a cooperative employee may perceive a leader as exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the leader and employee are similar. These two alternating possibilities give rise to the following research questions:

1.7. Main research question

What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?

1.7.1. Research sub-questions

What are employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees if a leader is different from employees?

What are employee reactions towards a leader who uses influence tactics, if a leader is different from employees?

1.8. Research contributions

1.8.1. Theoretical

The study draws on political influence theory to examine a leader who influences employees who are different from the leader. Before political influence theory emerged, Mintzberg (1985) developed a middle-range organisational politics theory, building on Weber's (1947) classic organisational theory. At a later stage, Ferris and Judge (1991) drew from Mintzberg's (1985) organisational politics theory to create the entry-level (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2016) political influence theory. Political influence theory assumes that workplaces are made up of irrational leaders and employees. In addition, workplaces comprise diverse leader and employee interests that compete for access to limited resources. The assumptions highlight the conditions for leaders to exercise political skill to manipulate and collaborate with potentially different employee interests in pursuit of few resources.

Since contributors and outcomes of political influence assumptions are known, Munyon et al. (2015), building on the work of Treadway, Ferris, Douglas, Hochwarter, Kacmar, and Ammeter (2004), have called for extending the political influence theory. Charles and Nkomo (2012) have further suggested the examination of race and gender categories of identity as intervening aspects of organisational politics, while Hochwarter et al. (2020), Ferris et al. (2019), as well as Frieder et al. (2019) have proposed diversity as an intervening aspect of political influence for future research. As a response to these theoretical suggestions and practical transformation tensions, this study examines a leader who uses political skill to influence diverse employees in the workplace.

While leaders have exercised political skill to influence employees who are similar to the leader, little is known about the influence of a leader's political skill on employees who are different from them (Ferris, et al., 2019) according to social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language. The study examines whether employees perceived a leader who applied political skill to influence employees as manipulative if the leader is different from employees. Employees are more likely to show resistance against a manipulative leader if the leader is different from the employee.

In contrast, employees are more likely to perceive the leader as deploying political skill to influence employees through collaboration if the leader shares a similar social identity with them. Employees may view a collaborative leader as using political skill to cooperate with employees if the leader and employees share a similar social identity based on race, gender, nationality and language. By examining the alternative perspectives of a leader who influences employees, the study contributes to the understanding of multiple social identity differences, characterised by race, gender, nationality, and language, as intervening aspects of political influence theory as well as practice.

1.8.2. Practical

Leaders are under pressure to influence employees who are different from them, by means of which to transform public and private organisations. The study contributes mechanisms to support leaders to exercise political skill to manipulate and collaborate with different employees based on the social identity of race, gender, nationality and language categories to mitigate transformation tensions. In this regard, practical workshops, executive coaching, and mentoring support manipulative leaders who exercise political skill on different employees (Kelly, 2020; Postma, 2020) based on multiple social categories of gender, race, nationality, and language. An executive coach can assist in shaping the leaders' influence tactics in a diverse organisation. Leaders ought to be supported to exercise influence and minimise offending, discriminating, and clashing with diverse employees. Therefore, leadership content should include political skill directed at diverse employees through self-awareness and reflections at work.

Capacity-building guides employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to manipulate employees if the leader has a different social identity from employees, according to nationality, race, gender, and language. Leaders ought to measure their level of political skill to identify areas of capacity building on diversity at work. Employees are instrumental in giving feedback to leaders about their tactics and employee reactions (Council for Higher Education [CHE], 2022). Observations and anonymous reports can be used to gather more information about a leader's political skill to transform an organisation. Mechanisms of capacity building at entry, mid-range, and senior levels can support manipulative leaders who employ political skill to deal with potential employee resistance if the leader has a different social identity from that of employees, based on language, race, nationality, and gender.

From a divergent perspective, a leader utilises political skill to collaborate with employees who share a similar social identity with employees for transformation. Training and development programmes, executive education opportunities, and practical experience observations may be implemented to enhance a collaborative leader's ability to exercise political skill on employees as the transformation progresses (CHE, 2022; DHET, 2022; USAF, 2023). Leaders can be sent to assignments where employees are diverse for exposure and awareness of differences.

The relevant mechanisms draw from employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to collaborate with employees if the leader has a similar social identity to employees. The mechanisms can entail social ways of exposure to difference for example through sport, music, and storytelling. The mechanisms and measurements enable collaborative leaders to apply the political skill to leverage employee cooperation if a leader shares a similar social identity with employees during the transformation of an organisation.

1.8.3. Methodological

The study contributes a survey cross-sectional research design and method that takes into account the South African context. Given South Africa's divisive history based on identity, the adopted research resign and method needed to be sensitive to context, building on previous research. The study contributes a unique sample of respondents in a unique setting to offer nuanced insights about identity and workplace politics during the transformation of the organisation (Maher, Russel, Jordan, Ferris & Hochwarter, 2020). South Africa is promoting the integration of leaders and employees from diverse background post-apartheid.

Instead of requesting leaders to identify their workplace politics, employees reported their perceptions of their immediate managers to strengthen the dataset. The measurement instrument was piloted to ensure respondents were not offended by statements on, race, gender, nationality, and language differences categories. The categories were used to examine social identity between leaders and employees, based on the exercise of leader political skill in the workplace.

1.9 Evolution of leader political skill

The political skill concept was conceived by Pfeffer (1981), building on Mintzberg's (1985) scholarly work on leadership power and influence. Drawing from Pfeffer's (1981) and Mintzberg's (1985) works, Ferris et al. (2007, p.292) developed the widely accepted definition of political skill as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, to use such knowledge to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational [sic] objectives". A leader demonstrates an understanding of employees by showing political skill components of "social astuteness, interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and network ability" (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwater, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Frieder, et al., 2019; p. 3; McAllister, Ellen III & Ferris, 2018; Treadway et al., 2004). Interpersonal, social, political savvy, and emotional intelligence skills are associated with the concept of political skill. The assumptions of political skill are sufficiently different from the aforementioned concepts.

Political skill as a concept has been examined through the political influence theory, situated in organisational politics drawn from organisational theory. Political influence underpins political skill, the conceptualisation of personal goal contributors, and group benefit outcomes. More recently, scholars have called for intervening aspects to determine the direction of political skill concept underscored by political influence assumptions (Ferris & Judge, 2001; Ferris et al., 2007; Longnecker, Sims & Gioia, 1987; Munyon, et al., 2015). In the same vein, Ferris et.al (2019) and Frieder et al. (2019) have proposed researching and measuring nationality and gender differences as intervening aspects of political skill in the workplace.

A measurement of political skill, as a unidimensional construct, known as political skill inventory, has been developed to conduct research. As depicted in the questionnaire, the political skill inventory comprises 17 items based on four components of "social astuteness, interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and network ability" (Ferris et al., 2005:126). A shorter version of the political skill inventory has been used in some studies. The political skill inventory has been widely used to measure leaders who exercise political skill, with implications for employee perceptions in the workplace.

1.9.1. Employee-perceived leader political skill

The practice of political skill is often studied from a leader's perspective, with less focus on employee perceptions of a leader's political skill. Scholars have probed the use of leaders political skill on employees (Masyln & Fedor, 1998; Sun, 2022; Sun, Burke, Chen, Tan, Zhang & Hou, 2021). Yet, employees at different levels of the organisation, who are on the receiving end of a leader's political skill, might provide unique insights. Instead of examining the political skill from a leader's perspective, employees are likely to show nuanced responses about the perceptions of a leader's political skill, as depicted in the research questionnaire. In addition, employees have robust perceptions about the level of a leader's political skill and social identity.

1.10. Evolution of social identity

Drawing from identity theory within social psychology, a widely accepted definition of social identity is "individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1972, p.292). This definition suggests that identity is not only personal but rather socially constructed. Ashforth and Mael (1989), as well as Nkomo and Cox (1996), later introduced the social identity concept to the organisation, as well as the organisational literature. In recent times, Abrams and Hogg (2021) built on early and later works on social identity theory, by foregrounding the role of leaders in navigating identity in the workplace.

Social identity assumes that an individual is a member of a group based on the satisfaction derived from membership. When no longer satisfied with the group, a member leaves the group, unless objective, value-related reasons exist to maintain membership. A member decides to reframe undesirable aspects of the group, as well as take social action to change members. Social identity assumptions and measurement recognise multiple social groups hence social categorisation and social comparison occur between ingroups and outgroups based on similarities and differences (Ferris & Mitchell, 1987; Mell, Dechurch, Leenders & Contractor, 2020; Tajfel, 1978; Yi, et al., 2020). Social identity has been measured using a widely accepted self-esteem instrument developed by Crocker and Luhtanen (1990). Many studies have used the instrument to measure social identity from a leader's perspective, hence the study draws from employee perspectives.

1.10.1. Race, gender, nationality, language differences and similarities

Social identity differences refer to aspects of profession and belonging in the workplace. Employees and leaders highlight tensions of differences of race and gender for multiculturalism, diversity, and uniqueness for belonging and satisfaction. Both the leader and employee develop respective personal identities for social identity. Personal identities of the leader and employee differ based on aspects of gender and language (Ely, 1994; Ferris & Mitchell, 1987; Haslam, Gaffney, Hogg, Rast & Steffens, 2022; Hogg, 2000; Izraeli, 1987; Nkomo & Hobbler, 2014; Ragins & Sundrom, 1989). Since there are power dynamics between a leader and an employee, a salient social group of leaders shapes employees' perceptions of a leader's social group and language in the workplace.

The perceptions of different employees about leadership, particularly from a workplace political influence perspective provide useful insights, especially in organisations that transform to become more inclusive and diverse for example based on language differences. Language differences have led to tensions in workplaces where leaders and employees speak different languages. This is the case when employees are different from the leader in an identity aspect (Arnett, 2023; Brewer, 1991; Hogg, 2001; Pan et al., 2019; Yi, Zhang & Windsor, 2020) such as language. This further shows that language can be a salient aspect of highlighting differences.

In the same vein, the conceptualisation of "self" within a group, has implications for differentiation, which requires assimilation to fit into the in-group, for a sense of belonging and acceptance, and ignoring the out-group. As a consequence, reconciling a sense of self with maintaining differences causes tensions between employees and leaders over rejection, ostracisation, and marginalisation outcomes (Haslam, et al., 2022). For example, a person who speaks a foreign language is treated differently from employees who speak the local language, making it difficult to socialise and fit into the workplace.

Social identity difference is viewed as beneficial to the organisation whether there is acceptance of individuality, even within intra-group interactions between leaders and employees. Based on social interactions, there are reactions of employees to the leader's influence approach to employees who are different from the leader (Selvanathan, Crimston & Jetten, 2022). Therefore, social identity matters when a leader interacts with an employee who is different from the leader, especially during the transformation tensions and misunderstandings. The primary language of the individuals involved in communication is an expression of a leader or employees' multiple identities.

In addition to language, the study focuses on race, gender, and nationality, for transformation to become more inclusive and diverse (Arnett, 2023; Nkomo, 1992; Drory & Beaty, 1991; Nkomo, 2021; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). Examining differences in social identity assists leaders in influencing employees. In contrast, employees relate with leaders who have a similar social identity to their own (Brewer, 1991; Brown, 2019, Wexley & Klimonski, 1984). The similarity between leaders influences employees based on shared aspects of given values.

1.11. Evolution of leader influence tactics

Influence tactics have emerged for scrutiny from lines of enquiry on interpersonal influence, power, and organisational influence. Leaders use tactics to influence decisions and allocation of scarce resources to employees. Influence tactics involve collaboration, persuasion, and manipulation (Lu, Bartol, Venkataramani, Zheng & Liu, 2019; Porter, Aleen & Angle, 1981; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yulk, Seifert & Chavez, 2008; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Manipulation and collaboration tactics are used to influence the outcomes for leaders and employees when navigating organisational politics. Employee perceptions of leader influence tactics of manipulation and collaboration are measured through a questionnaire developed by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980). Leaders use tactics to influence employee thinking, behaviour, and actions towards achieving organisational outcomes. Combined tactics influence employees, and conditions shape a leader to manipulate or collaborate with employees.

1.11.1. Employee-perceived leader influence tactics

Employees perceive a leader who uses influence tactics as manipulative or collaborative with employees. The effect of manipulation takes into account power dynamics between employees and a leader (Ferris et al., 2019; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990) and provides employee insights under unique conditions that include diverse interests. In contrast, a collaborative tactic draws nuanced employee perceptions about a leader who navigates workplace politics, which are always present in every organisation. The outcome of using manipulation and collaboration depends on employee reactions towards the leader.

1.11.1.1. Manipulation

Leaders have used manipulation to sway employee perceptions towards achieving personal and organisational goals. Manipulation tactics have been defined as “control or play upon as artful, unfair, or insidious means” (Owen, 1986: p. 111). Leaders control employees through underhanded means of ingratiation and inspirational appeals, complimenting employees before asking for a favour, appearing humble to the employee, and sympathising with an employee about the request (Drory & Beaty, 1991; Ferris et al., 2007; Furst & Cable, 2008; Jones, 1964; Yukl, et al., 2008). Employees view an overly polite leader as politically motivated in pursuit of personal gain. Where pretence is relied upon, leaders require the ability to understand and influence employee reactions through manipulation.

1.11.1.2. Collaboration

In contrast to manipulation, through collaboration leaders hold influence over the actions of their employees. Collaboration is conceptualised as “the agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change” (Yulk et al., 2008 p. 610). A leader collaborates with employees by offering to assist an employee, sourcing employee opinions before making a decision, and sharing outcomes of working together with employees (Lu, et al., 2019). To collaborate, the leader further reminds employees of previous support, gives employees benefits for acting on requests, and offers resources for job tasks. Since the leader influences employees, employee perceptions of a collaborative leader highlight nuances and reactions.

1.12. Evolution of employee reactions

Employees form reactions about a leader who exercises influence over them. Employee reactions towards a leader are essential if the organisation acts on commitments. Employee reaction is defined as “responses of all those workers who hold the type of jobs defined as paid employment job, where incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts that give them a basic remuneration that is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work“ (International Labour Organisation, n.d.). Employees respond to a leader who exercises political skill to influence them (Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008; Haslam et al., 2022), through employee cooperation with or resistance against the leader in the workplace.

1.12.1. Resistance

Employees show resistance against a leader who uses influence tactics on employees. Employee resistance is defined as “any employee conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo” (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977: p.63). Employees ignore a leader’s instructions, refuse to carry out a leader’s request or overlook an action that they require (Baron, 1986; Furst & Cable, 2008). Employees who feel taken advantage of demonstrate outright defiance against the influence of a leader, engage in a work slowdown, or stop being amenable to the leader. Employee resistance is associated with manipulation exercised by leaders, who are viewed as pursuing personal gain at the expense of employees.

1.12.2. Cooperation

Employees cooperate with a leader who uses political skill to collaborate with employees. Cooperation is defined as the “wilful contribution of personal effort to the completion of interdependent jobs” (Wagner III, 1995, p.152). An employee shows cooperation by obeying and complying with requests of the leader to meet job requirements (Furst & Cable, 2008). Employees who cooperate with a leader are consistent with beneficial politics, as suggested by Hochwarter et al. (2020), where employees support the leader’s requests and share information with them. However, the extent to which the employee cooperates with the leader depends on collaboration, where, if a leader has a similar social identity to the employee, this has implications for the transformation of an organisation.

1.13. Employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived leader influence tactics, and employee reactions, influenced by employee-perceived social identity

Little is known about whether a leader exercises political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader. A leader is likely to use political skill to manipulate employees if the leader has a different social identity. In organisations where irrational leaders use political skill to ingratiate diverse interest groups to compete for access to limited resources and opportunities (Ahearn et al., 2004; Ferris & Judge, 2001; Hochwarter et al., 2020; McAllister et al. 2018), such leaders resort to unfair means of influence. Employees find a leader to be overly complementary to employees if the employee has a different social identity from the leader based on race, gender, nationality, and language. The use of manipulation tactics on diverse employees offers insight into the influence on employees, particularly while tensions

arise over inclusion and diversity. Employees may react with resistance against the manipulative leader if the leader has a different social identity from the employees.

As an alternative, employees understand and overlook a manipulative leader who uses political skill to ingratiate employees (Ely, 1994; Drory & Beaty, 1991; Ferris et al., 2007; Frieder et al., 2020) in such cases that the leader and employees share a similar social identity with employees. Leaders and employees join social groups based on shared race, gender, language, nationality, and profession for a sense of belonging, and leave the social group if the group no longer benefits members (Nkomo et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1978). Employees may overlook a manipulative leader perceived as using political skill to favour employees similar to the leader, especially during transformation tensions and collaboration.

A leader is likely to adopt political skill to collaborate with employees who share a similar social identity. A collaborative leader offers to assist employees with tasks, recognise employee inputs openly, and offer personal favours for employees with a similar social identity to the leader (Ferris & Judge, 2001; Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, & Zivnuska, 2011; Munyon et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2019). Leaders further make formal requests to employees, give support after making requests, and offer a benefit in exchange for requests. Leaders prefer to work with employees who are similar to leaders when it comes to aspects such as gender, nationality, race, and language. In the wake of calls for the transformation of organisations to become more inclusive and diverse, leaders face misunderstandings when influencing not only employees similar to the leader but also those who are different.

Employees may cooperate with a leader who uses political skill to collaborate with employees if the leader has a similar social identity as the employee. Employees adhere to leader requests, show support for the leader's instructions, and communicate with a leader with ease if the leader and employee share a similar social identity. Since employees feel a sense of belonging (Wagner, 1995) if a leader shares a similar social group, employees could feel obligated to support the leader's requests, instead of mutually beneficial outcomes and benefits of the organisation. However, employees who are different from the leader when it comes to social identity are less likely to cooperate with the leader, especially during the transformation of the organisation.

Leaders face tensions in transforming organisations to include employees from diverse demographics and professional backgrounds. Depending on the leader's approach to transformation, employees perceive the leader to be either in support of or against transformation. Transformation highlights identity differences of gender, race, nationality, and language by categorising and comparing groups, which further raises questions about organisational politics that are present in every organisation (Arnett, 2023; Davy, 2008; Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Nkomo, 1992, Nkomo, 2021). Outcomes of transformation either encourage differences in social groups in the workplace or enable assimilation, where employees and leaders seek to fit in and feel a sense of belonging rather than underscore differences.

The study adopts a cross-sectional design to examine employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees who are different from the leader. While a cross-sectional design has limitations in collecting data at a singular point in time, the study uses the design as most appropriate to answer the research question of "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill*?

1.14. Overview summary

The overview chapter discussed the background of a leader who exercised political skill to influence the employees if the leader is different from the employees. Employees can perceive a leader who uses political skill to be manipulative if the leader is different from the employee. Employees are likely to show resistance in such cases. Alternatively, employees can view a leader who adopts political skill as collaborative, if the leader is similar to the employee. Employees can cooperate with a collaborative leader when the leader and employee are similar. Social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language differences are highlighted if organisations transform to become more inclusive and diverse, amid organisational politics. The next chapter presents a literature review on the leader's political skill and employee reactions from a social-political perspective.

Chapter two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an overview of a leader who exercises political skill to influence diverse employees during organisational transformation for diversity. Employees may view a leader who uses political skill as manipulative if the leader is different from the employees. Yet, a leader may be viewed as adopting political skill to collaborate with employees if the leader is similar. The main research question is "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?"* To address the research question, I discuss the state of transformation of higher education in South Africa. I adopt political influence as a theoretical anchor to examine a leader who uses political skill to influence different employee reactions. I draw on social identity differences of race, gender, nationality, and language differences as intervening aspects that extend political influence theory.

2.2 The state of higher education transformation in South Africa

In South Africa, higher education institutions were divided along racial lines during apartheid. Former white institutions had advanced research and administration resources as well as leaders and employees who delivered high-quality education, while former black institutions were regarded as under-resourced while delivering inferior education (DHET, 1997; DHET, 2019; Jansen, 2003). Former white privileged institutions were further categorised according to English and Afrikaans-speaking institutions, while black underprivileged institutions were classified along African, Indian, and coloured racial groups, with limited resources.

The difference or similarity in race identity of leadership and employee social groups was a catalyst for allocating and withholding physical resources to deliver quality higher education to society in South Africa. As Soudien (2010) has pointed out, calls were made to leaders to deracialise employee and student demographic profiles in the higher education sector and progress towards integration of formerly divided race social groups to promote diversity and inclusion in post-apartheid South Africa. During the transition from racial division to integration, leaders grapple with the required skills to implement transformation amid race tensions and misunderstandings throughout the higher education sector.

Tensions emerged regarding whether leaders were perceived by employees to support or were against the racial transformation of higher education institutions in democratic South Africa. Leaders who supported the transformation agenda employed qualified employees from underrepresented social groups based on race and gender identities and excluded overrepresented groups which caused further tensions. Soudien (2010) was of the view that employee race and gender demographic representation was insufficient to reflect transformation, as discrimination persisted in democratic South Africa. On the contrary, leaders who were perceived by employees to be against the transformation agenda delayed the implementation based on a lack of suitable affirmative action candidates available for jobs and opportunities. In mitigating tensions associated with transformation, the South African government passed legislation to guide higher education decision-making between leaders and employees.

South Africa's higher education legislation is steeped in a national constitution that enshrines a bill of rights under the equality clause, to promote no discrimination on aspects such as race, and gender. In alignment with the South African constitution, the higher education act and institutional forum purport to "restructuring and transformation programmes and institutions to respond better to human resource, economic and development needs". The institutional forum is mandated to monitor the implementation of transformation based on higher education legislation, in pursuit of redress on human resource and operational policy imperatives.

