Role of Organisational Politics in the Career Progression of Functional and Executive Level Managers

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

7th November 2018

ABSTRACT

This research explores the factors of organisational politics that affect the career progression of senior executives in organisations through a qualitative exploration among 15 executives having working experience in emerging markets like South Africa, India and others to shed more in depth light on the value of organisational politics. The findings revealed that the need and value of politics is determined by perception of politics, enablers of politics and the developments that take place in the workplace. Perception of Politics may be positive or negative or both. Findings suggests that human nature, ambitions, insecurity, diversity, company culture, mindset, need for recognition, and hidden agendas may be the enablers or drivers of politics in organisations. New technology and procedural developments may have an effect on the value of politics. Moreover, findings showed that political skills and ability to respond to political situations may determine career progression of individuals. Ethics plays a key role in developing positive politics in a system.

Recommendations are made for organisations to understand the dynamics of politics and develop skills to manage politics for career progression and organisational goal attainment, and for individuals to develop suitable political skills and value the role of mentorship in coping with and managing politics.

KEYWORDS

Organisational politics, political behaviour, political skills, career progression

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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CHAPTER 1:   PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1   Introduction

The introduction of this research is depicted with a hypothetical problem or a case that many organisations can be faced with in real life. ABC, a known Multi-national firm needs human skills (knowledge workforce) and talent to perform well.

Sam, a young bright professional and an honours post graduate joined the ABC firm with an ambition to excel, display his skills and improve his grade within the organisation, After working at ABC for five years, he develops his domain/functional skills and expertise and does a good job in completing the given tasks within the given deadlines. Sam is eventually recognised and becomes known in the company because of his domain knowledge and his function in the field. Moreover, considering his commitment and efficiency in carrying his duties, Sam's supervisor, who is also his mentor, promotes him. In a team of ten young professionals, he is promoted to the manager position with responsibilities of overseeing a team of junior professionals and coordinating with the senior management.

Years later, Sam resigns from his job due to non-performance and inability to cope with present stress at his job. He faces some political challenges that make his job difficult. The company, therefore, loses a talented individual. What could have been done by ABC as an organisation, to manage such staff attrition?

How could Sam have been assisted to equip himself for his career progression in ABC firm? This may not be an ABC problem only, as Sam may face the same challenges in other organisations as well. What were the critical areas in which Sam needed to understand in order to enable him to be a good manager and to enhance his performance?

1.2   Business and Academic Rationale

Managers' career progression is important for organisational growth and for succession planning. Organisations will benefit from skilled managers. Competition is common within and outside organisations. For organisations to survive in the competitive market, they need to have good leadership with effective succession planning strategies. This can be achieved

when there is a clear and effective organisational career progression path and when managers have been retained and equipped