The green and white papers of the South African government provide a framework for higher education transformation such as education working paper 3 (DHET, 1997). Furthermore, the government Department of Labour passed the Employment Equity Act, which requires that higher education institutional leaders implement affirmative action when recruiting employees (Wöcke & Sutherland, 2008). The affirmative action clause in the employment equity act promotes the prioritisation of underrepresented black and female employees for job opportunities. Despite the higher education and labour piece of legislation passed at the inception of democratic South Africa, leaders continue to face employee tensions in implementing the transformation agenda, amidst organisational politics which are always present in every organisation.

2.2.1 Leadership

Leaders are accountable for managing employees at different levels of responsibility and the state of the higher education sector. At the senior level of responsibility, the vice-chancellor provides a vision of the institution on transformation to be reported to the chair of the council who represents the board committee, and the relevant government department of higher education (HEI one, 2022). The vice-chancellor, as the head of the institution, is perceived by employees as having the political skill to support or face resistance towards transformation through decision-making, public statements, and general utterances. The deputy vice-chancellors, who report to the vice-chancellor, develop and implement strategies to transform the teaching, research, and administration of institutions.

Building on respective teaching, research, and administration strategies, the deans, who report to deputy vice-chancellors, operationalise faculty strategies of recruiting diverse employees, decolonising curricula, and procuring black business. I have witnessed the appointment and clarification of some of the institutional positions in terms of employment equity requirements. The heads of schools and departments, who report to deans, devise and implement plans for transformation by attracting and enrolling diverse students, enrolling different postgraduate students, and appointing underrepresented academic employees amid potential tensions associated with change.

The diversity of leadership at different levels of responsibility has created tensions between leaders, who may have political skill to support or be against the transformation of higher education institutions. For instance, a former deputy vice-chancellor used political skill to influence the appointment of a black African dean to a senior leadership position for transformation, and the dean committed suicide at a university in Cape Town (Henderson, 2017; Mazizi, 2022; Nhlapo, et al., 2020). The black African dean's appointment took place around the time of heightened calls for decolonisation and transformation by student formations, particularly the Fallist movements. Similarly, after the appointment of a black female vice-chancellor, the quality of qualifications was probed at a university in Pretoria. Such institutional examples highlight tensions that arise when leaders attempt to transform higher education institutions.

Transformation challenges persisted in higher education institutions. A former vice-chancellor of a university in KwaZulu-Natal faced resistance from senate members, which is the highest decision-making body, over accusations of racism and transformation resulting in the resignations of academic employees. As mentioned earlier, transformation tensions surfaced when many senior executive leaders resigned after a white male vice-chancellor was appointed at a university in KwaZulu-Natal (Mail and guardian, 2017; McKune, 2009) with accusations of political interference by the former Minister of Higher Education. The white male vice-chancellor did not complete the term of appointment amid persistent employee resistance. In both cases, the race and gender similarities and differences in the social identity of the vice-chancellor and academic employees influenced perceptions and reactions towards workplace politics and the state of institutional transformation.

Transformation tensions have been prevalent throughout the higher education system. A black African vice-chancellor blocked Indian employees from job opportunities in preference for black Africans at a University in KwaZulu-Natal, raising tensions about language discrimination (Bawa, 2017). In addition, an African foreign national professor who was a dean was gunned down after blowing the whistle on doctorates for pay at a university in KwaZulu-Natal, raising questions about xenophobia and workplace politics. Both examples underscore the volatility that emerged between leaders who use political skill to influence employees by implementing the transformation of higher education institutions in post-apartheid South Africa.

Leaders have faced volatile interactions with academic employees and student formations in KwaZulu-Natal, amid calls for transformation. Volatile engagements pressurised leaders to transform higher education by taking into account employee perceptions and reactions towards transformation (Bawa, 2017; DHET, 2019; Johnson, 2016). I have witnessed leaders who possess or lack the political skill to navigate debates about transforming academic employee social groups to become more diverse, or maintain the dominance of minority social groups at the expense of the transformation agenda, amid possible workplace political tensions, well-being, and career outcomes.

Higher education institutions that drive transformation are perceived as politicised. Leaders are seen as implementing transformation for self-serving needs by employing academic employees who are similar to their leader. Yet, transformation should not compromise the quality of teaching, research, and infrastructure by appointing those who are perceived to be in proximity to the leadership. Despite calls to employ diverse academic employees for transformation, the South African government promotes non-racialism and non-sexism, where

the country belongs to all who live in it. The government's stance gives rise to questions about the role of leaders in using political skill to influence diverse academic employees during the tensions that are associated with the transformation of an organisation.

2.2.2 Academic employees

Academic employees have faced pressure to teach large classes of underprepared students, conduct high-impact research regularly, process high loads of administrative tasks, and engage with communities with needs in democratic South Africa's higher education sector. As higher education institutions transformed, academic employees taught underprepared students with limited resources which compromises high-quality learning outcomes (Jansen, 2003). The massification of higher education as a result of increasing demand for access to higher education has driven the migration of black students from poorly resourced former black institutions, to well-resourced former white institutions, which further increased the teaching and research workloads of academic employees.

A low number of black postgraduate students who complete doctorates has led to a shortage of black academic employees throughout the higher education sector. Extending this premise, I have observed black undergraduate students who were under pressure to seek employment rather than pursue postgraduate education, which reduces the number of potential black postgraduate students, particularly for master's and doctorates (DHET, 2019), to develop the next generation of black professoriate. It usually takes a long time to develop a highly-rated professoriate in the higher education sector. Higher education institutions have been unable to compete with the private sector on compensation to retain emerging black academic employees.

A shortage of black and female academic employees has led to the sourcing of academics from the African continent. I have observed calls that were made to recruit African nationals as a scarce skill resource to address the shortage of black African and female academics (DHET, 2019). Even though black and female South Africans who were in exile and studied abroad due to the political system of apartheid, were requested to return at the dawn of democracy, it was challenging to meet the demand for teaching, research, and management positions throughout the higher education sector. Despite colonialism, the rest of Africa had not experienced similar transformation tensions that South Africa faces, exemplified by recent looting in the province of KwaZulu-Natal highlighting xenophobic tensions. Table 2.1 shows key literature references used to examine the workplace political tensions on the next page.

Table 2.1: Key concepts and references

Concepts	References
Employee-perceived leader political skill	Blickle, Kuckelhaus, Kranefeld, Genau, Gansen-Ammann & Wihler, 2020 Fedor, Masyln, Farmer & Bettenhausen, 2008 Ferris, Ellen III, McAllister & Maher, 2019 Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas & Frink 2005 Grosser, Obstfeld, Choi, Woehler, Lopez-Kidwell, Lablanca & Borgatti, 2018 Munyon, Frieder, Satamino, Carnes, Bolander & Ferris, 2020 Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi, Thatcher, 2019 Summers, Munyon, Brouer, Pahng & Ferris, 2020 Treadway, Ferris, Douglas, Hochwarter, Kacmar, & Ammeter, 2004
Employee-perceived social identity	Abrams, Lalot & Hogg, 2021 Arnett, R.D. 2023 Brown, 2020 Charles & Nkomo, 2012 Haslam, Gaffney, Hogg, Rast & Steffens, 2022 Hogg, 2001 Hogg & Terry, 2000 Hogg, Terry & White, 1995 Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014
Employee-perceived leader influence tactics *manipulation* *collaboration*	O'Reiley & Pfeffer, 2021 Falbe & Yulk, 1991 Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas & Lux, 2007 Good & Schwepker, 2022 Frieder, Ferris, Perrewe, Wihler & Brooks, 2019 Mell, Dechurch, Leenders & Contractor, 2020 Ferris & Judge, 1991 Lu, Bartol, Venkataranami, Zheng & Liu, 2019 McAllister, Ellen III & Ferris, 2018
Employee reactions *resistance* *cooperation*	Treadway, Ferris, Douglas, Hochwarter, Kacmar & Ammeter, 2004 Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007 Hochwarter Rosen, Jordan, Ferris, Ejaz, & Maher, 2020 Munyon, Frieder, Satamino, Carnes, Bolander, & Ferris, 2020 Wagner III, 1995 Shapiro, Novelli & Kirkman, 2001

The event sparked debates about African nationals in the higher education sector. Academic employees perceived leaders who exclude African nationals from job opportunities as xenophobic, contrary to leaders who support the employment of African nationals for internationalisation (HEI one, 2022; Jansen, 2022). Tensions arose about whether African nationals are still viewed as a scarce resource many years after the implementation of transformation, or whether academic employees who are South African ought to be prioritised for job creation in the higher education sector. I have witnessed debates about nationality and language similarities and differences, highlighting robust social interactions between academic employees and leaders for teaching, learning, and administration of institutions.

Tensions arose between Indian and Zulu people regarding language identity and belonging in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I have witnessed rising calls to use the isiZulu language for teaching students and conducting research in higher education institutions located in the KwaZulu-Natal (HEI two, 2022). Non-isiZulu speaking academic employees felt excluded from participating in isiZulu-based teaching, research, and administration of higher education. Non-isiZulu speakers further experience internal tensions about communicating socially using personal home language and fitting in by assimilating into the isiZulu language culture to achieve a sense of belonging.

While language translation activities can be provided, language choices as a tool for transformation cause tensions in the workplace. I have witnessed language debates that have created robust disagreement about leaders who are perceived as supporting language transformation and leaders against language transformation (USAF, 2023). Language debates highlight the challenges of implementing the transformation of academic language to be used by leaders when influencing academic employees for diversity.

The differences in the identity of a leader and academic employees require mechanisms of leaders to influence employees' perceptions and reactions through political skill. The study examines a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees if the leader has a different social identity from the employee, particularly during the transformation of an organisation. Even though public higher education has been used as a primary backdrop in the study to illustrate transformation tensions, leaders continue to grapple with using political influence on employees who are different from leaders during the transformation of private organisations.

2.3 Political influence theory

I adopt political influence as a theoretical lens to conduct the research. Political influence theory draws from mid-range organisational politics, which argues that organisations are made of irrational leaders who use power to influence employees in political arenas. In turn, organisational politics theory emerges from the classic organisational theory (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Mintzberg, 1985; Weber, 1947), which understands organisations to be made up of rational leaders who create bureaucratic systems for conducting work tasks. Situated in respective organisational and organisational politics theories, political influence entry-level theory presents a set of assumptions about organisations.

Political influence theory assumes that power politics always exist in every organisation. The theory further assumes that organisations have irrational individuals with differing interests and compete for access to limited resources. The theoretical assumptions are foundational to leaders who use manipulation to influence employees with differing interests, for personal gain (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Alternatively, leaders can collaborate with employees with diverse interests to benefit the organisation. While leaders have used political skill to influence employees who share a similar social identity to the leader, extant literature has under researched leaders who exercise political skill to influence employees with a different social identity from the leader.

2.4 Political skill and social identity

The political skill and social identity perspective is proposed as an extension of political influence theory. Social identity suggests an intervening aspect for leader political skill and leader political influence (*manipulation and collaboration*) from an employee perspective. In addition, social identity is proposed as an intervening aspect for the leader's political influence (*manipulation and collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance and cooperation*) from an employee perspective. Employees are more likely to perceive a leader who uses political skill to manipulate employees if a leader is different from employees. Employees are meanwhile more likely to show resistance against a leader who is viewed as adopting political skill to manipulate employees if the leader is different from the employees. In contrast, employees perceive a leader as exercising political skill to collaborate with employees, if the leader and employees are similar. Employees may cooperate with a leader who uses political skill to collaborate with employees if the leader and employees are similar.

2.4.1. Employee-perceived leader political skill

Employee-perceived leader political skill is a unidimensional concept characterised by “social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity” (Ferris et al., 2005;126). Ferris, et al., (2007:p.292) defines political skill as “the ability to effectively understand others at work, to use such knowledge to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives”. A leader who uses political skill makes an employee feel comfortable at work, builds relationships with influential people at work, and senses an employee’s hidden agenda (Ahearn et al., 2004; Blickle, Kuckelhaus, Kranefeld, Schutte, Genau, Gansen-Ammann & Wihler, 2020; Frieder, Ellen III & Kapoutsis, 2023; Pan et al., 2019). Employees perceive politically skilled leaders as self-aware when communicating with employees, adapting to organisational settings, negotiating beneficial alliances, and showing genuine interest in employees. Leaders use political skill to influence social interactions for desirable employee outcomes in pursuit of personal and organisational benefits.

Employees perceive a leader who lacks political skill as overlooking self-awareness, the ability to build beneficial networks at work, and seeming sincere towards employees. Munyon et al. (2015) and Summers, Munyon, Brouer, Pahng, and Ferris (2020) agree that a leader who lacks political skill sees detrimental outcomes for employees when the leader is unable to influence power dynamics in the organisation’s political arena, considering limited resources. Munyon et al. (2015) take into account that employees depend on the leader to access limited organisational resources and opportunities, as a leader who lacks political skill is overlooked for few opportunities useful to employees. Leaders who lack political skill, since it is not only a trait, but rather a competence, develop it through training and development, coaching, and workplace support.

2.4.2. Employee-perceived social identity

The social identity perspective assumes that a leader is a member of a social group based on the derived satisfaction, that can be perceived by employees. Leaders leave when no longer satisfied with membership of the social group, unless objective, value-related reasons exist to maintain membership (Brown, 2019; Brown & Jaciby-Senghor, 2021; Hogg et al., 19956; Mell et al., 2020; Tajfel, 1978). Leaders decide to reframe undesirable aspects or take social action to change members of the social group. Assumptions and measurement of social identity recognise multiple social groups to which a leader belongs, based on social categorisation, and a comparison of race, gender, nationality, and language aspects.

Social identity acknowledges the multiplicity of identities residing in leaders and employees. Identities are categorised to race, gender, nationality, and language of the leader and employee. In addition, identity categories exist simultaneously within and across leaders and employees, affecting how leaders interact with employees (Booysen, 2018; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Ramarajan, 2014). The salience of the category of the identity of a leader's prototypicality and employee is affected by the hierarchy given to the identity (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). The salient identity positions of a leader or employee cause internal conflict where the salient positions are prioritised. However, if multiple salient identities are in a similar position, internal conflicts of identity are magnified (Roberts & Creary, 2012). Since the categories of social identity exist within and across leaders and employees, the context becomes important to examine influence in the workplace.

The prototypical leadership is affected by the context of the interaction between the leader and employee in the workplace (Ullrich, Christ & Dick, 2009). The prototypicality of a leader depends on the social group a leader compares to in different contexts (Bednar & Brown, 2024). In situations where leaders have been socialised to belong to similar groups based on characteristics, leaders face tensions when dealing with employees who do not belong to the leader's prototypical group (Giessner, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel & Sleebos, 2013). Therefore, defining leadership identity within a group and context becomes important. The context includes a requirement for differences to be recognised, affirmed, and elevated for diversity, inclusion, and representation in the workplace.

2.4.2.1. Race, gender, nationality, language differences

The differences between a leader and employees can assume race, gender, nationality, and language differences. Race, gender, nationality, and language identity categories are highlighted during the transformation for diversity (Arnett, 2023; Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023; Nkomo, 2021; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). For instance, a leader's and employee's identity is expressed in the primary language involved in communication, as a further expression of a person's multiple social identities. Language differences lead to a comparison of language prominence in workplaces where leaders and employees speak different languages. Employee perceptions about the language of a leader lead to working together for mutually beneficial outcomes, or to tensions in the workplace.

Since leaders and employees have multiple social identities exemplified by different races, nationality and languages, leaders and employees view race, nationality, and language aspects according to social categories and comparisons (Abrams, et al., 2021; Arnett, 2023; Brown, 2019; Hogg, 2001; Nkomo & Hobbler, 2014). For example, based on gender, women who operate from positions of less power than men, due to fewer networks, allies, and mentors may form social groups for a sense of belonging and identity. In addition, women who are more susceptible to social influence than males provide unique insights about leader and employee interactions in the workplace.

2.4.2.2. Race, gender, nationality and language similarities

Contrary to these differences, the effect of similarity occurs in leadership decisions about employees. Leaders and employees belong to an in-group that has similar characteristics that engender togetherness and bring about a sense of belonging (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Hogg, 2001; Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005). Since social groups reflect a leader's self-image, the similarity between leaders and employees emphasises the commonalities of the profession. Since leaders influence employees who are similar to the leader, employees seek in-groups aligned with leaders for fulfilment and a sense of belonging. In the wake of multiple identities, leaders and employees foreground the social identity category of salience to generate influence in the workplace (Roberts & Creary, 2012).

2.4.3. Employee-perceived leader influence tactics

Employees form perceptions and present reactions towards leaders who use influence tactics on employees for personal gain. The leader withholds important information from employees, overlook deserving employees for opportunities, and withholds resources for advancing an employee's career (Munyon et al., 2019). Employees perceive a leader who uses influence tactics as insincere. The effect of employee perceptions on influence tactics takes into account power dynamics and relational aspects that arise between employees and leaders in the workplace. Leaders exercise tactics to influence employees for the organisation's benefit. Leaders use influence tactics that assist employees and organisations in working together. As a means of encouraging togetherness, leaders promote competent employees, share limited resources with selected employees, and enable access to competitive opportunities (Hochwarter et al., 2020) in the workplace. A leader uses influence tactics to share support with employees for a broader good.

2.4.3.1. Manipulation

Employees perceive a leader who uses manipulation to influence employees as serving personal interests at the expense of the organisation. Manipulative leaders have been found to focus on ingratiating employees and engaging in self-promotion to achieve personal ambitions. Leaders for example act with pointed humility before requesting employees to perform certain job tasks. Perceptions formed about a leader as inflating the importance of requests depend on whether the leader is sincere when manipulating employees (Good & Schwepker, 2022; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021). Manipulation is further enacted when a leader helps an employee with an opportunity and expects the return of favours, pretence around decision-making, and sympathising with the employee, instead of collaborating with the employee. The differences and similarities between the social identity of the leader and employees influence employee perceptions of manipulation from a leader.

2.4.3.2. Collaboration

In contrast to the manipulation of employees, leaders adopt the collaborative approach of working together with them. Collaboration, as understood here, is conceptualised as "the agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out the request or approve the proposed change" (Yukl et al., 2008 p. 610). A collaborative leader offers to assist employees, sources the opinions of employees before making decisions, and shares outcomes of working together with employees (Lu, et al., 2019). Furthermore, the collaborative leader offers personal favours to employees, reminds employees about past offerings, and makes requests formally to employees. Employee perceptions towards a collaborative leader highlight nuances about influence tactics based on similarity and employee reactions.

2.4.4 Employee reactions

Employees react in different ways to a leader who uses political skill to influence employees in the workplace. Employees show resistance towards a leader who praises employees excessively, over-sympathises with employee problems, or shows the need for help from employees. On the contrary, employees cooperate with a collaborative leader (Hochwarter, et al., 2020; Shapiro, Novelli & Kirkman, 2001), while exercising political skill to influence them. Whether the employee's reaction is resistance or cooperation depends on the nature of the leader's political skill to manipulate or collaborate with employees, based on differences or similarities between the two.

2.4.4.1 Resistance

Employee resistance can arise from perceptions of the manipulation tactic exercised by the leader to influence employees in the workplace. While the leader is empowered to use underhanded means to influence employees by the power of position and title, employees react to a leader's political skill to influence employees in the workplace. Taken to the extreme, the use of political skill to influence employees can backfire for leaders. The nature of employee resistance to a leader who uses political skill to influence employees involves a refusal to perform instructions, performing at a minimal level, and boycotting the leader through protests and strikes (Ferris, et al., 2019). Employee resistance can be further highlighted by the difference in social identity between a leader who has access to influential networks to support employees, rather than cooperation in the workplace.

2.4.4.2 Cooperation

Employees cooperate with a leader who uses political skill to collaborate with employees in the workplace. Employees show cooperation by exerting personal effort to obey and comply with the requests of the leader to meet job requirements. Employees who cooperate with a leader are consistent with beneficial organisational politics as suggested by Hochwarter et al. (2020). The employee is likely to work together and assist a collaborative leader who uses political skill in pursuit of organisational benefits, rather than personal gain. The extent to which an employee cooperates with a leader relies on a collaborative leader who uses political skill and shares a similar rather than different social identity with employees.

2.5. Employee-perceived leader political skill and employee-perceived social identity

Employee-perceived political skill is characterised by “social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity” components. For example, employees perceive the leader as using social astuteness of awareness and adapting behaviour to suit the social setting of the workplace. Employees view a leader as lacking in interpersonal influence when unable to form beneficial mutual alliances through negotiation and power (Ahearn et al., 2004; Frieder et al., 2019; McAllister et al., 2018; Munyon et al. 2020). Employees further perceive a leader who shows networking ability as authentic and genuine. Furthermore, employees view a leader as having apparent sincerity and showing

understanding towards employees. Employees who perceive leaders as possessing political skill to influence employees are affected by their differences in social identity.

The perceptions of the exercise of political skill are influenced by the difference in the social identity of both a leader and their employee based on nationality, language, gender, and race categories. The difference in social identity assumes that leaders and employees belong to social groups that are unique both between and within groups (Arnett, 2023; Abrams, et al., 2021) based on social categorisation and social comparison. Considering that leaders and employees have multiple social identities in terms of race, nationality, language, or gender differences, women are understood to be in a position of less power due to fewer networks and mentors in the workplace.

Race, gender, nationality, and language constitute areas of heightened focus in the wake of the transformation tensions between leaders and employees in an organisation that is becoming more inclusive, diverse, and equitable. For example, language differences lead to tensions in workplaces if leaders and employees speak different languages (Nkomo, 202; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). The perceptions of the employees about the language of the direct leader can lead to resistance to working together with employees. This is likely to be the case when employees are different from the leader in terms of language as well as race, gender, nationality, and language in the workplace. Therefore, the hypothesis one (HO1) of the study is formulated as follows:

HO1: Employee social identity predicts perceptions of a leader's political skill.

2.6. Employee-perceived leader political skill and employee-perceived leader influence tactics

There are various ways in which leaders demonstrate the use of political skill in influencing employees. Employees perceive a leader's use of political skill to influence employees, as being the result of social awareness and the ability to adapt to social settings. Employees perceive a leader with interpersonal influence as building power blocks for driving the personal and organisational agenda (O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021). Employees perceive a leader's political skill as being demonstrated through networking ability to influence employees in the workplace. Employees perceive leaders who have apparent sincerity as showing understanding towards employees. Political skill highlights the social awareness, interpersonal ability, network ability, and apparent sincerity of the leader who influences employees.

Employees perceive leaders who lack political skill as having less influence over employees. Employees form perceptions about a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees. Leaders exercise political skill to influence employees for personal or organisational gain (Sun et al., 2022). The effect of employee perceptions regarding whether leader influence tactics result in desired outcomes depends on power dynamics and positions in the workplace hierarchy. For instance, employees view the politics of a leader at the senior level of the organisation in insightful ways, as competition and power are concentrated when compared to junior leaders with less influence over the organisation and resources.

In contrast, leaders use political skill to influence employees in destructive ways of silencing opposition, pushing employees out of the organisation, and smear campaigns to discredit employees. The dark side of political influence highlights that employees have views about the way in which leaders decide on performance feedback fairly, sharing privileged information with certain employees, and helping employees recover from professional mistakes through cover-ups and defences (Ferris & Judge, 1991). In addition, the destructive side of politics enables leaders to decide on whether employees get promoted to higher positions of influence and share limited resources disproportionately with selected employees if the leader is different in social identity from the employee.

2.6.1. Employee-perceived leader political skill and manipulation influenced by differences

Employees may perceive a leader who uses political skill as manipulative if the leader has a different social identity from that of the employee. Leaders use manipulation of employees to ensure task performance for personal gain. Perceptions formed about whether the leader is using underhanded tactics depend on whether the actions of the leader appear genuine (Ahearn et al., 2004; Arnett, 2023; Blickle, et al., 2020; Frieder et al., 2019; Good & Schwepker, 2022). Employees perceive a leader who uses manipulation as serving personal interests at the expense of the organisation's benefit. Social identity categories such as race, gender, nationality, and language as social identity differences shape employee perceptions of manipulation from a leader, especially during transformation to become more inclusive and diverse. The differences between the social identity of the leader and employees influence the choice of manipulation. Hence, the study proposes the following hypothesis two (HO2):

HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee.

2.6.2. Employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration influenced by similarities

Employee-perceived political skill can enable leaders to collaborate with employees if the leader is similar to them. A leader who uses political skill to collaborate with employees adds value to the organisation. Employee perceptions highlight the nature of working together with a leader who uses political skill on employees. The leader who collaborates with employees follows the benefits of adopting political influence on them, in the case of leaders and employees with a similar race, gender, nationality, and language. Employees perceive the collaborative leader as approachable and focused on broader needs employees (Ahearn et al., 2004; Frieder et al., 2019; Hochwarter, et al., 2020). During the transformation of an organisation for inclusion, the perceptions of the exercise of political skill are influenced by the similarity in social identity between the leader and employee. Hypothesis three (HO3) of the study is formulated as follows:

> ***HO2a:*** *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader.*

2.7 Employee-perceived leader influence tactics and employee reactions

Employees react to a leader who uses influence tactics on employees in the workplace. The use of leader influence tactics on employees serves either to advance personal gain, (Sun et al., 2022) or to benefit the organisation in some way. Regardless of the influence tactic adopted, leaders administer resources, decide on the allocation of opportunities, and support employees who perform job tasks, which draws reactions from employees (Hochwarter, et al., 2020; Shapiro, et al., 2001) in the workplace. Employee reactions to a leader's tactics of influence take into account the role, authority, and power of a leader to direct employee operational work and future opportunities with career outcomes. Therefore, leaders exercise influence tactics on employees' reactions to benefit the organisation's direction, rather than for personal gain, or selfish reasons.

2.7.1. Employee resistance towards a perceived manipulative leader influenced by differences

Employees perceive a leader who uses manipulation as self-serving. Manipulative leaders have been found to focus on meeting personal ambitions using destructive means at the expense of an organisation. Leaders, for example, as previously mentioned, show pointed humility before a request to an employee, make an employee feel good before a request, or act politely to get employees to perform job tasks. The employee perceptions about whether or not the leader is manipulative depend on whether the actions of the leader appear authentic (Good & Schwepker, 2022; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021). If the leader is overly complimentary of the employee before asking the employee to perform the task, this might be viewed as manipulative. The difference between the identity of the leader and the employee influences mechanisms of manipulation within the organisation.

As a response to manipulation from the leader, if the leader has a different social identity based on race, gender, nationality, and language from the employee, they may not only notice but resist it. Based on nationality differences, tensions arise where leaders and employees are from different nationalities. The perceptions of the employee about the nationality of the leader create misunderstandings or working together (Ferris, et al., 2019; Nkomo, 2021). Employee resistance ignores leader instructions, refuses to undertake job tasks, and shows defiance against leadership orders. While the leader is empowered to influence employees because of authority and position, employees adapt responses along with perceptions and expectations from a leader who manipulates them. Reactions of employees to manipulation from leaders are foundational to navigating tensions during the transformation of an organisation for diversity. Hypothesis three (HO3) is:

HO3: The employee shows resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader.

2.7.2. Employee cooperation with perceived collaborative leader influenced by similarities

Employees perceive a leader who uses influence as a collaborative tactic. Collaborative leaders are viewed as using influence on employees to benefit the organisation, rather than for personal gain. A collaborative leader builds mutually beneficial alliances and seeks consensus, as well as is open to ideas to ensure work gets done by employees. In this regard, the politics of the leader are viewed as positive and necessary for the workplace with diverse interests and limited resources (Wagner III, 1995). Employees react towards collaborative leaders cooperatively, with the leader adding value to the organisation. As a result of the approach adopted by the leader to collaborate with employees, employees may cooperate with the leader if the leader has a similar race, gender, nationality, and language.

Collaborative leaders work together with cooperative employees. The level of cooperation is affected by whether the social identity of the leader and employee is similar based on race, gender, nationality, and language (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Scholars have found that the collaborative leader builds alliances with employees similar to the leader based on shared assumptions and interpretation of common interests. For example, the leader gives higher scores to the applicant for a job, a high-performance rating, and overlooks discretions of employees similar to the leader. Hypothesis three A (HO3a) is formulated as follows:

HO3a: *Employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader.*

2.8. Employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived leader influence tactics, and employee reactions, influenced by employee-perceive social identity

Employee forms perceptions towards a leader who exercises political skill in influencing employees if the leader has a different social identity. Leaders who are perceived as using political skill show “social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity” components (Ferris et al., 2005:126). Yet, the perceptions of the adoption of political skill may be influenced by the difference in the social identity of the leader and employee when it comes to race, gender, nationality, and language. For example, if the leader is black, and the employee is white, white employees may perceive the application of political skill on the part of a black leader in nuanced ways. In contrast, if the leader and employee share a similar

race identity, social interactions may be unique, especially during the transformation of the organisation to become more inclusive and diverse.

Employees have views about a leader who uses tactics to influence employees in the workplace. The outcome of employee perceptions on whether influence tactics are effective depends on the power dynamics, the sincerity of the leader, as well as on the nature of the requests between the employee and the leader. Leaders use political skill to influence employees to serve personal interests by limiting an employee's access to support and opportunities (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Good & Schwepker, 2022; McAllister et al., 2018; Munyon et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2022). A leader provides support based on the difference in social identity between leader and employee based on race, gender, nationality, and language. These influence tactics involve the manipulation of employees by the leader who navigates tensions that arise during the transformation of the organisation to become more diverse and inclusive.

Employees perceive a leader who differs from them as using manipulation to influence employees serving personal interests, seeking promotions, and power to control resources at the expense of the organisation. Manipulative leaders are self-centred and use underhanded ways of dealing with employees, and employ destructive ways of exposing their opponents. For instance, leaders ingratiate employees through excessive compliments, being overly polite, and using impression management to ensure that employees perform job-related tasks (Blickle, et al., 2020; Good & Schwepker, 2022; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021). The employee perceptions of a manipulative leader depend on whether the leader's actions appear genuine and sincere, particularly over time. The difference between the identity of the leader and the employee further affects perceptions of manipulation. Differences in race, gender, nationality, and language are heightened during transformation tensions that arise for diversity.

As a response to a leader's manipulation, employees may demonstrate resistance towards a manipulative leader who utilises political skill. Employee resistance highlights unease with a leader who deploys underhanded means to get work done in the workplace. The strength of employee resistance involves the refusal of leader instructions, performing tasks to a minimum acceptable degree, and outright boycotting or undertaking a labour strike against a manipulative leader (Arnett, 2023; Ferris, et al., 2019; Nkomo et al., 2019). The reactions of employees to political influence from a leader who uses political skill are critical to mitigating transformation tensions of deciding between in-groups and out-groups categorised according to race, gender, nationality, and language. Differences determine the difference between resistance and collaboration, particularly in the transformation of organisations.

A leader who employs political skill to influence employees benefits the organisation through collaboration if the leader has a similar social identity as that of the employee. Employee perceptions about collaboration with a leader who uses political skill to leverage influence extend understanding of influence tactics during the transformation of an organisation. A leader who uses collaboration to influence employees shows an ability to build coalitions with diverse interests, accepting that leaders and employees are irrational and resources are limited (Ferris & Judge, 2001; Hochwarter, et al., 2020). Employees perceive collaborative leaders as resourceful, connected to influential networks, and therefore able to offer help to employees. The exercise of the leader's political skill to collaborate with employees provides insight into employee reactions towards transformation for diversity.

Employees decide to cooperate with a leader who uses political skill to influence them. Cooperation refers to employees who choose to work together with the leader to benefit the organisation. Leaders choose to work with employees to get work done through cooperation, rather than by forcing employees to perform, particularly during transformation where – as is the case in almost every corner of South Africa – as previously divided people face integration (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Nkomo, 2021; Wagner III, 1995).

Cooperation occurs when the leader is perceived by employees as using political influence by supporting employees, offering exchanges to employees, and reminding employees about previous favours. Therefore, this study examines whether employees are more likely to view a leader who uses political skill as manipulative if the leader differs from employees. However, a leader may be viewed as adopting political skill to collaborate with employees if the leader proves themselves to be similar to the employees. Table 2.2 on the next page, shows the political skill and social identity hypotheses of the study.

Table 2.2: Political skill and social identity hypotheses

Hypotheses
HO1: Employee social identity predicts the perceptions of a leader political skill.
HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be using political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee.
HO2a: *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader.*
HO3: The employee shows resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader.
HO3a: *The employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader.*

2.9. Literature review summary

The literature review discussed leaders who exercised political skill to influence employees who were different from the leader, especially during the transformation of an organisation to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. While political influence has been used to study leader political skill on employees who are similar to themselves, little is known about leaders who exercise political skill to influence employees that differ from themselves. In particular, the study examines whether social identity and race, gender, nationality, as well as language differences contribute to employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill. Employees may perceive a leader who exercises political skill as manipulative if that leader differs from the employees. Employees are likely to show resistance against a leader who uses political skill to manipulate employees if they fundamentally differ. In contrast, employees are likely to view a leader who exercises political skill as collaborative if they share fundamental similarities. The next chapter explains the research methodology and design for the study.

Chapter three: Research design and methodology

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter proposed a political skill and social identity model as well as hypotheses for testing. The study examines whether employees are likely to perceive a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees as manipulative if the leader is different from the employees. By contrast, employees may view a leader who uses political skill to influence employees as collaborative if the leader is similar to employees. The main research question is: "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill*". To answer the research question in this chapter, I described the positivist paradigm underpinning the research design. I obtained survey data from employees who report to direct managers in organisations. I analysed data to test the hypotheses of the suggested political skill and social identity model.

3.2. Positivist paradigm

I located myself in a positivist paradigm to conduct the research. Positivism purports that knowledge was measured objectively and value-free, as was the case in the study. I adopted a positivist stance as a philosophical lens, by means of which to collect and analyse data on employee perceptions of a leader who exercised political skill to influence employees with a different social identity from the leader. Underpinning the positivist philosophical lens adopted, an ontological anchor assumes that knowledge production was to be found in the real world (Aristotle, 2022). In a bid to draw from the positivist ontological foundation, I separated myself from the data, to allow data to highlight relationships between employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived social identity, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*) and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*).

Even though a researcher exists in the real world and is exposed to conditions that shape my world outlook, the explanatory research design I chose was situated in a positivist realm of philosophy. As a researcher, I assumed knowledge to be rooted in the epistemological foundation of objective stance, as an approach (Bryman, 2006) to examine employee perceptions of a leader who exercised political skill to influence employees who are different from them. The epistemological foundation and axiological nature of the study were such that I employed a research design intending to use measures that obtain statistical results, in pursuit of the truth. I recognised that the study I conducted was a singular version of the truth.

A positivist paradigm was chosen as a philosophical lens to shape the explanatory research design of the study to deepen the political influence theoretical assumptions of irrational individuals. The positivist paradigm was situated at the nexus between an ontological stance of objectivity as truth, where the epistemological foundation and axiological position indicated that data was value-free (Aristotle, 2022; Bryman, 2006). I adopted a positivist view of a positivist paradigm that permitted an approach that assumed knowledge to be observable using measures to obtain statistical data, even within management sciences. The data obtained from the research was anchored in a positivist paradigm as a meta-theoretical foundation that underpins the selected explanatory research design and methodology by means of which to pursue knowledge production on political skill and social identity.

3.3. Explanatory research design

Table 3.1: Explanatory research design

Research paradigm	Research design	Research type
Positivism	Nomothetic	Quantitative
Value-free	Explanatory	Non-experimental
Objective	Deductive	Cross-sectional
Statistics		Survey

The study followed a nomothetic explanatory research design as depicted in Table 3.1 above. The design was appropriate to test the levels of variance between the employee-perceived leader's political skill as an independent variable, the employee-perceived leader's political influence tactics (*manipulation and collaboration*) as a dependent variable, as well as employee reactions (*resistance and cooperation*) as an outcome variable. In addition, employee-perceived social identity was a moderator variable of the proposed relationships between the aforementioned variables. The nomothetic explanatory research design I chose was relevant for conducting the study, where theoretical constructs of interest emerged from the reviewed literature (Ferris, et al., 2018; Nkomo et al., 2019). I was aware of the limitations of using a nomothetic explanatory research design, due to the partial explanation of relationships between constructs of interest as depicted in Table 3.2 on the next page.

Table 3.2: Questionnaire variables

Independent variable	Moderating variable	Dependant variable	Outcome variable
Employee-perceived leader political skill	Employee-perceived social identity	Employee-perceived leader influence tactics *manipulation* *collaboration*	Employee reactions *resistance* *cooperation*

The explanatory research design was deductive, with academic employees as respondents from selected public higher education institutions located in South Africa. A deductive research approach was appropriate for the study, where respective political influence and social identity theories were well-developed, rather than nascent (Ferris & Judge, 2001; Shepherd & Suddaby, 2016). I tested the theoretical constructs of interest to establish whether hypothetical relationships existed between employee reactions towards a leader who applied political skill to manipulate employees if a leader is different from employees. Therefore, underpinning a cross-sectional study to test the proposed political skill and social identity in a different conceptual model took a deductive approach.

3.3.1. Cross-sectional study

Since the study concerned employee perceptions of a leader who exercised political skill to manipulate employees, if a leader was different from employees, I selected non-experimental cross-sectional research as the most appropriate to conduct the research. In contrast to manipulation, a leader could use political skill to collaborate with similar employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. Cross-sectional studies gave a snapshot of the phenomena of interest. Even though limitations existed in producing causal outcomes for the research, I chose a non-experimental cross-sectional approach to test relationships between constructs of interest that comprise the proposed political skill and social identity model.

Cross-sectional studies were widely conducted in political skill research on relationships between leaders and employees in the workplace (Kacmar et al., 2011; Maher, et al., 2020; McFarland et al. 2012; Rindfleisch, Malter, Ganesan & Moorman, 2008). The research drew from and built on previous studies from the reviewed literature on cross-sectional design and measures within political skill scholarship. The refined existing data collection measures were validated and tested for reliability. To extend the understanding of the generalisability of findings from research sites, a cross-sectional study was used to examine a leader who applied political skill to influence employees of a different race, gender, nationality, and language in the leader at research sites.

3.4. Research sites

I chose two public higher education institutions as research sites located in the seaside province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Both research sites had employees who were categorised according to race and language social groups during apartheid. At the dawn of democracy, both research sites that were divided along race and language identity aspects underwent mergers to integrate employees and leaders, which caused social interaction tensions due to the transformation to become diverse and inclusive (DHET, 2022). As a researcher employed at one of the research sites, I was witness to transformation tensions between leaders and employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language identity dimensions.

The research sites faced transformation tensions, where leaders were perceived as purging academic employees who were different from leaders on race group, in preference for race groups similar to leaders raising concerns about whether leaders used political skill to influence employees (Johnson, 2016; Mail and guardian, 2017). For instance, at one research site, many senior black executives resigned in reaction to the appointment of a white vice-chancellor, which was perceived as anti-transformation and political, with further concerns about non-South African nationals in higher education institutions.

Xenophobic tensions based on nationality differences arose between academic employees who interacted with leaders about the appointment of foreign nationals who identified as African, who were perceived as taking South African jobs. Xenophobia concerns emerged in the wake of recent KwaZulu-Natal regional tensions between South Africans and non-South African foreign nationals, leading to academic employees and leader social interaction tensions. I witnessed a recent meeting that brought academics and leaders together to engage

in looting and social unrest between South Africans and non-South Africans in KwaZulu-Natal, further creating tensions in higher education institutions. A leader who supported transformation was viewed by academic employees as xenophobic against foreign nationals who identified as African and spoke a different home language, contrary to an anti-transformation leader who was viewed as internationalising the institution.

Language tensions in KwaZulu-Natal over job opportunities existed between social interactions of academic employees and leaders who identified isiZulu as a home language against non-isiZulu speaking employees dominated by Indian people who spoke English. A leader perceived as supporting transformation was viewed as prioritising isiZulu-speaking employees for job positions, as isiZulu-speaking employees constitute a majority population in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In contrast, a leader viewed as anti-transformation were perceived as prioritising non-isiZulu speaking employees for employment opportunities, even though non-isiZulu speaking employees are a minority in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Regardless of the language differences and tensions, employees formed perceptions and react towards a leader's influential position on language and gender during the transformation of an organisation.

Gender representation was high at the senior executive level, with less representation throughout higher education institutions. However, two senior black executives who identified as female resigned despite many years of experience with the same institution. Resignations created instability at the senior level, with the loss of institutional memory and expertise that held implications for political dynamics with employees. Gender differences between senior executives and academic employees resulted in social interaction tensions that led to resignations. Hence, the retention of senior executives would have maintained gender differences in senior key positions necessary for gender transformation. There were tensions along race, gender, nationality, and language dimensions, pitting leaders for or against one another based on the level of analysis of public higher education institutions during the transformation for diversity.

3.4.1. Organisational level of analysis

The level of analysis for the study is the organisation made up of two respective public higher education institutions located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The first public higher education institution was a traditional university that underwent a merger to integrate institutions that were categorised according to race. Higher education institution one was a research-intensive traditional university with five campuses and several schools and colleges across two cities in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The institution has faced transformation challenges between leaders and academic employees.

The second public higher education institution is a university of technology with a primary focus on vocational learning. The institution underwent a merger to integrate two institutions that were formally divided according to race lines amid transformation tensions. Higher education institution two was a university of technology made up of six campuses as well as various faculties and departments across two cities in KwaZulu-Natal. Both institutions of higher learning were sites for collecting data from the target population of the study.

3.5. Target population

The target population comprised relationships between each academic employee who reported to respective direct managers at two public higher education institutions located in KwaZulu-Natal. In higher education institution one, there were 1198 academic employees, and in higher education two, there were 827 academic employees at the time that the study was conducted, which tallied to (N = 2025) 2025 academic employees (HEI one, 2022; HEI two, 2022). The target population was categorised according to race, gender, language, and nationality of academic employees at both higher education institutions, in preparation for sampling.

3.5.1. Census sample

I used a census sampling technique to invite respondents to participate in an online survey. The G-power software recommended about a 160 (n=160) sample size for a population of around 2000 targeted respondents. The response rate for online surveys usually yielded between 10% to 20% of the target population. The online survey anticipated about 160 responses, which was about 10% of the 2025 target population, from both higher education

institutions as research sites. The sample was categorised by race, gender, language, and nationality of academic employees and relationships with direct managers.

Academic employees constituted a core staff function of higher education institutions. Job positions of academic employees were typically titled junior lecturer to full professor. Beyond teaching students, academic employees who reported to direct managers were expected to conduct research, perform administrative duties, and engage with communities (HEI one, 2022; HEI two, 2022). Academic employees reported to direct managers who provided direction for job tasks. Direct managers typically held positions of Head of Department to Vice-Chancellor. The direct manager's position indicated a level of power to influence the transformation of language at a higher education institution.

Heads of schools and departments as well as academic leaders, who reported to the dean, influenced academic employees who spoke similar and different languages. Appointing and influencing academic employees who spoke similar and different languages was operationalised by the headship of the higher education institution. For instance, I heard employees referring to heads of departments based on the ability to speak isiZulu fluently in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Academic employees were perceived to be either in support of or against transformation based on personal language usage.

Deans of faculties and schools, who reported to deputy vice-chancellors, developed faculty strategies to recruit and retain heads of departments from different and similar social groups. The deans, which included deputy deans, and headships, were dominated by African foreign nationals in technology and natural sciences (HEI one, 2022). Deputy vice-chancellors, who reported to the vice-chancellor, devised institution-wide strategies to influence transformation across respective teaching, learning, research, and administration ambits. The number of African female South African researchers appointed as deputy vice-chancellors and deans reflected the lack of transformation that existed in research outputs, national research foundation rating, and membership in the academy of sciences.

The vice-chancellor, who was the chief executive officer, provided a vision of the transformation of a higher education institution. Transformation progress was reported to the chair of the university council and members who form the board, as well as government higher education and labour departments (DHET, 2022). Both vice-chancellors at research sites of the study were perceived as supportive of, or against transformation based on academic employee perceptions of leader social groups. I have witnessed academic employees who avoided speaking publicly about transformation to vice-chancellors and deputies for fear of

reprisal, hence, in this study, respective respondents as a unit of analysis were invited to participate anonymously and confidentially in the online survey.

3.5.2. Individual unit of analysis

I conducted a study among individual academic employees as units of analysis from a junior lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate director, associate professor, director, and full professor. The unit of analysis referred to a matter under study (Babbie, 2021). Director positions are legacy roles associated with universities of technology with a primary focus on vocational training. Therefore, the unit of analysis involved the respective individual academic employees comprising relationships with direct managers at both higher education institution research sites. The academic employees who completed the measuring instrument if they so wished, reported to a direct manager from academic leaders, deputy head of department or school, the head of department or school, deputy dean of faculty and college, dean of faculty and college, deputy vice-chancellors, vice-chancellor, and chair of the council.

3.6. Questionnaire

The questionnaire entailed personal and demographic information of respondents and direct managers respectively to reflect the relationship between leader and employee in the workplace. In addition, the questionnaire covered section two: employee-perceived leader political skill (understanding an employee), and section three: employee-perceived social identity (social group). The questionnaire also covered sections four and five, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), as well as sections six and seven employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*) variables. These are shown in appendix one.

The respondents were invited to participate in the study in the introduction section of the questionnaire. The purpose of the research was clarified as "*conducting research on employee perceptions of influence from a leader at your organisation*". Informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity ethics protocols were explained as "*Kindly note participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate*", in preparation for personal information.

Employee personal information was collected on race, gender, language, nationality, job title, employment type, and experience aspects. Examples of questionnaire statements were "*Please choose ONE response to indicate your gender*". An option of "*prefer not to say*" and "*other*" were added to gender statements, to be considerate of respondents who chose not to state their gender identity. If a respondent chose "other", respondents were given the option to specify the meaning of "other" if they so wished.

Since the study probed the relationship between respondents and direct managers, respondents answered a questionnaire about perceptions of direct manager's personal and demographic information. Questionnaire statement examples were "*Please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's race*", and options given aligned to race categories based on the South African census survey. Relevant questionnaire statements were based on respondent perceptions of a direct manager's (Census, 2022; Evans & Mathur, 2018; Kacmar et al., 2010; Messick, 1995) language, gender, nationality, profession, job title, positions, and experience. Sensitive statements were avoided taking into account the unique research setting of South Africa and its divisive past.

In addition to the demographics section, the questionnaire had six sections namely employee-perceived leader political skill (*understanding an employee*), employee-perceived social identity difference, employee-perceived influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*). Existed measuring scales were used and validated in previous research and the study.

3.6.1. Employee-perceived leader political skill

Employee-perceived leader political skill was measured by using the political skill inventory 17-item scale. As a unidimensional construct, employee-perceived leader political skill was based on four aspects namely "social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity" (Ferris et al., 2005:126). For employee-perceived leader political skill measure, the example of a questionnaire statement for social astuteness was "*My direct manager always seems to instinctively know the right thing to say to influence me*", while interpersonal influence had, "*My direct manager gets along with me easily*".

Regarding networking ability, the questionnaire statement example was, "*My direct manager spends a lot of time networking with me at work*", while apparent sincerity had, "*My direct manager is sincere when communicating with me*". A Likert scale of strongly agree (one), agree (two), neutral (three), disagree (four), and strongly disagree (five) were used in the questionnaire as depicted in table 3.3, followed by employee-perceived social identity difference construct.

Table 3.3: Questionnaire outline

Construct	**Questionnaire statement no.**	**Scale**
Employee-perceived leader political skill	17	5 point
Employee-perceived social identity	19	5 point
Employee-perceived leader influence tactics		
manipulation	*(11)*	5 point
collaboration	*(7)*	5 point
Employee reactions		
resistance	*(7)*	5 point
cooperation	*(6)*	5 point

3.6.2 Employee-perceived social identity

Employee-perceived social identity was measured using an adapted social identity questionnaire developed by Brown and Jacoby-Senghor (2021) building on Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) measure. The questionnaire had 19 statements including, "*I feel that I do not have much to offer to my social group*" and "*I often feel that my social group is not worthy*". Further questionnaire statements examples were, "*I belong to a social group that is different from my direct manager's social group*" and "*My direct manager respects my social group*". A Likert scale with a range of *strongly agree* (one) to *strongly disagree* (five) was used.

3.6.2.1. Race, gender, nationality, language differences and similarities

The respondents indicated their social groups and perceived differences and similarities with the direct manager's social group. Social identity differences can assume forms of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and origin. Differences were based on race, gender, nationality, and language (Arnett, 2023; Constitution; 1996; Hogg, 2001; Nkomo et al., 2019). The study focused on race, gender, nationality, and language in the wake of the transformation of an organisation to become more inclusive and diverse. Since the research setting was sensitive to the formation of social groups in South Africa and its divisive past as well as democratic integrations of social groups, a questionnaire that entailed employee-perceived leader influence tactics was piloted on respondents, who were excluded from the main study.

3.6.3. Employee-perceived leader influence tactics

Employee-perceived leader influence tactics variable was a multidimensional construct comprising *manipulation* and *collaboration* (Good & Schwepker, 2022; Kipnis et al., 1980; Lu et al., 2019) dimensions.

3.6.3.1. Manipulation

The *manipulation* tactic comprised 11 questionnaire statements. The questionnaire statement examples were, "*My direct manager acts humble before making a request to me*", "*My direct manager makes me feel good before making a request*", and "*My direct manager waits until I am in a receptive mood before making a request*" (Good & Schwepker, 2020). A Likert scale was used with a range of *strongly disagree* (one) to *strongly agree* (five), followed by collaboration influence tactic.

3.6.3.2. Collaboration

The questionnaire statements for the *collaboration* tactic had a total of seven statements. The examples of questionnaire statements were, "*My direct manager obtains my support to back up a request"*, "*My direct manager offers to help me if I act on a request*", as well as "*My direct manager offers resources for me to perform a task*" (Lu, et al., 2019). A Likert scale had a range of *strongly disagree* (one) to *strongly agree* (five) as depicted in the questionnaire, followed by employee reactions.

3.6.4. Employee reactions

Employee reactions were a multidimensional construct comprising *resistance* and *cooperation* (Fedor et al., 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2020) dimensions for the study. The adopted Likert scale had a range of *strongly disagree* (one) to *strongly agree* (five) as depicted in the questionnaire of the study.

3.6.4.1. Resistance

The resistance section of the questionnaire had a total of seven statements. Examples of questionnaire statements were, "*I stop working with my direct manager if my direct manager takes advantage of me*" and, "*I engage in work slowdown if my direct manager takes advantage of me*", as well as "*My direct manager distorts reasons for making a request to me*" (Fedor et al., 2008).

3.6.4.2. Cooperation

The cooperation construct was made up of six questionnaire statements. The questionnaire statement examples were, "*I comply with my direct manager's requests"* and "*I feel eager to work with my direct manager*", as well as "*I communicate with my direct manager with ease*" (Wagner, 1995). The Likert scale used ranged from *strongly disagree* (one) to s*trongly agree* (five) in preparation for conducting a pilot study of the questionnaire.

3.7. Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to check the questionnaire on respondents. The invited respondents to participate in the pilot study were academic employees, who were part of a doctoral cohort to improve the completion of doctorates in under-resourced and less research-intensive institutions in South Africa's higher education institutions, supported by the government. I was a member of the doctoral cohort, from which I conducted a pilot study. Following approval of ethical clearance and receiving further permission from the cohort head in August 2022, I invited conveniently sampled respondents to participate in the study via email. There were 29 respondents in total and eight KwaZulu-Natal-based respondents were excluded because the main study was to be conducted in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, 21 respondents were invited to participate in the pilot study if they so wished.

The pilot study was conducted over three weeks from 04 September 2022 to 23 September 2022 with reminders sent weekly. The respondents who gave consent and voluntarily participated in the study, checked the clarity, and sensitivity of statements, instructions, and time to complete the draft questionnaire as suggested by Podsakoff, Mckenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). From 21 invited respondents, 10 responses were received at a 48% response rate. The respondents held positions of lecturer, senior lecturer, head of department, and academic leader. The respondents had a few years of experience in the academic field. The respondent profile was dominated by black African females from diverse languages, such as isiZulu and English, and was based at three universities of technology institutions focused on vocational learning and three traditional research-intensive universities.

Following the pilot study, the respondents suggested minor changes to the questionnaire. For instance, a respondent suggested that the definition of the concept of social group should be clearer. In response to the feedback, the examples of demographic aspects included race, gender, nationality, and language. Furthermore, respondents suggested that two questionnaire statements on "*understanding an employee*" may benefit from examples, or be reworded for clarity. The two questionnaire statements were subsequently reworded. Few respondents suggested checking the grammar and typos on the questionnaire.

In response to the suggestion about checking the grammar, the questionnaire was edited by a professional language editor. All respondents confirmed that the questionnaire was not excessively long, and was both easy to navigate and understand. The pilot respondents were excluded from participating in the main study. Even though the pilot study was based on a few respondents, nominal data was captured on an MS Excel spreadsheet and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain preliminary results. I obtained description statistics, mean, and standard deviation. Patterns emerged from the pilot study, which were instructive for the main data collection of the study.

3.8. Data collection

I received ethical approval from the Gordon Institute of Business Science ethics committee at the University of Pretoria, and gatekeepers' permissions from both research sites between 01 July and 31 August 2022, as attached in appendix C. Following receipt of ethical approval and after conducting the pilot study, I collected data using an online survey of Google forms from the 30 of September 2022. I invited respondents to participate in the study, by placing an invitation on the institutional pinboard at research site one in compliance with the gatekeepers'

permission letter. At research site two, I sent individual invitations to work email addresses of academic employees based on the institutional email list. The respondents were located across several institutional campuses, faculties, and departments throughout cities located in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

The purpose of the study was explained on the invitation and ethical protocols of anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Respondents were informed about the study via email invitation and requested to give consent to complete the survey and click on the Google form questionnaire link if they so wished. The cover page of the online survey emphasised ethical protocols and requested consent to participate in the study if they so wished, without reprisal. Respondents who gave consent completed the online survey. Respondents who did not give consent on the first page were directed to the end of the questionnaire. Therefore, the uncompleted questionnaire would be returned blank to reduce the response rate of the study.

To mitigate potential low response rates associated with online surveys, I sent bi-weekly reminder invitations to respondents through institutional pinboards, along with emails to respective research sites, in compliance with the gatekeeper's letter permissions. I observed that the reminder invitations were useful in increasing the response rate when compared to a week in which I did not resend an invitation to potential respondents (Evans & Marthur, 2018). I extended the data collection period from the initial planned eight weeks to sixteen weeks to accommodate more responses. Given the size of the target population, I used a census sample approach to reach many respondents who were academic employees and reported to direct managers, located across several campuses at both research sites.

Few respondents required alternative forms of access to the online questionnaire due to technical glitches. I sent questionnaire invitations to an alternative email address voluntarily provided by respondents upon request. A respondent located at a campus in another city in KwaZulu-Natal required assistance with completing an online questionnaire, and I provided my device for the respondent to use personal login details to complete the online questionnaire. I attended face-to-face meetings of academic employees to invite respondents to participate in the study if they so wished. I sent further invitations to departments with large numbers of academic employees to participate if they so wished. Overall, I received 205 responses after sixteen weeks of data collection from 30 September 2022 to 01 February 2023. One respondent did not give consent to participate in the study and was removed from the dataset. Hence, 204 responses were eventually received in preparation for checking common method bias.

3.8.1 Common method bias

I used a questionnaire to collect data from respondents, which was susceptible to common method bias. I took steps to mitigate common method biases usually associated with cross-sectional studies. The constructs and questionnaire statements that were closely related were placed together to mitigate potential respondent mood changes and response styles. Lindell and Whitney (2001) suggest that the demographic and behavioural statements be placed at the end of the questionnaire. However, the study covered demographic information at the beginning of the questionnaire to establish the demographic information of employees, and the relationship with a direct manager as central to the social identity of respondents, as stated in the introduction of the questionnaire.

As shown in appendix one, the introduction section of the questionnaire simplified the purpose of the study as "*examine employee perceptions of influence from a leader at your organisation"* to mitigate potential false correlations between constructs by the respondents. In addressing potential social desirability concerns as I was employed at one of the research sites of the study, I reversed questionnaire statements for certain constructs. For example, a questionnaire statement on social identity difference (4.11) was stated in reverse as " *I feel that I do not have much to offer to my social group*", instead of, "*I feel that I have much to offer to my social group*". In addition to reversed statements, a few unrelated questionnaire statements were included in constructs such as the resistance construct, where the statement was (7.5) "*I get along with my direct manager"*, instead of excluding the unrelated statement to resistance.

Respondents who completed the questionnaire with enthusiasm at the beginning of data collection could introduce common methods and social desirability biases. To address the potential biases, I sent regular reminder invitations to respondents over the course of sixteen weeks from the 30th of September 2022 to the 01 February 2023, in particular, to invite respondents who may not have had time or who may have had reservations about completing the questionnaire initially. Respondents who complete questionnaires in later stages may introduce nuances that address potential biases (Bowling, Gibson, Houpt & Brower, 2021; Brannick, Conway, Lance & Spector, 2010; Lindell & Whitney, 2001). I reminded potential respondents who had not completed the questionnaire earlier of no obligation to complete the questionnaire and to comply with ethical protocols if they so wished.

I checked preliminary data as to whether responses were spread across job titles, positions, experience, and demographics to address potential common method biases. The last section of the questionnaire on employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*) could be exposed to distortion of previous extreme responses and reluctant acceptance of statements without protest (Podsakoff et al., 2003). I reviewed responses to check for patterns of extreme responses associated with common method biases. As an employee at one of the research sites, I was aware of potential biases that may arise. Yet, I was trained regarding mechanisms to avoid method biases during the pre-doctoral training I attended and I explained the steps and tests I systematically undertook to minimise potential biases guided by previous studies (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). I used the Harman single test to check for common method bias factors and introduced control variables of the study.

Table 3.4: Control variables

Variable	Description
Age	Younger (18 - 35 years) vs. older employees (35 + years)
Job title	Junior (lecturer) vs senior jobs (senior lecturer to full professor)
Job type	Permanent (full-time employment) vs. temporary employees (on a contract)
Years of experience	Less experience (five years or less) vs. more experienced employees (six years and above)
Job position	Less power (Deputy Dean and less) vs. more power (Dean to vice chancellor)

3.8.2. Control variables

To address alternative explanations of relationships between constructs of the study, I included control variables drawn from previous studies and based on my knowledge of the research setting as well as for the robustness of the results, as tabulated in table 3.4 on the previous page. The study controlled for job title, employment type, years of experience, age, and job position variables which are reflected in the questionnaire as appendix one. Academic employees were typically employed with job titles of junior lecturer to full professor. The job titles of academic employees could affect the nature of perceptions about a leader's social identity. For example, a junior lecturer's view about the vice-chancellor's political skill and identity is unique from a lecturer's perception of a direct head of the department. Therefore, an academic employee with proximity to a leader by job title holds more nuanced perceptions about a leader's political skill than an academic employee at a distance from a leader.

The study further controlled for years of work experience of academic employees as shown in table 3.4. Academic employees who have many years of work experience hold deeper insights when compared to less experienced employees about perceptions of a leader's political skill to influence employees with a different social identity from the leader (Blickle et al., 2020). In addition, with regards to the type of employment, whether the academic employee was permanent or temporary affects perceptions and reactions towards a leader who exercised political skill to influence employees. Leaders are perceived in unique ways by permanent employees with job protections than temporary employees whose contracts are not renewed as well as access to and distribution of resources along the lines of social identity.

The job position indicated the level of seniority of an academic employee within an academic department, faculty, and school in a higher education institution. Academic employees hold a head of department, school, or dean of faculty management position, as well as deputy vice-chancellor and vice-chancellor positions of influence. The job position highlights interesting observations from an academic at the lecturer level about a leader's exercise of political skill to influence employees in the workplace. The age of academic employees influences perceptions about a leader's political skill. A younger academic is less aware of the political dynamics of leadership when compared to a senior academic employee. The control variables of job position, employment type, years of experience, job title, and age were included during data analysis to mitigate alternative explanations of the study.

3.9. Data analysis

Several steps were followed to analyse the data. Data was exported from Google forms onto a Microsoft excel spreadsheet, removing a respondent who did not give consent to participate in the study from the dataset. Questionnaire statements were then coded for the relationship between leader and employee personal information as well as demographic information including the Likert scale responses from strongly agree (one), agree (two), neutral (three), disagree (four), and strongly disagree (five). The coded data of 204 (n=204) responses were loaded onto SPSS computer software to conduct statistical analysis tests.

During the data analysis procedure, the reversed questionnaire statements to reduce common method bias were reworded. For example, a questionnaire statement on social identity difference (4.11) was stated as "*I feel that I have much to offer to my social group*", instead of a reversed statement of " *I feel that I do not have much to offer to my social group*". Similarly, unrelated questionnaire statements that were included to minimise common method bias were removed during the data analysis phase. For instance, the statement (7.5) "*I get along with my direct manager"*, was excluded during this phase.

Coded data was loaded onto M-Plus computer software for further statistical tests. During the procedures and in addition to my supervisor, a mathematics and statistics expert provided advice on appropriate statistical tests. The coded data was analysed to obtain the descriptive, analysis of variance (ANOVA), factor analysis, reliability, measurement correlation, moderation, and linear regression using relevant statistical software, as tabulated in table 3.5 on the next page.

3.9.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were obtained to describe the respondent and relationship with the direct manager profiles, along with personal and demographic information as illustrated in table 3.5 on the next page. The profiles entailed the respondent and direct manager's age, race, gender, home language, nationality, job title, employment type, and experience aspects on SPSS computer software. In addition, frequencies *(f)* and percentages *(%)* were obtained to exemplify the aspects of interest in preparation for the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 3.5: Data analysis procedures and statistics tests

Statistical analysis	Statistical test
Descriptive	Mean, standard deviation
Normalcy	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Shapiro-Wilk
Analysis of variance	Kurtosis and skewness
Common method bias	Harman single factor
Internal consistency	Cronbach's alpha
Construct validity	Factor analysis
Hypotheses test	Linear regression
Moderation	Hayes moderation process

3.9.2. Data normality

The normality of data distribution and skewness was checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk statistical tests on SPSS as depicted in table 3.5 above. The normalcy of data for the skewness of data using Kurtosis tests for each variable of interest was also tested. Thereafter, the normality scores were obtained at a 95% confidence level, with a 5% margin of error. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to analyse data at a .005 p-value for 95% levels of significance and a 5% margin of error. The mean ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$) and standard deviation (*SD*) scores for each construct of interest were obtained. The constructs of interest were employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived social identity, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*), in preparation for the factor analysis procedure.

3.9.3. Factor analysis

A Harman single test was conducted through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) procedure on SPSS. A principal axis factoring was performed without rotation to extract factors at level one for the total variance recommended to be less than 50% (Hair, Howard & Nitzl, 2020), which meant less risk of common method bias in the dataset. Furthermore, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to establish construct validity on SPSS. In doing so, questionnaire statement loadings were analysed for each construct, where lower loadings at the recommended 0.6 (Hair, et al., 2020) were removed to improve validity in anticipation of the reliability tests.

3.9.4. Reliability

Cronbach's alpha (α) scores were obtained for each variable to analyse the internal consistency of questionnaire statements of the original construct questionnaire statements. In addition, composite reliability scores were obtained based on the six variables of the study, namely employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived social identity difference, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*). I removed questionnaire statements that did not show high reliability for each variable to measure the model of the study.

3.9.5. Measurement model

The political skill and social identity model argues that employees form perceptions about a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees if a leader has a different social identity from that of employees. In addition, employees react to the influence of a leader based on a leader who has a different social identity from employees. The political skill and social identity model was measured by obtaining measurement fit indices of Satorra-Benter, Chi-square (x2), and degree of freedom (df) using M-Plus statistical analysis software. In addition, measurement fit indices were obtained of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardised Root Mean Square Residuals (SRMR), and Tucker Lewi Index (TLI) scores. Finally, the Scaling Correction Factor for MLM and Comparative Fit Indices (CFI) were obtained on M-Plus software before hypotheses (HO) testing for correlation (*r*) and moderation.

3.9.6. Correlation and moderation

The hypotheses of the study were analysed based on the political skill and social identity model by obtaining Pearson correlations coefficient (*r*) scores on SPPS. The coefficient (*r*) scores were conducted at 0.01 p-value at a 95% level of significance with a 5 % margin of error. In addition, the hypotheses (HO) were analysed to obtain the moderating effect of employee-perceived social identity on employee-perceived leader political influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*) and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*), using the Hayes plug (Cronbach, 1987; Hayes, 2017) on SPSS. Finally, the moderation effect revealed the direction and strength of the proposed hypotheses (HO) based on the political skill and social identity model in anticipation of linear regression tests.

3.9.7. Linear regression

The linear regression analysis test was analysed by capturing the independent variable of employee-perceived leader political skill, with the dependent variable namely respective employee-perceived influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*) as well as moderator namely employee-perceived social identity on SPSS. Furthermore, a regression analysis was conducted for the dependent variable, namely respective employee-perceived influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*) and outcome variable employee reactions (*resistance and cooperation*), moderated by employee-perceived social identity.

Linear regression tests were used to determine the direction of hypotheses (HO) on a continuum from most likely to least likely (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, Cohen, Lewis-Beck, 1980; Kaufman, 2019; West & Aiken, 2003). Each hypothesis was accepted or rejected based on the regression scores. Furthermore, the regression tests established whether there were relationships between variables that were statistically significant at a p-value of 0.01 with a 95% level of accuracy and a 5% margin of error, amid the limitations of the study. For results robustness, tests were conducted on SPSS and M-Plus to observe whether scores were consistent. These constructs were rearranged to observe the scores as part of ensuring the robustness of the results. Values greater than one were rotated and kept below one for robustness amid limitations.

3.10. Research limitations

During the course of conducting the research, the study faced limitations. Since I collected data at a specific point in time using a singular measure and following a cross-sectional method of research design, the method could be regarded as a limitation. Yet, the cross-sectional method was most appropriate for conducting the research and answering the research question regarding the influence of social identity on the exercise of leader political skill. Furthermore, the study used a census sampling technique to collect data from sparsely located respondents across departments, units, and locations, which could be viewed as a limitation. The census approach was deemed most appropriate to reach many respondents who had a relationship by reporting to a direct manager at different levels of employment and across respective organisations, while following quality controls to conduct the research.

3.11. Quality assurance and ethics

Ethical and quality protocols were followed when researching employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees if a leader has a different social identity from them. Before collecting the data, the gatekeeper's permissions were granted at research site one on the 25 of July 2022. In addition, a gatekeeper's letter was received from research site two on the 28 of July 2022. The letters were not attached so as to ensure the anonymity of the research sites throughout the study. The letters were submitted to the research ethics committee of the Gordon Institute of Business Science of the University of Pretoria.

Ethical clearance approval was received on 29 August 2022 from the research ethics committee of the Gordon Institute of Business Science at the University of Pretoria, to comply with the research ethics policy and guidelines as attached in appendix D. Thereafter, I invited respondents through institutional pinboards and emails to give consent to participate (Bell & Byrman, 2007) on the body of the email and the Google form online. Respondents who did not give consent were taken to the end of the questionnaire for exit.

Statistical scores were interpreted and aggregated to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of responses (Honig, Lampel, Siegel & Drnevich, 2017). I explained the statistical procedures in to analyse the data, without contaminating it. There was a low potential risk of inconvenience of access to data and devices for respondents who decided to give consent and participate in

the survey of the study. Professional editing was conducted in order to check the language, writing, and clarity of the thesis as illustrated in appendix E.

Electronic data was accessible to the researcher, supervisor, and statistical expert, to comply with ethical protocols (Cunliffe & da Silveira, 2016). I cleaned the data on an excel spreadsheet and submitted a copy to the research office of the Gordon Institute of Business Science at the University of Pretoria for ten years to comply with ethical protocols and guidelines. Table 3.6 shows the political skill and social identity hypotheses and statistical tests.

Table 3.6: Political skill and social identity hypotheses and statistics tests

Hypotheses	Statistics test
HO1: Employee social identity predicts perceptions of leader political skill	Correlation, Linear regression
HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee	Correlation, Linear regression Hayes moderation process
HO2a: *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader*	*Correlation, Linear regression Hayes moderation process*
HO3: The employee shows resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader	Correlation, Linear regression Hayes moderation process
HO3a: *The employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader*	*Correlation, Linear regression Hayes moderation process*

3.12. Methodology summary

A positivist, nomothetic, deductive, and cross-sectional research design was conducted on the research regarding employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees who are different from leaders. Data was collected using an online survey and 204 (n=204) responses were returned from two research sites. Data was analysed to obtain statistical results that test the political skill and social identity model fit and direction of hypotheses. Limitations encountered during the process of conducting the research were explained and quality controls and ethical protocols while conducting the research were described. The next chapter presents the results of the data analysis.

Chapter four: Results

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explained the positivist, nomothetic, deductive, cross-sectional design, survey data collection method, and statistical analysis of the dataset. The study claims that employees are more likely to perceive as manipulative a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees if that leader is different from employees. By contrast, employees may view a leader who uses political skill to influence them as collaborative if a leader is similar to them. The primary research question is "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of leader political skill?*".

In response to the overarching research question, this chapter presents the results of the data analysis. First, it describes the demographic profile and personal characteristics scores of the relationship between employees and direct managers using descriptive frequencies (f) and percentages (%). Second, it explains the data normality scores to provide an overview of the dataset. Third, it presents the validity and reliability scores of the measures of employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived social identity, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*). Finally, it interprets the hypotheses (HO) results around the political skill and social identity model.

4.2. Sample population description

To present the demographic results of the sample population (N = 2025) of potential employees and direct managers, the data was analysed to obtain the race, gender, and nationality frequency (f) and percentage (%) scores from two research sites as depicted in table 4.1 on the next page. The first research site of HEI one comprised 1198 potential respondents and the second research site of HEI two was made up of 827 potential respondents, which tallied to 2025 (N = 2025) potential respondents who were invited to participate in the study, if they so wished (HEI one, 2022; HEI two, 2022). Based on the sample population, there were 204 (n=204) responses received.

Table 4.1: Employee and employee-perceived direct manager race, gender, and nationality scores

Employee race, gender nationality	f (%)	Employee-perceived direct manager race, gender nationality	f (%)
African Male	50 (24.6)		64 (31.4)
Coloured Male	2 (0.9)		0 (0)
Indian Male	20 (9.8)		44 (21.6)
White Male	8 (3.9)		11 (5.4)
African Female	52 (25.5)		33 (16.2)
Coloured Female	6 (2.9)		0 (0)
Indian Female	22 (10.8)		17 (8.3)
White Female	16 (7.9)		9 (4.4)
Non-South African Male	19 (9.3)		16 (7.8)
Non-South African Female	9 (4.4)		10 (4.9)
TOTAL	**204 (100)**		**204 (100)**

There was a small number of white people (f = 24, % = 13.6) with few coloured people (f = 8, % = 4.5) in the sample (n=204) as indicated in table 4.1 above. The categories of race of African, coloured, Indian, and white people were drawn from the South African constitution and census (Census, 2022; Constitution, 1996). Female employees (f = 96, % = 54.5) constituted more than half of the respondents, while male employees (f = 80, % = 45.4) constituted less than fifty percent of the total (n=204). The number of employees who chose "other" and "prefer not to say" for gender identity was small, and not reflected in table 4.1. Most respondents identified as South African (f = 176, % = 86.2), with few non-South Africans (f = 28, % = 13.8) included in the dataset, as borne out in table 4.1.

As illustrated in table 4.1 above, the employee-perceived direct manager results showed a high number of African people (f = 97, % = 54.4), fewer Indian people (f = 61, % = 34,2), a small number of white people (f = 20, % = 11.2), while there were no coloured people (f = 0, % = 0). This is mainly due to the fact that there remain few coloured people in management positions in the higher education sector in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The number of perceived direct managers identified as "other" and "prefer not to say" for gender was small and excluded

in table 4.1 on the previous page. Most perceived direct managers were males (f = 119, % = 66,8), while there were females (f = 59, % = 33.1). Most respondents were South Africans (f = 178, % = 87.2) and there were few non-South Africans (f = 26, % = 12.8).

4.2.1. Employee and employee-perceived direct manager language

Table 4.2: Employee and employee-perceived direct manager language scores

Home language	Employee f (%)	Employee-perceived direct manager f (%)
English	85 (41.7)	100 (49.1)
isiZulu	66 (32.4)	60 (30.4)
isiXhosa	12 (5.9)	3 (1.2)
Afrikaans	5 (2.5)	16 (7.8)
Sesotho	5 (2.5)	2 (0.9)
Setswana	2 (0.9)	2 (0.9)
Tshivenda	3 (1.5)	2 (0.9)
Sepedi	4 (2)	0 (0)
isiNdebele	0 (0)	0 (0)
SiSwati	3 (1.4)	0 (0)
Xitsonga	0 (0)	1 (0.1)
Other	19 (9.2)	18 (8.7)
TOTAL	**204 (100)**	**204 (100)**

Beyond race, gender, and nationality, the study analysed language to establish differences and similarities between employee perceptions of direct managers' social identity during political influence at work. The employee language results showed that most employees were English speakers (f = 85, % = 41.7), followed by isiZulu speakers (f = 66, % = 32.4) as illustrated in table 4.2 above. Few employees (f = 34, % = 16.7) spoke the rest of the South African official languages as shown in table 4.2. Few employees spoke other non-official languages (f =19, % = 9.2). The employee-perceived direct manager language results demonstrated that most direct managers spoke English (f = 100, % = 49.1) followed by isiZulu (f = 60, % = 30.4). Few direct managers (f = 26, % = 10.2) spoke the rest of the South African

languages, while a small number (f = 18, % = 8.7) spoke other unofficial languages, as depicted in table 4.2 on the previous page. It is not surprising that English and isiZulu are the most widely spoken languages, taking into account the research is set in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.2.2. Employee and employee-perceived direct manager job title

In a bid to describe the respondent characteristics, the data was analysed regarding the job titles of employees and direct managers, as tabulated in table 4.3 below. The employee job title results showed that most employees held lecturer positions (f = 119, % = 58.3) followed by senior lecturers (f = 34, % = 16.6), a few associate professors (f = 12, % = 5.9), and a small number of full professors (f = 7, % = 3.4). The high number of lecturer positions pointed to professors who retired and the need to develop emerging academic employees to become professors through the transformation of the higher education sector in South Africa. At the research site of the study, a few associate directors and directors (f = 6, % = 3) were represented in the dataset, as historical director positions were discontinued at universities of technologies, primarily focused on vocational training.

Table 4.3: Employee and employee-perceived direct manager job title scores

Job title	**Employee** f **(%)**	**Employee-perceived direct manager** f **(%)**
Junior Lecturer	26 (12.7)	0 (0)
Lecturer	119 (58.3)	32 (15.7)
Associate Director	1 (0.5)	41 (20.1)
Director	5 (2.5)	12 (5.9)
Senior Lecturer	34 (16.7)	74 (36.3)
Associate Professor	12 (5.9)	1 (0.5)
Full Professor	7 (3.4)	44(21.5)
TOTAL	**204 (100)**	**204 (100)**

The job title results for employee-perceived direct manager positions were dominated by senior lecturers (f = 74, % = 36.3) and full professors (f = 44, % = 21.5), followed by fewer associate directors (f = 41, % = 20.1) and few directors (f = 12, % = 5.9) as depicted in table 4.3 on the previous page. The job title results further indicated the variation in respondents across levels of job titles as leaders who use political skill to influence employees face nuances at different levels of the organisation. The study used the job title of personal characteristics as a control variable in conducting the statistical procedures.

4.2.3. Employee and employee-perceived direct manager age, job type, and work experience

In addition to job title, the data was analysed based on the number of years of work experience of employees, age, and permanent or temporary type of job as tabulated in table 4.4 below. The employee personal characteristics results indicated that most employees had between one and five years (f = 57, % = 27.9) of work experience, while few employees had less than a year (f = 9, % = 4.4), and over 26 years (f = 19, % = 9.3) of work experience, respectively. The range of years of experience uncovers insights about employee perceptions of a direct manager's use of political skill to influence employees. Employees with many years of experience offer perspectives about the political dynamics more than employees who joined the organisation recently.

Table 4.4: Employee age, job type, and experience scores

Experience	f **(%)**	**Age**	f**(%)**	**Job type**	f **(%)**
0	9 (4.4)	18-35	34 (17.6)	Temporary	45 (22.1)
1-5	57 (27.9)	36-45	71 (33.8)	Permanent	159 (77.9)
6-10	43 (21.1)	46-65	92 (45.2)		
11-15	44 (21.6)	66+	7 (3.4)		
16-25	32 (15.7)				
26+	19 (9.3)				
TOTAL	**204 (100)**	**204 (100)**			**204 (100)**

Most employees were aged between forty-six and sixty-five years (f = 92, % = 45.2), followed by the thirty-six to forty-five (f = 71, % = 33.8) age group as illustrated in table 4.4 on the previous page. Few employees were in the age group of eighteen to thirty-five (f = 34, % =17.6) and sixty-six (f = 7, % = 3.4) years of age, which is not surprising given the duration of becoming an academic employee in South Africa. An overwhelming number of employees were employed in permanent positions (f = 159, % = 77.9), with few employees (f = 45, % = 22.1) employed in temporary positions in the dataset.

Employees who were employed permanently provide unique views about the exercise of a leader's political skill to influence employees when compared with temporary employees. For instance, permanent employees are more vocal about political dynamics than temporary employees, who remain silent fearing reprisal, as contracts may be terminated. The study controlled for employee age, job type, years of experience, position, and job title.

Table 4.5: Employee-perceived direct manager age, job type, and experience scores

Experience years no. (%)		**Age no. (%)**		**Job type no. (%)**	
0	8 (3.9)	18-35	1 (0.5)	Temporary	197 (96.6)
1-5	66 (32.4)	36-45	36 (17.6)	Permanent	7 (3.4)
6-10	45 (22.1)	46-65	165 (80.9)		
11-15	23 (11.3)	66 +	2 (1)		
16-25	44 (21.6)				
26+	18 (8.7)				
TOTAL	**204 (100)**	**204 (100)**			**204 (100)**

The data was analysed to compute frequencies (f) and percentages (%) for the employee-perceived direct manager's age, job type, and experience as illustrated in table 4.5 above. The employee-perceived direct manager personal characteristics results showed that most direct managers had between one to five years of experience (f = 66, % = 32.4), followed by six to ten years of experience (f = 45, % = 22.1). Few direct managers had less than a year of experience (f = 8, % = 3.9), and twenty-six years of experience (f = 18, %= 8.7). Furthermore, most direct managers were between forty-six and sixty-five years of age (f =

165, % = 80.9). Few direct managers were between thirty-six and forty-five (f = 36, % = 17.6) and over sixty-six years of age (f = 66, % = 0.9).

Most direct managers were appointed temporarily (f = 197, % = 96.6), and few direct managers were employed permanently (f = 7, % = 3.4), which was not surprising as managers were appointed temporarily in the higher education sector with implications for exercising leader political skill to influence employees. I have witnessed former direct managers become ordinary employees and a former ordinary employee became direct managers over the former bosses, with interesting observations about political dynamics and influence tactics especially during the transformation of an organisation. Therefore, the study controlled for the direct manager's age, job type, years of experience, position, and job title.

4.2.4. Employee-perceived direct manager position

The data was analysed about the employee-perceived direct manager's positions within the organisation as depicted in table 4.6. below. The results indicated that direct manager positions were dominated (f = 149, % = 73.0) by heads of department. The head of department position was followed by the deans of faculty (f = 21,%= 10.3). There were fewer deputy heads of department/school (f =15, % = 7.4), and deputy deans of faculty/college (f = 9, % = 4.4).

Table 4.6: Employee-perceived direct manager position scores

Position	f **(%)**
Deputy Head of Department/School	15 (7.4)
Head of Department/School	149 (73.0)
Deputy Dean of Faculty/College	9 (4.4)
Dean of Faculty/College/School	21 (10.3)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor	7 (3.4)
Vice-Chancellor	3 (1.5)
TOTAL	**204 (100)**

Few direct managers held the position of deputy vice-chancellors (f = 7, % = 3.4) and vice-chancellors (f = 3, % = 1.5) as shown in table 4.6 on the previous page. The position results are not surprising because there were more heads of department than deans of faculty and vice chancellors positions, based on the number of departments and faculties in the dataset. For instance, a faculty had one dean with eleven heads of department, hence the dataset showed fewer dean positions.

Similarly, few positions were reported to the vice-chancellor, and therefore, there were few deputy vice-chancellors included in the dataset. The position results further highlighted a spread of direct manager positions in the dataset from lower to higher levels of the organisation. The higher the direct manager position, the more challenging the exercise of a leader's political skill especially during the transformation of an organisation. The study controlled for a direct manager's position in preparation for further analysis of the data.

4.3. Data normality

Table 4.7 below illustrates the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistical test scores about the normality of the data, regarding the influence of social identity on a leader who uses political skill to influence employees in the workplace. The data normality results showed significant differences for employee-perceived leader political skill (K-S = .093, Shapiro-Wilk = .968, p = < .005) and employee-perceived social identity (K-S = .149, Shapiro-Wilk = .876, p= < .005) constructs at 0.05 p-values at 95% level of significance and 5 % margin of error.

Table 4.7: Data normality scores

Construct	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wik		
	Statistic (K-S)	df	Sig (p)	Statistic	df	Sig (p)
Employee-perceived leader political skill	.093	204	<.005	.968	204	<.005
Employee-perceived social identity	.149	204	<.005	.876	204	<.005
Employee-perceived leader influence tactics *manipulation*	.064	204	.040	.984	204	.021

collaboration	.075	204	.007	.987	204	.054
Employee reactions						
resistance	.080	204	.003	.983	204	.017
cooperation	.137	204	<.005	.963	204	<.005

The normality results further showed significant differences for employee-perceived leader influence tactic of *manipulation* (K-S = .064, Shapiro-Wilk = .984, p = < .021), *resistance* (K-S = .080, Shapiro-Wilk = .983, p = < .017), and *cooperation* (K-S = .137, Shapiro-Wilk = .963, p = > .005) as constructs at 0.05 levels and 95% margin of error. Using composite scores of each construct measure, the normality results indicated that data was not normally distributed as shown in appendix C.

By contrast, the *collaboration* (K-S = .075, Shapiro-Wilk - .987, p = < .054) construct result was not significantly different from the non-normally distributed data, as the score was higher than the recommended 0.05 level of significance (Hair et al., 2019), based on 204 (n=204) responses as demonstrated in table 4.7 above. To address the skewness of the data, a bootstrapping technique was performed on SPSS based on 5000 sampling at a 95% confidence interval level as shown in appendix E. The bootstrapping result scores showed that the constructs of interest were in the same direction of negative or positive scores as depicted in attached appendix D.

Table 4.8 on the next page describes the original construct results of a leader who could use political skill to manipulate employees who show resistance against the leader, while employees may collaborate with cooperative employees. The means ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$) and variations (σ^2) results scores showed the employee-perceived leader political skill ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 2.47, σ^2 = .109, n = 204, I =17), employee-perceived social identity ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 2.87, σ^2 = .498, n = 204, I = 19), and employee-perceived leader influence tactic of *manipulation* ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 2.73, σ^2 = .319, n = 204, I = 11).

Table 4.8: Original constructs description scores

Construct	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Questionnaire
				$\overleftrightarrow{X}$	σ^2	item no. (I)
Employee-perceived leader political skill	204	2.02	3.06	2.47	.109	17
Employee-perceived social identity	204	1.92	4.00	2.87	.498	19
Employee-perceived leader influence tactics						
manipulation	204	1.92	3.47	2.73	.319	11
collaboration	204	2.47	4.19	3.29	.572	7
Employee reactions						
resistance	204	3.26	3.74	3.55	.029	7
cooperation	204	2.41	4.11	3.70	.417	6

The normality results demonstrated employee-perceived leader influence tactic of *collaboration* ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 3.29, σ^2 = .572, n = 204, I = 7), employee reaction of *resistance* ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 3.55, σ^2 = .029; n = 204, I = 7), and employee reaction of *cooperation* ($\overleftrightarrow{X}$= 3.70, σ^2 = .417, n = 204, I = 6). The questionnaire items varied between nineteen (19) for employee-perceived social identity and six (6) for *cooperation* as shown in table 4.8 above. Overall, there was a minimal variance in scores from the mean scores.

4.4. Analysis of common method bias

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to obtain scores with eigenvalues greater than one and extraction sums of squared loadings to test for common method bias in respondent responses as illustrated in table 4.9 on the next page. The component matrix one and two scores from SPSS were obtained to show the questionnaire statement loadings for employee-perceived leader political skill. The factor analysis results showed the percentage of common method variance was approximately twenty-five percent (24.4%) and the lowest point (1.01) based on seventeen (17) employee-perceived leader political skill questionnaire items.

The factor results indicated no common method bias for employee-perceived leader political skill. Furthermore, the collinearity scores were high, which showed convergent and discriminant validity for each construct. In addition to table 4.9 below about employee-perceived leader political skill scores, the common method variance tables for employee-perceived social identity, *manipulation, collaboration, resistance,* and *cooperation* constructs found to have no common method bias are attached in appendix B.

Table 4.9: Employee-perceived leader political skill factor scores

	Initial Eigenvalues			***Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings***		
Factor	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative%**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative%**
1	16.72	24.96	24.96	16.72	24.96	24.96
2	5.04	7.52	32.49	5.04	7.52	32.49
3	4.16	6.21	38.70	4.16	6.21	38.70
4	2.66	3.97	42.68	2.66	3.97	42.68
5	2.47	3.70	46.38	2.47	3.70	46.38
6	2.02	3.02	49.40	2.02	3.02	49.40
7	1.88	2.81	52.21	1.88	2.81	52.21
8	1.65	2.47	54.69	1.65	2.47	54.69
9	1.58	2.36	57.06	1.58	2.36	52.17
10	1.49	2.22	59.28	1.49	2.22	57.06
11	1.33	1.99	61.27	1.33	1.99	59.28
12	1.29	1.93	63.20	1.29	1.93	61.27
13	1.24	1.85	65.06	1.24	1.85	63.20
14	1.20	1.79	66.86	1.20	1.79	65.06
15	1.19	1.78	68.64	1.19	1.78	68.64
16	1.07	1.60	70.24	1.07	1.60	70.24
17	1.01	1.52	71.76	1.01	1.52	71.76

For common method bias results robustness, some questionnaire statements were reworded from the original measures to further check for common method bias as depicted in table 4.10 below. For example, questionnaire statements were reworded from "*I feel that I do not have much to offer*" to "*I feel I have a lot to offer to my social group*". Furthermore, a statement was reworded from "*I get along with my direct manager*" to "*I distance myself from my direct manager*". Lastly, the original statement was "*I feel frustrated by working with my direct manager*" to " *I look forward to working with my direct manager*". The rewording procedure further minimised the common method bias of the construct measures of the study. The full questionnaire is attached as appendix A.

Table 4.10: Original and reworded questionnaire statements

Questionnaire item no.	Original questionnaire statement	Reworded questionnaire statement
4.11	I feel that I do not have much to offer to my social group.	I feel that I have a lot to offer to my social group.
4.17	My social group is not an important reflection of who I am.	My social group is an important reflection of who I am.
7.5	I get along with my direct manager.	I distance myself from my direct manager.
8.4	I feel frustrated by working with my direct manager at work.	I look forward to working with my direct manager.

4.5. Original measurement model fit

To test the original political skill and social identity model fit, a measurement analysis was conducted to obtain fitness scores on the M-Plus statistical software. The original measurement results showed a high Chi-square value ($\chi 2$ = 30.96, p = < 0.05), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.16, p = < 0.08), and comparative fit indices (CFI = 0.77, p = < 0.90) as well as Tucker Lewis Index (TLI =0.31, p = < 0.95) as depicted in Table 4.11 on the next page. The standardised root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.08, p = < 0.08), and degree of freedom (df = 5, p = < 0.05) were obtained at the recommended 0.05 level of value, in preparation for construct reliability and validity testing.

Table 4.11: Original measurement for model fit scores

Fit indices	indices value	P-value
Chi-square value (x2)	30.96	< 0.05
Degree of freedom (df)	5	< 0.05
Scaling Correction Factor for MLM	1.00	< 0.05
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.16	< 0.08
Comparative Fit Indices (CFI)	0.77	< 0.90
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.31	< 0.95
Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.08	< 0.08

4.5.1. Construct reliability and validity of the original model

The study conducted a statistical test to obtain the reliability scores for each construct of interest as illustrated in table 4.12 below. The reliability results showed high reliability scores for employee-perceived leader political skill (α = .94, SI = .94, I = 17), *manipulation* (α = .82, SI = .83, I = 11), *resistance* (α = .70, SI= .70, I = 7), and *collaboration* (α = .65, SI = .44, I = 6), which were above the recommended 0.65 (Hair et al., 2019). In contrast, employee-perceived social identity (α = .58, SI = .60, I = 19) and *cooperation* (α = .33, SI = .44, I = 6) were below the suggested 0.65. The scaling correction factor for MLM was at the 1.00 value level.

Table 4.12: Original measure reliability scores

Measure	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Cronbach's alpha standardised items (SI)	Questionnaire items no. (I)
Employee-perceived leader political skill	*.94*	*.94*	*17*

Employee-perceived social identity	*.58*	*.60*	*19*
Employee-perceived leader influence tactics			
manipulation	*.82*	*.83*	*11*
collaboration	*.65*	*.65*	*7*
Employee reactions			
resistance	*.70*	*.70*	*7*
cooperation	*.33*	*.44*	*6*

To increase the reliability scores of constructs, the reworded questionnaire statements were removed as depicted in table 4.13 below. The questionnaire items were "*I belong to a social group that is similar to my direct manager's social group*" (α = .63), "*My direct manager's social group has more to do with how I feel about myself*" (α = .69) and "*I feel that I do have much to offer to my social group*" (α = .71). In addition, removed questionnaire statements were " *My social group is an important reflection of who I am*" (α = .67), "*My direct manager reminds me of past favours done for me"* (α = .67), and *"I look forward to working with my direct manager*" (α = .71).

Table 4.13: Removed original questionnaire items and improved reliability scores

Questionnaire no	**Questionnaire statements**	**Improved reliability scores**
4.1	I belong to a social group that is similar to my direct manager's social group	.63
4.8	My direct manager's social group has more to do with how I feel about myself	.69
4.11	I feel that I do have much to offer to my social group	.71
4.17	My social group is an important reflection of who I am	.67
6.6	My direct manager reminds me of past favours done for me	.67
8.4	I look forward to working with my direct manager	.71

After conducting the confirmatory factor analysis to check questionnaire item loadings and Cronbach's alpha (α) scores, the factor results indicated satisfactory scores. The factor scores showed convergent validity between questionnaire items within a construct where scores were above .70 as recommended by Hair et al. (2020), and discriminate validity between the six constructs of the study as well as Pearson correlation coefficients on SPSS. The six constructs of the study were employee-perceived leader political skill, employee-perceived social identity, employee-perceived leader influence tactics (*manipulation, collaboration*), and employee reactions (*resistance, cooperation*), in preparation for the structural model test of main effects.

4.6. Control variables

The control variables of the study, which were job title (W), type of employment (W), position (W), and years of experience (W) were added to the moderation and correlation statistical tests for robustness of the results. The results showed that the control variables did not change the results when compared to the exclusion of control variables in statistical analysis.

4.7. The influence of social identity on leader political skill

The study examined whether employee-perceived differences in social identity influenced employee perceptions of a leader who used political skill in the workplace. The employee-perceived social identity. Hence, the hypothesis one (HO1) was formulated as follows:

HO1: Employee social identity predicts perceptions of leader political skill.

To address hypothesis one (HO1), the study analysed the effect of employee social identity affects perceptions of a leader who uses a political skill. To test hypothesis one (HO1), a Pearson correlation coefficient (*r*) analysis statistical test was conducted ($X \rightarrow Y$) using a two-tailed approach on SPSS as depicted in table 4.14 on the next page. The X of the study represented employee-perceived leader political skill (X) as an independent variable, and Y indicated employee-perceived social identity (Y) as a dependent variable. The correlation analysis (*r*) was conducted based on 204 (n= 204) sample population size at a p-value of .005 (<.005) at a 95% level of significance, within a 5% margin of error.

The political skill and social identity correlation results showed consistency with hypothesis one (HO1), which confirmed that a significant relationship existed between a leader who exercised political skill and employee-perceived social identity as depicted in table 4.14 below. The correlation results (n = 204, *r* = .499**, p = <.005) further suggested that employees were more likely to view a leader as using knowledge about the employee to enhance personal or organisational goals based on the social identity of employees.

Table 4.14: Employee-perceived social identity and employee-perceived leader political skill

Variable	Employee-perceived leader political skill		Employee-perceived social identity
Employee-perceived leader political skill	Pearson correlation	1	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.005
	n	204	204
Employee-perceived social identity	Pearson correlation	.499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.005	
	n	204	204

** .005 p-value

4.8. The effect of the differences on employee-perceived leader political skill and manipulation

The study examined whether employees perceived a leader who exercised political skill as using influence tactic of *manipulation* on employees if a leader is different from employees.

Hypothesis two (HO2) was formulated as follows:

HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee.

To test the hypothesis (HO2), the respondents were divided according to employee perception of the leader along race, gender, nationality, and language differences respectively as shown in table 4.15 below. Therefore, employees who were different from direct managers were grouped along race, gender, nationality, and language respectively on SPSS, in preparation for further analytical tests. The employee-perceived leader political skill construct was an independent variable (X), *manipulation* (Y) was a dependent variable of race, gender, nationality, and language differences (Z) was a moderator variable.

Table 4.15: Differences in employee-perceived leader political skill and manipulation scores

Variable	**Employee-perceived leader political skill *manipulation***					
	LLCI	**ULCI**	**coeff**	**se**	**t**	**P**
Employee-perceived social identity						
- Race difference	-.124	.229	.052	.088	.585	.559
- Gender difference	-.464	.593	.064	.266	.242	.593
- Nationality difference	-1.139	.562	-.416	.482	-.862	.393
- Language difference	-.219	.135	-.041	.089	-.466	.642

The Hayes process macro plug was used to analyse the moderating effect of employee-social identity (W) for respective race, gender, nationality, and language differences (Z) on employee-perceived leader political skill (X*W*Z) and *manipulation* (Y). In this regard, p-values, LLCI, and ULCI scores were obtained as shown in table 4.15 above. The moderation results indicated no significant effect of social identity race differences (LLCI = -.124; se = .088, ULCI = .229, p = .559), and social identity gender differences (LLCI = -.464, se= .266, ULCI = .593, p = .809) on employee perceptions of a leader who exercised political skill to *manipulate* employees along, as illustrated in table 4.15.

The moderation results further highlighted no significant moderation effect of social identity differences based on nationality (LLCI = - 1.139, se= .482, ULCI = .562, p =.393), as well as social identity differences based on languages (LLCI = -.219, se = .089; ULCI = .135, p = .642) on employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to *manipulate* employees. The moderation results suggested that social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, as well as language differences, were unlikely to influence employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to *manipulate* employees.

4.8.1. Influence of employee-perceived leader political skill on manipulation of employees

The study analysed the effect of employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to influence employees through *manipulation* for robustness. To test hypothesis two (HO2), a Pearson correlation coefficient (*r*) analysis statistical test was conducted (X --- Y) using a 2-tailed approach on SPSS as depicted in table 4.16 below. The X of the study represented employee-perceived leader political skill (X) as an independent variable, and Y indicated employee-perceived influence tactic of *manipulation* (Y) as a dependent variable. The correlation analysis (*r*) was conducted based on 204 (n= 204) sample population size at a p-value of .005 (<.005) and 95% level of significance, within a 5% margin of error.

Table 4.16: Employee-perceived leader political skill on manipulation scores

Variable		**Employee-perceived leader political skill**	***manipulation***
Employee-perceived leader political skill	Pearson correlation	1	.608**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		< .005
	n	204	204
manipulation	Pearson correlation	.608**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.005	
	n	204	204

** .005 p-value

The *manipulation* correlation results confirmed a significant relationship between a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees through *manipulation,* as depicted in table 4.16 on the previous page. The results (n = 204, *r* = .608**, p = < .005) further suggest that employees were more likely to view a leader as using employee knowledge to control employees through underhanded means. In contrast to *manipulation*, the study examined whether employees were likely to perceive as *collaborative* a leader who exercised political skill to influence employees.

To further test hypothesis two (HO2), a Pearson correlation (*r*) analysis statistical test was conducted (X - Y) using a 2-tailed approach on SPSS. The X of the study represented employee-perceived leader political skill (X) as an independent variable, and Y indicated the employee-perceived influence tactic of *collaboration* (Y) as a dependent variable. The correlation analysis was conducted based on a 204 (n = 204) sample population size at a p-value of .005 (<.005) and 95% level of significance, within a 5% margin of error. Therefore, hypothesis two (HO2) was not supported.

4.9. Similarities in employee-perceived leader political skill on collaboration with employees

The study examined whether employees were more likely to perceive a leader who exercised political skill as *collaborative* if a leader is similar to the employee. Hypothesis 2a (HO2a) was stated as follows:

> ***HO2a:*** *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader*

In a bid to test hypothesis 2a (HO2a), respondents were clustered based on employee perceptions of a leader along with similarity in race, gender, nationality, and language respectively as depicted in table 4.17 on the next page. Employee-perceived leader political skill was an independent variable (X), *collaboration* (Y) was a dependent variable, and similarity in social identity (Z) was a moderator variable. A Hayes process macro plug on SPSS was used to analyse the moderating effect of social identity categories of race, gender, nationality as well as language similarities on leader political skill (X*Z) and *collaboration* (Y) to obtain scores at a p-value of >.005 with 95% level of significance and 5% margin of error.

Table 4.17: Similarities in employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration scores

Variable	Employee-perceived leader political skill *collaboration*					
	LLCI	**ULCI**	**coeff**	**se**	**t**	**P**
Employee-perceived social identity						
- Race similarity	-.465	.679	.106	.288	.370	.712
- Gender similarity	-.163.	214.	.025	.095	.265	.214
- Nationality similarity	-.051	.273	.111	.082	1.349	.178
- Language similarity	-.189	1.1498	.480	.336	1.428	.157

The moderation results demonstrated that employee-perceived social identity of race similarity (LLCI = -.465, se = .288, ULCI = .679, p = .712), as well as gender similarity (LLCI = -.163, se = .095, ULCI =.214, p = .790) respectively, had no significant effect on employee-perceived leader political skill and *collaboration*, as tabulated in table 4.17 above. The moderation results further indicated that employee-perceived social identity category of nationality similarity (LLCI = -.051, se = .082, ULCI = .273, p = .178) and language similarity (LLCI = -.189, se = .336, ULCI = 1.149, p = .157) had no significant moderation effect on employee-perceived leader political skill and *collaboration.*

4.9.1 Employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration with employees

The study conducted a Pearson correlation (*r*) coefficient between employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration scores as tabulated in table 4.18 on the next page. The *collaboration* correlation results showed a significant relationship between employee-perceived leader political skill and *collaboration*. The collaboration results (n = 204, *r* =.450**, p = <.005) further highlight that employees were more likely to perceive leaders who exercised political skill to influence employees as *collaborative*. Hypothesis three (HO3) was not supported.

Table 4.18: Employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration scores

Variable		Employee-perceived leader political skill	*collaboration*
Employee-perceived leader political skill	Pearson correlation	1	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.005
	n	204	204
collaboration	Pearson correlation	.450**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.005	
	n	204	204

** 0.05 p-value

4.10. Employee resistance against employee-perceived manipulative leader influenced by differences

The study examined whether employee-perceived differences played a role in employee *resistance* towards a leader who *manipulates* employees. Hypothesis three (HO3) was formulated as follows:

HO3: The employee is more likely to show resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader

To test hypothesis three (HO3), the X represented employee-perceived *manipulation* (X) as a dependent variable, Y denoted employee *resistance* (Y) as an outcome variable, and the social identity (Z), based on categories of race, gender, nationality as well as language differences (W), were moderator variables as depicted in table 4.19 on the next page. A Hayes macro plug test on SPSS was conducted to determine the moderating effect of social identity differences in *manipulation* (X*Z*W) and *resistance* (Y).

Table 4.19: Differences in employee resistance towards leader manipulation scores

Variable	*Leader manipulation*		*Employee resistance*				
	LLCI		**ULCI**	**coeff**	**se.**	**t**	**p**
Employee-perceived social identity							
- Race differences	.335		.171	-.082	.127	-.641	.522
- Gender differences	.597		.735	.069	.335	.206	.837
- Nationality differences	.450		1.712	.631	.533	1.183	.244
- Language differences	.353		.113	-.119	.118	-1.014	.312

The moderation results illustrated no significant effect of the employee-perceived social identity categories of race differences (LLCI = .335, se = .127, ULCI = .171, p = -.522) as well as gender differences (LLCI = .-597, se = .335, ULCI = .735, p = .837) on employees who show resistance against a manipulative leader, as illustrated in table 4.19 above. Similarly, the results further demonstrated that the employee-perceived social identity categories of nationality differences (LLCI = -.450, se = .533, ULCI = 1.712, p = .244), as well as language differences (LLCI = -.353, se = .118, ULCI = .113, p = .312), had no significant moderating effect on employees who show *resistance* against a *manipulative* leader.

4.10.1 Employee resistance against employee-perceived manipulative leader

For robustness, the study tested whether employees resisted perceived manipulative leaders, and a Pearson correlation (*r*) analysis statistical test was conducted (X - Y) using a two-tailed approach on SPSS as demonstrated in table 4.20 on the next page. The X represented the employee-perceived influence tactic of *manipulation* (X) tactic as a dependent variable, and Y indicated employee reaction of *resistance* (Y) as an outcome variable. A correlation (*r*) statistical test was conducted based on 204 (n = 204) sample population size at .005 (<.005) p-value and 95% level of significance, within a 5% margin of error. The correlation (*r*) results revealed a significant relationship between employee-perceived leader *manipulation* and *resistance*. The results (n = 204, r =.049**; p = <.005) further indicated that employees were

more likely to show *resistance* against a *manipulative* leader. Therefore, hypothesis three (HO3) was not supported.

Table 4.20: Employee resistance towards leader manipulation scores

Variable	Leader *manipulation*		Employee *resistance*
Leader manipulation	Pearson correlation	1	.049**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.483
	n	204	204
Employee resistance	Pearson correlation	.049**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.483	
	n	204	204

** 0.05 p-value

4.11 Employee cooperation and leader collaboration influenced by similarities

The study examined whether employee-perceived similarity in social identity had a moderating effect on employees who *cooperate* with a *collaborative* leader as tabulated in table 4.21 on the next page. Therefore, the hypothesis three A (HO3a) was formulated as follows:

HO3a: *The employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader*

To test the hypothesis (HO3a), the X represented *collaboration* (X) as a dependent variable, while Y denoted *cooperation* (Y) as an outcome variable, and employee-perceived similarity in social identity (Z) was a moderator variable as depicted in table 4.21 on the next page. A Hayes macro plug test was conducted to analyse the moderating effect of employee-perceived similarity in social identity on employee-perceived *collaboration* (X*Z) and employee

cooperation (Y). The moderation results showed that employee-perceived social identity based on race similarity (LLCI=3.643, se = .048, UCLI = 3.834, p= 408), had no significant effect on employees who *cooperate* with a *collaborative* leader.

Table 4.21: Similarities in leader collaboration with employee cooperation scores

Variable	*Leader collaboration*	*Employee cooperation*				
	LLCI	**UCLI**	**coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Employee-perceived social identity						
- Race similarity	3.643	3.834	3.739	.048	77.869	.408
- Gender similarity	-.555	-.114	-.334	.111	-3.004	.003
- Nationality similarity	-.300	.097	-.101	.100	-1.009	.314
- Language similarity	-.604	.323	-.140	.233	- .601	.549

** 0.05 p values

The nationality similarity (LLCI = -.300, se = .100, UCLI = .097, p=.314) and language similarity (LLCI= -.604, se = .233, UCLI=.323, p=.549) had no significant moderating effect on employees who *cooperate* with a *collaborative* leader, as indicated in table 4.21 above. The results indicated that social identity and gender similarity (LLCI = -.555, se = .111, UCLI= -.114, p= .003) had a significant moderating effect on *collaborative* leaders who *cooperated* with employees. The results underscore the role of gender similarity in relationships between employees who *cooperate* with a *collaborative* leader. The results report that employees were not likely to *cooperate* with a *collaborative* leader based on nationality, language, and race similarity, except for gender similarity.

4.11.1 Employee perceived leader collaboration and employee cooperation

Table 4.22: Leader collaboration with employee cooperation scores

Variable	Leader *collaboration*		Employee *cooperation*
Leader collaboration	Pearson correlation	1	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.005
	n	204	204
Employee cooperation	Pearson correlation	.333**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.005	
	n	204	204

** 0.05 p values

A Pearson correlation (*r*) analysis statistical test was conducted (X - Y) using a two-tailed approach on SPSS for robustness as depicted in table 4.22 above. The X represented employee-perceived influence tactic of *collaboration* (X) as a dependent variable, and Y indicated *cooperation* (Y) as an outcome variable. A correlation test (*r*) was conducted based on 204 (n=204) sample population size at a p-value of .005 (< .005) at a 95% level of significance, within a 5% margin of error. The correlation results depicted a significant relationship between *collaboration* and *cooperation*. The results (n = 204, *r* = .333**, p = <.005) highlighted that employees were more likely to cooperate with an employee-perceived collaborative leader. Therefore, hypothesis three A (HO3a) was fully supported. Finally, table 4.23 on the next page presents the political and social identity hypotheses and results.

Table 4.23: Political skill and social identity hypotheses and results

Hypotheses	Results
HO1: Employee social identity predicts perceived leader political skill	Fully supported
HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee	Not supported
HO2a: *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader*	*Not supported*
HO3: The employee reacts with resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader	Not supported
HO3a: *The employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader*	*Fully supported*

4.12. Results summary

The study examined whether employee perceptions of a leader's political skill were affected by social identity. The results showed that social identity affected perceptions of leader political skill. The study further probed whether employees perceived a leader who uses political skill as manipulative if a leader was different from employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. The results demonstrated that employees were less likely to perceive a leader who exercises political skill as manipulative if a leader was different from employees in terms of race, gender, nationality, and language. On the contrary, the results indicated that employees were more likely to view a leader as collaborative if a leader had a similar gender to employees, except for race, nationality, and language. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explained the statistical results of the political skill and social identity model. The study argues that employees may perceive a leader who uses political skill to influence employees as manipulative if a leader is different from employees. By contrast, employees may view a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees as collaborative if a leader is similar to employees. While employees may show resistance against a manipulative leader if a leader is different from employees, alternatively, employees may cooperate with a collaborative leader if that leader is similar to employees.

I draw from the results to discuss the findings of the study. I restate the research questions and hypotheses of the study. I use social identity to extend the political influence theory (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Nkomo et al., 2019). The race, gender, nationality, and language social categories highlight the differences between leaders and employees. I suggest implications of social identity differences for political influence, where leaders exercise political skill to influence diverse employees, particularly during the transformation of an organisation to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

5.2. Restated research questions and hypotheses

The study addresses the following primary research question, research sub-questions, and related hypotheses (HO):

5.2.1 Primary research question

What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?

5.2.1.1 First research sub-question

What are employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees, if a leader is different from employees?

5.2.1.2 Second research sub-question

What are employee reactions towards a leader who uses influence tactics, if a leader is different from employees?

5.2.2 Hypotheses

HO1: Employee social identity predicts perceptions of leader's political skill

HO2: The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to manipulate the employee if a leader is different from the employee

HO2a: *The employee perceives the leader to be exercising political skill to collaborate with the employee if the employee is similar to the leader*

HO3: The employee reacts with resistance against a manipulative leader if the employee is different from the leader

HO3a: *The employee cooperates with a collaborative leader if the employee is similar to the leader*

5.3 Employee-perceived leader political skill and employee-perceived social identity

The main research question of the study was: "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?*". Based on the results, the study found that employee perceptions contribute to views about a leader who exercises political skills to influence employees based on social identity if a leader is different from employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. The study suggests that employee perceptions of social identity differences extend understanding of assessing a leader's political skill further than previously understood. By showing that social identity between leaders and employees, as well as social differences, affect employee perceptions of a leader's use of political skill at work, the study closes the gap on the intervening aspect of the exercise of a leader's political skill (Ferris et al., 2019; Frieder et al., 2019; Grosser et al., 2018; Hochwater et al., 2020; Hogg, 2001), to influence employees.

The study deepens race and gender categories of social identity by including nationality and language aspects in broader organisational politics. In the case of nationality, there is a growing concern about xenophobia against foreign nationals who speak different languages and the preservation of jobs for local nationals as well as language speakers. Leaders can use political skill to manipulate employee perceptions and responses to xenophobia and language tensions. Even though nationality and language differences add to race and gender dimensions (Arnett, 2023; Nkomo et al., 2018), the study shows that employees are affected by a leader's nationality or language differences during social interactions (McAllister et al., 2018) at work.

The social identity differences based on nationality and language multiplicity categories open lines of scholarly enquiry to address big questions of migration, origin, ethnicity, and belonging to a transforming workplace for inclusion in the wake of workplace political tensions always present in every organisation (Mintzberg, 1985; Munyon et al., 2015; Summers et al., 2020). The nationality and language social differences further highlight the boundaries of a leader's political skill, which extend beyond salient race and gender categories, as well as the outcomes for employee stress and well-being.

In contrast to social identity differences, the study found that social identity similarities based on race, nationality, and language categories are less likely to influence employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to influence employees at work. The similarity notion contradicts political influence (Ashforth, & Mael, 1989; Ferris & Judge, 2001; McAllister et al., 2018; Munyon et al., 2020) assumptions, which suggest that similarity between leaders and employees creates bias in work decisions, such as appointing employees based on race and gender similarity. Mechanisms to transform the workplace yield progressive change over time. The study suggests that employees focus more on professional identity (Hogg, 2001; Roberts & Creary, 2012) as the basis for forming perceptions about a leader's political skill to influence employees, instead of race, nationality, and language social categories, except for gender similarity.

The study found that gender similarity contributes to employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to influence employees during the transformation of an organisation for diversity. Employees prefer to work with leaders who share a similar gender identity with employees. For example, men would rather work with other men, and women prefer working with other women. The gender similarity preference confirms Hochwarter's (2020) argument regarding gender aspects in workplace politics that men dominate leadership positions, which shows a need for a sense of belonging and salience to similar gender social groups. The

observation further underscores gender similarity as foundational for the inclusion and exclusion of employees and leaders from social groups.

Leaders who use political skill to transform gender representation at work may face resistance in the form of ignored instructions as well as outright boycotts, beyond race, nationality, and language social categories. Conversely, the social-political perspective of the study raises broader research questions about gender similarity between a leader and an employee (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Davy, 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2020), where organisations transform beyond the race category. Taken together, social identity similarity and political skill deepen the understanding of the influence of a leader on employee perceptions, in the process of necessary transformation in countries such as South Africa with a history of human rights violations, discrimination, and oppression.

Since employees overlook race, nationality, and language multiple social category differences in assessing a leader's political skill to influence employees, transformation interventions offer social integration at work, except for gender salient similarity. The notion contradicts political influence (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris et al. 2018; Frieder et al., 2019; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Ramarajan, 2014) assumptions of preference for similar relational identities in the workplace. In South Africa, social groups were segregated based on race and language categories during apartheid, as reflected in organisation demographic representation.

In contrast, democratic South Africa has integrated social groups into organisations that create political tensions between leaders and employees in workplaces. These boundary conditions of political skill provide insights into the tipping point for the transformation of the workplace based on race, nationality, and language social categories to become unnecessary and, alternatively, assume a different form (CHE, 2022; DHET, 1997; USAF, 2023). Intentional social interactions between diverse leaders and employees are used to mitigate historical tensions and misunderstandings and deepen political influence perspectives to advance organisational goals through transformation.

The study demonstrates a relationship in the methodology by focusing on the employee perception of direct managers in the workplace. Rather than asking direct managers if they used political skill to influence diverse employees at work, the study asked employees about the nature of social interactions with direct managers (Bednar & Brown, 2024; Frieder et al., 2023; Kacmar et al. 2010). The line of questioning brought to the fore the salient elements of identity shaping the individual multiple identities and simultaneity at work. Furthermore, leaders use political skill on employees in destructive ways for personal benefit, or in

constructive ways for the benefit of the organisation. The study suggests that insights about social identity and political skill emerged from employee perceptions of a direct manager to advance knowledge.

The study adjusted and checked the measures for social identity and political skill to reflect the employee perceptions of the direct manager. Since the employee perceptions could have misunderstandings of direct managers, the choice of transformed research sites was central to offering nuances about relationality in the research (HEI one, 2019; HEI two, 2019). Within broader organisational political research, studies use individual perceptions alone contrary to the relationship as an approach to conducting research in the workplace, as was the case in this study. Finally, the study finds that social identity differences in race, gender, nationality, as well as language, and categories contribute to a leader's political skill theoretical and practice.

5.3.1 Differences in employee-perceived leader political skill and employee-perceived leader influence tactics

Building on the main research question of the study, the first research sub-question was: "*What are employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill if a leader is different from employees?*" Drawing from the results, the study found that employees are less likely to perceive a leader who uses political skill to influence employees as manipulative if a leader is different from employees. In contrast, employees are less likely to view a leader who applies political skill to influence employees as collaborative if a leader is similar to an employee. Similarities or differences were examined along a multiplicity of race, gender, nationality, and language categories in social identity, particularly during the transformation of an organisation to become more diverse, inclusive, and representative.

5.3.1.1 Examination of differences in employee-perceived leader political skill and manipulation of employees

The differences between a leader and an employee are less likely to influence an employee to perceive a leader who uses political skill to be manipulative. This finding contradicts the work of Nkomo et al. (2019) on the role of race and gender differences in excluding and including social groups in leader manipulation of employees in workplace politics. The observation suggests that race, gender, nationality, and language social differences are more

salient and contribute to the initial stages of transformation when compared to the latter stages of transformation.

The salience view of social identity categories such as race raises further questions about a leader who uses political skill to ingratiate employees as a tactic of manipulation promote acceptance of transformation and diversity in the workplace. Consequently, there is an emerging need to examine whether transformation reaches a stage of lesser necessity for demographic identity considerations in the workplace, where leaders and employees foreground professional identity as salient within the multiplicity of identities (Booysen, 2018; Hogg & Terry, 2001; Liao et al., 2019; Lu, et al., 2019). In this regard, employees associate manipulation with the character of the leader as prototypical rather than dependent on the social identity categories of race and gender.

A strength of the current study lies in examining differences from multiple dimensions to offer integrated insights and mechanisms for a leader who shows an awareness of social interactions in the workplace. The study characterised social identity differences along race, gender, language, and nationality categories of the leader and employee respectively through workplace relationships. These categories differ from one another based on assumptions (Booysen, 2018; Haslam et al., 2022; Nkomo, 2021; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014), although they are interrelated regarding employee perceptions of leader manipulation employees during the transformation of an organisation.

Race, gender, language, and nationality are unique categories of social identity in terms of perceptions and attributions between leaders and employees at work. For example, a non-South African leader learns a local language to be able to request work favours from local employees and benefit from a sense of belonging. Therefore, employees are less likely to identify leaders of different nationalities and languages when assessing a given leader's manipulation of a given employee.

Employees are unlikely to attribute a leader's political skill to manipulation tactics based on social identity differences of race, gender, nationality, and language between the leader and employees (Booysen, 2018; Nkomo et al., 2018). Employees justify excessive compliments from a leader based on a leader's sincerity (Abrams, et al., 2021; Ferris et al., 2019; Frieder et al. 2023; Good & Schwepker, 2022). In addition, a leader who is skilled in using political skill hides personal intentions by giving excessive compliments to employees, covering up for employees shortcomings, and requesting workplace favours in return. The leader supports

employees excessively, as a means to achieve transformation goals and outcomes, given the tensions of differences in identity in the workplace

The observation of manipulation grants additional insight into perceptions of leader manipulation of employees who differ from the leader. For example, a white male employee who perceives a black male leader pays excessive compliments as sincere, alternatively, as utilising tactics to advance a transformation agenda. The interpretation of the compliment and outcome stems from a workplace relationship between the employee and the leader. The significance of a leader's use of the political skill is highlighted in pursuit of and realisation of transformation progress outcomes.

The study finds that social identity categories of gender, race, nationality, and language differences play less of a role during social interactions between a leader and employees, and therefore, theoretically, the study advances the understanding of political influence and social identity. The finding suggests that there are diverse groups with differing interests – a situation that creates grounds for manipulation within and between group members. Even though legislation has made inroads into and raised questions about social identity differences in the workplace, there are deeper questions to be addressed about whether legislative requirements (Ferris et al., 2019; Wöcke & Sutherland, 2008) are necessary where social identity differences play a less significant role among leaders who influence employees at work over time.

The socio-political perspective deepens an understanding of the transformation of workplaces, where leaders are less likely to use interpersonal influence to ingratiate themselves with employees, based on differences within legislative frameworks. The assertion further implies that legal requirements have made a difference in bringing diverse groups together in the workplace. The statement underscores the role of legislative requirements, such as affirmative action, triple black economic empowerment, and employment equity legislation in entrenching transformation in South Africa and beyond (DHET, 2022; Selvanathan et al., 2022; Wöcke & Sutherland, 2008). The legislation has implications for leaders who appear humble to diverse employees, as a mechanism to foster change in the workplace. In addition, the duration of legislative requirements indicates that identity differences become progressively more nuanced, rather than being persistently foregrounded and salient between leaders and employees.

The transformation progression, political skill, and competence address the nationality identity of the leader and employees. South Africa's implementation of a programme of bringing skills from the rest of the continent has met the race requirement of transformation, alternatively, African nationals have taken advantage of the provision for personal gain (DHET, 2019; du Pres, et al., 2016). Black people from the African continent who brought scarce skills in the early stages of democratic South Africa could have integrated well with local nationals. The observations suggest that leaders focus on skills transfer between foreign nationals and local nationals as a means to build local talent to meet the needs of industry and foster mutualism. While concerns have arisen about xenophobia, the study finds that xenophobia in South Africa contributes less to the political influence between a leader and an employee, than it does in other societal spheres.

The study claims that the skill and competence of the leader take precedence and become more salient over the language and employee origin differences. The claim suggests that leaders ought to pay less attention to nationality, race, and language categories when implementing transformation. Legislation protects all official local languages in South Africa as equal before the law. The observation further shows that assimilation and simultaneity are where lines become blurred between identities in the workplace (DHET, 2022; Ferris et al., 2018; Hochwarter et al., 2020).

The integration of assimilation and simultaneity further highlights social class as indicated by professions that require a certain level of education, and contributes to perceptions of leader political skill, as is found to be the case in higher education. Senior-level positions in the organisation pay more than lower-level professions that are underpaid, and competitive with local nationalities. The question of nationality raises further questions about the role of social class and race in supporting or resisting leader influence at work, particularly during the transformation of an organisation.

The nature of race plays out in workplaces that are changing as society transforms. In South Africa, black people constitute the majority, while in the West, black people constitute a minority. This study observes that racial identity begins to diminish over time with the transformation and foregrounding of professional values. The observation underscores the role of political influence in changing workplaces and boundary conditions, as well as foundations for minimising identity differences. changes, and foregrounding similarity in the workplace.

5.3.1.2 Evaluating of similarities in employee-perceived leader political skill and collaboration with employees

Employees are less likely to perceive a leader who uses political skill as collaborating with employees if the employee and leader share a similar social identity on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. Employees do not fulfill a leader's request, network with a leader, and assess the provision of resources based on social identity when it is similar to that of a leader. The current study contradicts Ferris and Judge (1991) in this regard, who argue that interpersonal interactions are enabled by similarity, which contributes to workplace politics of recruitment, performance appraisal, and promotion decisions when instituting transformation in the workplace. The transformation of an organisation necessarily requires employees who are not similar to one another to work together for inclusion, diversity, and equity which causes tensions in the workplace.

The nature of similarity is less likely to contribute to sourcing ideas of employees before decision-making and leader political skill application, which bodes well for transformation based on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. The observation agrees with Lu et al. (2019), who found that working together was preferred between leaders and employees in the workplace. The assertion further suggests that leaders share work outcomes with employees through political skill in the absence of similarity with employees. The observation extends an understanding of transformation where employees work together beyond race, gender, nationality, and language social categories, but focus on professionalism and values as a basis for collaboration in the workplace.

5.3.2 Employee reactions towards employee-perceived leader influence tactics

The second research sub-question was: "*What are employee reactions towards a leader who uses influence tactics if a leader is different from the employees?*" The study found that employees are less likely to react with resistance towards a manipulative leader if a leader has a different social identity to employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language social categories. In contrast, employees are less likely to cooperate with a collaborative leader, if a leader has a similar social identity with employees based on race, nationality, and language aspects. Instead, employees are more likely to cooperate with a collaborative leader if the leader is similar to the employee based on gender identity.

5.3.2.1 Assessing differences in employee resistance against a manipulative leader

Employees are less likely to show resistance against a manipulative leader if leaders belong to different social groups from employees based on race, gender, nationality, and language. This assertion suggests that employees avoid pushing for a change of status quo of manipulation from a leader that is perceived as different, as a leader possesses more power and authority over employees (Blickle et al., 2020; Drory & Beaty, 1991; Fedor et al., 2008; Good & Schwepker, 2022; Liao et al., 2019; Sun, 2022). In addition, individual employees are found to be reluctant to ignore a leader's instructions, refuse the leader's requests, and overlook actions towards the leader when social identity differences are present. Instead, employees could show resistance through employee formations, such as trade unions, to address manipulative leaders who pursue personal gains at the expense of an organisation.

Employees who look beyond the differences with a leader, instead focusing on the nature of manipulation rather than performing at a minimal level as a form of protest at work. Social identity differences decrease and become less salient in the wake of low resistance from employees against manipulative leaders over the course of transformation (Abrams et al. 2021; Haslam, et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2021). While the study has focused on the leader and employee relationship, further questions are raised about team perceptions of manipulative leaders during the transformation of an organisation. For example, if a leader is perceived as manipulative for personal gain, employees congregate as a team to address the matter. If employees congregate as a team, the nature of team identity dynamics and relationality arises.

5.3.2.2 Examining similarities in employee cooperation with a collaborative leader

Employees are less likely to cooperate with a collaborative leader based on similarity in race, nationality, and language social categories except for gender identity in the workplace. Gender similarity enables collaborative leaders to cooperate with employees for workplace politics during the transformation of an organisation. The similarity in gender implies employees prefer to obey and comply with requests from a collaborative leader who navigates the transformation of an organisation to maintain the status quo on gender similarity (Elly, 1994; Ely, 2020; Mell et al., 2020; Hochwarter, 2012; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). The observation suggests that employees and leaders are excluded from political influence based on different gender identities, which is consistent with beneficial politics.

Respective male groups and women form alliances for cooperation with collaboration during transformation. In the early years of transformation, white women were appointed to positions, followed by Indian women and coloured women in South Africa. More recently, black African women were appointed into positions of power. The study not only underscores preference for a similar gender group but, where gender identity is more salient amid multiple identities (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Yo-Jud & Grosberg, 2020) the leader needs to use collaborative tactics to influence employees. However, males continue to dominate leadership positions and appoint other men to positions of power. In the South African context, women are promoted through legislation, such as affirmative action and employment equity.

Women who were appointed to positions may have intentionally appointed other women into positions of power. The observation explains the gender similarity preference for leaders. The gender claim further suggests that the similarity in gender between leader and employee proves insufficient to provide resources and support for cooperative employees. Instead, collaborative leaders cooperating with employees have implications for leaders who drive the transformation agenda. The assertion further opens up lines of scholarly enquiry regarding the assumptions that gender similarity is more important than race, nationality, and language social categories for collaboration and cooperation (Arnett, 2023; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Selvanathan et al., 2022; USAF, 2023). The study provides the groundwork for further studies on the role of gender during social interactions between collaborative leaders and cooperative employees during transformation in its later stages, where there were divisions or apartheid previously.

The gender observation is inconsistent with the work of Brown and Jaciby-Senghor (2021), which found that differences matter in the workplace. The assertion suggests that employees work willfully exert effort when cooperating with a collaborative leader from a similar social group. The study corroborates political influence theory (Frieder et al., 2018) regarding similarity in decision-making between leaders and employees when it comes to opportunities for career development based on similarity in identity. The assertion further proposes that the employees and leaders prefer not to work with individuals of similar identity based on race, nationality, and language, except for gender identity.

The study raises questions about sexual harassment and gender-based violence within a transforming workplace. It may be the case that women prefer to report to a female boss who is collaborative with whom to form workplace political alliances as espoused in political skill theory. Men prefer to report to a collaborative male. The observation has cultural dimensions and socialisation which contribute to workplace politics and alliances for personal benefits

(Grosser et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2019). The study underscores political power dynamics and influence between leaders and employees as transformation progresses. This assertion opens up a line of scholarly enquiry about the social identities that become more salient as workplaces begin the diversity journey. Yet, gender similarity may support male and female leaders in navigation transformation based on gender social category.

The collaborative leader of similar gender to employees uses political skill to build alliances and networks towards extending gender differences, which become more accepted over time, rather than assuming a leadership position to force transformation change early (Davy, 2008; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Liao et al., 2019; Hochwarter et al., 2018; Powell & Butterflied, 2015; Yo-Jud Cheng & Groysberg, 2020). The study highlights the significance of political skill beyond the qualifications and experience of leaders during the transformation of an organisation with implications for future well-being and career outcomes. The political influence approach to social identity change requires the input of employees who may assist in advancing transformation amongst internal and external stakeholders.

In the context of South Africa, the importance of a leader's political skill was previously underappreciated, while the study highlights political skill in advancing the transformation agenda amid a rise in tensions in workplaces. Beyond male and female identities, the study had few respondents who chose "other" or "prefer not to say" in the dataset. The study highlights questions about gender identity groups that are excluded from political power blocks on the mechanism to join groups and to form new groups to exert and respond to influence in the workplace during the transformation of an organisation. Overall, political skill and social identity contribute to workplace interaction between leaders and employees.

5.4 Discussion summary

The study examined employee perceptions of the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill. The study finds that employees perceive a leader as using political skill to influence employees based on social identity and differences of race, gender, nationality, and language. In contrast, employees may cooperate with a collaborative leader, if the leader is similar to employees based on gender, rather than race, nationality, and language. The employee preference for gender similarity with a leader stands at odds with the transformation of promoting gender difference for diversity in the workplace. The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations for the study.

Chapter six: Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the findings of the study on leaders who exercise political skill on employees in the workplace. The study finds that employees are less likely to perceive a leader as exercising political skill to manipulate employees if the leader is different from employees based on social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language. In contrast, employees are more likely to perceive a leader as using political skill to collaborate with cooperative employees if the leader is similar to employees based on gender identity. The chapter presents the key social identity contributions of this research to political influence theory, leader and employee interaction practices, and employee views about their leaders in methodology. Finally, the limitations of the study are explained and directions for future research are recommended.

6.2 Research contributions

6.2.1 Theoretical

The main research question of the study was: "*What is the influence of social identity on the exercise of a leader's political skill?*". The study used political influence as a theoretical lens to answer the research question. Political influence theory assumes that leaders and employees are irrational and belong to diverse interest groups while competing for limited resources (Ferris & Judge, 1991). The study finds that social identity categories of race, gender, nationality, and language differences intervened between employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to influence employees in the workplace.

The study suggests that employee perceptions of social identity differences from multiple aspects of race, gender, nationality, and language contribute to assessing a leader's political skill more so than has been previously understood. The study highlights that differences in social identity between leaders and employees contribute to employee perceptions of a leader's use of political skill amid irrationality, diverse interests, and limited resources as espoused in political influence theory. This research closes the gap (Ferris et al., 2019; Hochwater et al., 2020), on the intervening contribution of multiple social identity differences in the exercise of leader political skill to influence employees.

The study indicates that the multiplicity of social identity differences based on race, gender, nationality, and language contributes to employee perceptions of a leader's use of political skill to leverage networks, observe employees' hidden agendas, and know what to say intuitively. While employees' social differences are compared according to race and gender categories (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Nkomo et al., 2019), the study established that the social differences facilitated employee reactions and views about diverse groups with unique interests for access to limited organisational resources. In demonstrating multiple social identity differences as an intervening aspect, the study extends the understanding of the intersection between the use of political skill and social identity.

The study further finds that gender similarity contributes to employee perceptions of a collaborative leader who uses political skill to cooperate with employees, rather than race, nationality, and language similarity. The study suggests that gender similarity, within multiple identities of the leader and employee, becomes more salient pertaining to cooperating with a collaborative leader (Arnett, 2023; Charles & Nkomo. 2012; Drory & Beaty, 1991; Ferris et al., 2019). The study highlights that the employee preference to work with a collaborative leader depends on similarity in gender identity in the workplace, perhaps for a sense of belonging, even though leaders ought to transform organisations to accommodate more diverse interests, gender inclusiveness, and equitability.

The key to this study is that not only should a leader be gender similar to an employee, but the leader should be collaborative in working with employees. Yet, gender similarity is inconsistent with calls to become more gender inclusive, particularly for gender minorities such as transgender people. Therefore, the study implies that the preference for gender similarity perpetuates simultaneity rather than the multiplicity of identities to promote workplace diversity amid workplace politics always present in every organisation (Booysen, 2018; Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023). Leaders, therefore, face tensions of preference for gender similar employees while expected to prioritise gender differences, which is an important observation of the study in advancing political influence theory on irrationality, competing for diverse interests and resource access.

The study demonstrates that employee perceptions and reactions likely contribute less to interpreting manipulation from the leader as leaders and employees integrate over time, where race, gender, nationality, and language social differences tend to carry less salience. Instead, employees attribute manipulation tactics to the leader as an individual, rather than as part of a social group based on race, nationality, and language purported to belong to the leader, particularly during the transformation of organisations to become more inclusive, diverse, and

equitable. Key to the observation is the role of time-lapse in foregrounding differences as a basis for access to opportunities, and the realisation of equitable access to resources in the workplace.

6.2.2 Practical

The study suggests mechanisms to support leaders to exercise political skill effectively. A leader may be capacitated to navigate tensions that could arise from manipulating diverse employees. In this regard, practical workshops, executive coaching, and mentoring mechanisms can be used to support manipulative leaders who exercise political skill to influence employees (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Postma, 2020). For example, leaders should be taught to use manipulation for the benefit of the organisation, rather than for personal gain. Furthermore, leaders require support in navigating tensions of workplace politics.

Capacity-building mechanisms could be guided by employee perceptions of a leader who uses political skill to manipulate an employee if the leader has a different social identity of race, gender, nationality, and language from the employee. Mechanisms support manipulative leaders to deal with potential employee resistance where leaders differ in terms of social identity from their employees (CHE, 2022; DHET, 2022; USAF, 2023). Leaders who ignore navigating workplace politics of transformation face negative career outcomes of ostracization, lack of power, and exiting the organisation. Leaders should become aware of approaches to workplace politics as claiming to not play workplace politics has outcomes for employees such as reduced access to opportunities in the workplace.

On the contrary, a leader ought to develop the use of political skill to collaborate with employees who are similar to the leader based on race, gender, nationality, and language social identity categories, for the transformation of the organisation to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. Training and development, executive education, and measurement instruments should enhance collaborative leaders' ability to exercise political skill on employees in the context of transformation (CHE, 2022; DHET, 2022; USAF, 2023). Leaders and employees should pay attention to political influence and diversity groups as a means to foster the transformation of workplaces. The observation highlights the need for leaders and employees to bring their salient social identities of authenticity rather than silencing or covering up identity to fit in and get ahead at work.

Capacity mechanisms draw from perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill to work and support employees if the leader has a similar social identity of gender to that of the employee. The absence of political skill in the education of leaders to drive the organisational agenda means that those who have political skill get ahead, have ideas adopted, and are generally supported even if the leader's conduct is counter-productive (CHE, 2022). However, leaders ought to be sensitised in seeking gender different employees, particularly gender minorities who are underrepresented in organisations creating a need for gender transformation in the workplace. The call for action is the use of appropriate gender pronouns to avoid offending others and including gender minorities for belonging and improved self-esteem

Employees give leaders feedback on their political skill capabilities in a safe environment for an upward 360-degree performance appraisal feedback generated by an external consultancy firm. Self-awareness about perceptions of alternative multiple identities assists in developing appropriate tactics for influencing employees by minimising misunderstandings, tensions, and exclusions. The 360 degree includes a measure of the political skill of the leader and areas of improvement. On the other hand, 360-degree can assist employees to reflect on reactions to a leader's capability to exercise political skill in the workplace.

Mechanisms and measurements ought to be used to enable collaborative leaders to apply political skill to leverage employee cooperation based on similarity as a means of addressing diverse employees with limited opportunities and resources towards transforming the organisation. Leaders should build alliances across ingroups to understand differences in employees to foster trust and credibility as a foundation for collaboration (Ferris et al., 2018). For example, the need to ensure women are represented at high levels of the organisation relies on men and women as well as other gender identities to drive gender transformation. The study further proposes the significance of leaders in understanding the progression of transformation in guiding the focus area of gender, rather than race, nationality, and language aspects of social identity differences when influencing employees.

Policymakers should investigate whether legislations like affirmative action and broad black economic empowerment serve to transform society. There is a need to review whether the nature of legislation for transformation should be revised to reflect a changing context. For example, in South Africa apartheid emphasised the separation of individuals based on race and language primarily (DHET, 2022). In democratic South Africa, policymakers should look into salient social identity categories that are relevant at a certain stage in the transformation journey. The policy positions can then inform guidelines and practices of organisations for

leaders and employees to follow. Leaders and employees foreground professional identity rather than race, gender, and nationality which may have a class dimension.

6.2.3 Methodological

The study contributes a survey cross-sectional research design and method that takes into account the South African context. Given South Africa's divisive history of multiple social identities, the adopted research design and method of the study was sensitive to context, building on previous research (Kacmar et al., 2010; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). The apartheid system of segregation meant that South Africans were divided according to race and language with differentiated development, violence, and exclusions. In democratic South Africa, the dispensation promoted the inclusion and integration of different social groups across races and languages. Therefore, South Africa becomes an interesting context to understand diversity and workplace politics between leaders and employees in the workplace where black African people are a majority and white people are a minority. The study contributes a unique sample of respondents in a unique setting to methodology.

The measurement instrument was piloted to ensure respondents were not offended by statements on, for example, race, gender, language, and nationality social categories used to find out about differences between leaders and employees (Maher, et al., 2020). For example, the term coloured is used in the South African context to denote a race based on government categorisations devised under apartheid (Census, 2022). Furthermore, language can unearth questions of origin, migration as well as inclusion and exclusion. The study used language rather than ethnicity as language would be more acceptable as a social identity category from an employee and their direct managers. The research instrument that incorporates a leader's political skill, social identity, manipulation, collaboration, resistance, and cooperation should be used in future studies to examine workplace politics and transformation.

6.3 Research limitations

While the study has many strengths, there were limitations in conducting the research. Even though the study adopted a cross-sectional design study using a singular data source that addressed the research question, this may be viewed as a manner of limitation. Yet, the cross-sectional method was most appropriate for conducting the research and answering the research question on the influence of social identity differences of race, gender, nationality, and language on political skill between a leader and employees.

The study collected data from a singular side of a relationship between employee perceptions of their direct manager, which may be viewed as a limitation, despite the study focusing on employee perceptions of a direct manager. The study collected data from employee perceptions' perspectives' to examine the reactions towards a leader's political skill and influence tactics, rather than asking the leader about their political skill. The study investigated the relational identity perspectives in a more nuanced way. Furthermore, the study used a census approach to conducting the research which may be perceived as a limitation. Yet, the study used a census approach at individual unit of analysis against their immediate manager in the workplace.

As a further limitation, in the case of South Africa, labour legislation detailed in the Employment Equity Act and business legislation of black economic empowerment, emphasis was placed on race and gender identities, which could not apply to more social identities of nationality and language as was the case in the study. Given the tensions around migration and xenophobia, the study added nationality and language as multiple identities between leaders and employees. However, further social identities such as ethnicity were not included in the study, which may viewed as a limitation. Instead, the study used language as a form of identifying differences between leaders and employees during the transformation of an organisation to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

6.4 Directions for future research

Since the study was cross-sectional using a quantitative design, future studies can investigate whether perceptions of race become more nuances over time through a qualitative and longitudinal study. Since the study found that differences in social identity contributed to employee perceptions of a leader who exercised political skill to influence employees at individual units of analysis in a singular sector, future studies should explore team political skill

of diverse individuals in other sectors, to foreground political influence within and across teams. As the study identified gender similarity as an important driver of preference for leader political skill rather than race, nationality, and language social categories, future studies can examine whether different gender identities experience workplace politics in insightful ways. In addition, the study could include employees and leaders in the same organisation respectively, where leaders share the same level of power.

Since the study found that gender similarity was more salient than race and gender social categories, future studies could investigate whether interventions such as affirmative action need to be revisited to consider the identity of gender difference. For example, there could be a tipping point for when interventions such as affirmative action could take a different form, be discontinued, or be tied to further requirements. Future studies could probe the assumptions about gender similarity during transformation drawing from feminist and intersectional perspectives to further understand the role of gender in the wake of tensions created by *wokism* and other movements with implications for organisational politics around the world. The research could assist leaders in better-managing organisations that are transforming and becoming more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

Since the study used linear analysis of relationships between constructs of interest, future studies can investigate non-linear relationships between constructs around social identity and workplace politics. While the study has examined many constructs in an interesting context about differences, future studies can examine further outcomes of workplace politics on turnover intentions and counterproductive work behaviours. The outcomes could arise where the nature of politics is no longer bearable for employees and leaders. Therefore, questions of boundaries of turnover intentions and counterproductive work behaviours could be an area of further research.

Finally, organisational politics can affect employee well-being which may lead to stress and lack of job satisfaction in the workplace. It would be interesting to investigate the conditions under which workplace politics has unfavourable outcomes for employee well-being. Overall, future studies can explore more outcomes of political skill such as well-being, turnover intention, job satisfaction, counterproductive work behaviours, and stress to extend understanding of workplace politics in theory and practice.

6.5 Conclusion summary

The study examines employee perceptions of a leader who exercises political skill with employees where differences exist between them in terms of race, gender, nationality, and language. The study shows that such differences of social identity contributed to employee perceptions in a leader who uses political skill. In contrast, employees are more likely to cooperate with a collaborative leader if the leader and employee share a similar social identity based on gender. The study suggests that race, language, and nationality differences play a lesser role than gender similarity if a leader exercises political skill to influence diverse employees during the transformation of an organisation to become more inclusive, diverse, and equitable. The study infuses social identity into extending political influence theory by means of which leaders can use political skill to influence diverse employees.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire of the study

Leader political skill and employee reactions: A social-political perspective

Greetings Respondent,

As a Doctor of Philosophy student in Business at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, I, Baphiwe Daweti, am conducting research on employee perceptions of influence from a leader at your organisation. The study may assist leaders to better influence employees. You have been selected to participate in the study, hence this request for consent to participate. You are invited to complete the following survey, which should take you about 15 minutes to complete.

Kindly note:

Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate.
Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed for the study.
There are no anticipated risks associated with participation.
There is no remuneration for participating in the study.
A summary of aggregated results will be shared.

By clicking on the hyperlink and completing the survey, you confirm that you understood the above and, of your own free will, give consent to participate in the study. Kindly note that this research has been granted ethical clearance by the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria with reference number: 20824468. I have been granted permission to conduct research at your organisation. Should you have any further questions, kindly contact me, the researcher, Baphiwe Daweti, at 20824468@mygibs.co.za. Alternatively, please contact my research supervisor, Prof. Albert Wöcke at wockea@gibs.co.za. For any concerns regarding the way this research was conducted, please contact the ethics research chair, Prof. Gavin Price at priceg@gibs.co.za

Thank you

http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20(4).2022.04

Aa. Consent

Indicate ONE response to indicate your choice on statements below.

Consent form

Study title: Leader political skill and employee reactions: A social-political perspective

Researcher: BAPHIWE DAWETI

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Baphiwe Daweti, about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study with an ethical clearance number 20824468. I have received, read, and understood information regarding the study. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex and age, will be anonymously processed into a study report.

In view of the requirements of the research, I agree that data collected during this study can be processed into a computerised system by the researcher. I may, at any stage and without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and, of my own free will, declare myself prepared to participate in the study. I understand that significant new findings developed during the research relating to my participation will be made available to me.

I have read and understood the statement of agreement above.

☐ I give consent to participate in the study.

☐ I do not give consent to participate in the study.

1. My personal information

Indicate ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

1.1 Please choose ONE response to indicate your age range.

☐ 1. 18 - 35

☐ 2. 36 - 45

☐ 3. 46 - 65

☐ 4. 66 and over

1.1 Please choose ONE response to indicate your race.

☐ 1. Black African

☐ 2. Coloured

☐ 3. Indian/Asian

☐ 4. White

☐ 5. Other

1.2a If you chose “other” in the previous statement about race, please specify

_____

1.3 Please choose ONE response to indicate your gender.

- [ ] 1. Male
- [ ] 2. Female
- [ ] 3. Prefer not to say
- [ ] 4. Other

1.3a If you chose “other” in the previous statement on gender, please specify

_____

1.4 Please choose ONE response to indicate your home language.

- [ ] 1. isiZulu
- [ ] 2. English
- [ ] 3. isiXhosa
- [ ] 4. Afrikaans
- [ ] 5. Sesotho
- [ ] 6. Setswana
- [ ] 7. Tshivenda
- [ ] 8. Sepedi
- [ ] 9. isiNdebele
- [ ] 10. SiSwati
- [ ] 11. Xitsonga

☐ 12. Other

1.4a If you chose “other” in the previous statement about home language, please specify.

_____

1.5 Please choose ONE response to indicate your nationality.

☐ 1. South African

☐ 2. Non-South African

1.5a If you chose “non-South African” in the previous statement about nationality, please specify.

_____

1.6 Please choose ONE response to indicate your job title.

☐ 1. Junior lecturer/developmental lecturer

☐ 2. Lecturer

☐ 3. Senior lecturer

☐ 4. Associate professor

☐ 5. Full professor

☐ 6. Associate director

☐ 7. Director

1.7 Please choose ONE response to indicate your type of employment (job).

☐ 1. Permanent

☐ 2. Temporary

1.8 Please choose ONE response to indicate years of experience with your current employer.

☐ 1. Less than 1 year

☐ 2. 1 – 5 years

☐ 3. 6 - 10 years

☐ 4. 11 -15 years

☐ 5. 16- 25 years

☐ 6. 26 years and over

2. My direct manager's personal information

The following statements indicate your views about your direct manager.

2.1 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's age range.

☐ 1. 18 - 35

☐ 2. 36 - 45

☐ 3. 46 - 65

☐ 4. 66 and over

2.2 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's race.

- ☐ 1. Black African
- ☐ 2. Coloured
- ☐ 3. Indian/Asian
- ☐ 4. White
- ☐ 5. Other

2.2a If you chose "other" in the previous statement about your direct manager's race, please specify

_____

2.3 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's gender.

- ☐ 1. Male
- ☐ 2. Female
- ☐ 3. Prefer not to say
- ☐ 4. Other

2.3a If you chose "other" in the previous statement about your direct manager's gender, please specify

_____

2.4 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's home language.

☐ 1. isiZulu

☐ 2. English

☐ 3. isiXhosa

☐ 4. Afrikaans

☐ 5. Sesotho

☐ 6. Setswana

☐ 7. Tshivenda

☐ 8. Sepedi

☐ 9. isiNdebele

☐ 10. SiSwati

☐ 11. Xitsonga

☐ 12. Other

2.4a If you chose "other" for the previous statement about your direct manager's home language, please specify

_____

2.5 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's nationality.

☐ 1. South African

☐ 2. Non-South African

2.5a If you chose "non-South African" in the previous statement about your direct manager's nationality, please specify

_____

2.6 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's job title.

☐ 1. Lecturer

☐ 2. Senior lecturer

☐ 3. Associate professor

☐ 4. Full professor

☐ 5. Associate director

☐ 6. Director

☐ 7. Chair of council

2.7 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's position.

☐ 1. Deputy Head of Department

☐ 2. Head of Department/School/ Academic Leader

☐ 3. Deputy Dean of Faculty/College

☐ 4. Dean of Faculty/College

☐ 5. Deputy Vice-Chancellor

☐ 6. Vice Chancellor

☐ 7. Chair of Council

2.8 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your direct manager's type of employment (job).

☐ 1. Permanent

☐ 2. Temporary

2.9 In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate the years of management experience of your direct manager.

☐ 1. Less than 1 year

☐ 2. 1 – 5 years

☐ 3. 6 - 10 years

☐ 4. 11 -15 years

☐ 5. 16- 25 years

☐ 6. 26 years and over

3. Understanding an employee (Employee-perceived leader political skill**)**

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3.1	My direct manager spends a lot of time networking with me at work.					
3.2	My direct manager makes me feel comfortable at work.					
3.3	My direct manager communicates with me easily.					
3.4	My direct manager gets along with me easily.					
3.5	My direct manager understands me very well.					
3.6	My direct manager is good at building a relationship with influential employees at work.					
3.7	My direct manager is good at sensing the hidden agendas of employees.					
3.8	My direct manager tries to be genuine when communicating with me.					
3.9	My direct manager is well-connected to influential people at work.					
3.10	My direct manager spends a lot of time developing a connection with me at work.					
3.11	My direct manager is good at getting me to like them.					
3.12	My direct manager is sincere when communicating with me.					
3.13	My direct manager shows a genuine interest in me.					
3.14	My direct manager is good at using networks to make things happen at work.					
3.15	My direct manager has a good sense about how to present themselves to me.					
3.16	My direct manager always seems to instinctively know the right things to say to influence me.					
3.17	My direct manager pays close attention to my facial expression.					

4: A social group is formed based on aspects like race, gender, nationality, and language. (Employee-perceived social identity**)**

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4.1	I belong to a social group that is different from my direct manager's social group.					
4.2	I get along with my direct manager's social group.					
4.3	My direct manager feels that my social group is not effective.					
4.4	My direct manager respects my social group.					
4.5	My direct manager feels that my social group is effective.					
4.6	I belong to a social group which is similar to my direct manager's social group.					
4.7	My direct manager's view about my social group is important to me.					
4.8	My direct manager's social group has very little to do with how I feel about myself.					
4.9	My direct manager's social group is an important reflection of who I am.					
4.10	I am a worthy member of my social group.					
4.11	I feel that I do not have much to offer to my social group.					
4.12	I cooperate with members of my social group.					
4.13	I often regret that I belong to my social group.					
4.14	I am glad to be a member of my social group.					
4.15	I often feel that my social group is not worthy.					
4.16	I feel good about belonging to my social group.					
4.17	My social group is not an important reflection of who I am.					
4.18	I belong to a social group which is important to the kind of person I am.					
4.19	Belonging to a social group is important to my self-image.					

5: Employee-perceived leader influence tactic (*manipulation*)

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
5.1	My direct manager makes me feel important.					
5.2	My direct manager acts humble before making a request to me.					
5.3	My direct manager acts in a friendly manner before asking me for something.					
5.4	My direct manager makes me feel good before making a request.					
5.5	My direct manager inflates the importance of request made to me.					
5.6	My direct manager praises me before making a request.					
5.7	My direct manager sympathises with me about added problems from a request.					
5.8	My direct manager waits until I am in a receptive mood before making a request.					
5.9	My direct manager shows a need for help from me.					
5.10	My direct manager makes a request to me in a polite manner.					
5.11	My direct manager pretends to let me decide to do something.					

6: Employee-perceived leader influence tactic (*collaboration*)

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6.1	My direct manager obtains my support to back up a request.					
6.2	My direct manager approaches me formally to make a request.					
6.3	My direct manager offers resources for me to perform a task.					
6.4	My direct manager does personal favours for me.					
6.5	My direct manager offers an exchange to me to act on a request.					
6.6	My direct manager reminds me of past favours done for me.					
6.7	My direct manager offers to help if I act on a request					

7: Employee reaction (*resistance*)

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
7.1	I notify another manager if my direct manager takes advantage of me.					
7.2	I stop working with my direct manager if my direct manager takes advantage of me.					
7.3	I engage in work slowdown if my direct manager takes advantage of me.					
7.4	I ignore my direct manager if my direct manager takes advantage of me.					
7.5	I get along with my direct manager.					
7.6	I stop being friendly with my direct manager if my direct manager takes advantage of me.					
7.7	My direct manager distorts reasons for making a request to me.					

8: Employee-perceived leader influence tactic (*cooperation*)

In your view, please choose ONE response to indicate your choice for each statement below.

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
8.1	I comply with my direct manager's request.					
8.2	I support my direct manager's request.					
8.3	I feel eager to work with my direct manager.					
8.4	I feel frustrated by working with my direct manager.					
8.5	I share information with my direct manager at work.					
8.6	I communicate with my direct manager with ease.					

Any other comments maybe added

Thank you

Appendix B: Construct variance

1. Employee-perceived social identity

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.434	23.339	23.339	4.434	23.339	23.339	3.768	19.833	19.833
2	3.198	16.830	40.169	3.198	16.830	40.169	2.525	13.290	33.124
3	1.439	7.572	47.740	1.439	7.572	47.740	1.950	10.263	43.387
4	1.383	7.281	55.022	1.383	7.281	55.022	1.640	8.633	52.019
5	1.107	5.828	60.850	1.107	5.828	60.850	1.367	7.196	59.215
6	1.013	5.330	66.180	1.013	5.330	66.180	1.323	6.964	66.180

2. Employee-perceived leader influence tactic (*manipulation*)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.312	39.197	39.197	4.312	39.197	39.197	2.778	25.252	25.252
2	1.794	16.308	55.505	1.794	16.308	55.505	2.198	19.983	45.235
3	1.062	9.655	65.160	1.062	9.655	65.160	2.192	19.925	65.160

3. Employee-perceived leader influence tactic (*collaboration*)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.349	33.553	33.553	2.349	33.553	33.553	2.002	28.599	28.599
2	1.430	20.434	53.987	1.430	20.434	53.987	1.777	25.388	53.987

4. Employee reaction (*resistance*)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.629	37.553	37.553	2.629	37.553	37.553	2.158	30.830	30.830
2	1.241	17.731	55.284	1.241	17.731	55.284	1.712	24.454	55.284

5. Employee reaction (*cooperation*)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.836	47.271	47.271	2.836	47.271	47.271	2.381	39.678	39.678
2	1.112	18.529	65.800	1.112	18.529	65.800	1.567	26.122	65.800

Appendix C: Kurtosis scores for collaboration variable

Variable	N	Mean	Standard	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std error	Statistic	Std. error
Collaboration	204	2.709	.622	.137	.170	.266	.339

Appendix D: Ethics clearance letter

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

29 August 2022

Baphiwe Daweti

Dear Baphiwe

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.
Kind Regards

GIBS Doctoral Research Ethical Clearance Committee

Doctoral Chair Signature

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Appendix E: Language editing certificate

PRO EDIT PTY LTD
PO BOX 23081, CLAREMONT CAPE TOWN 7735 | +27 21 813 6997

EDITING CERTIFICATE

Date: 2024/04/01

This serves to confirm that the document entitled:

Leader political skill and employee reactions:
A social-political perspective
by
Baphiwe Daweti

has been language edited on behalf of its author.

Genevieve Wood
PhD candidate
Wits University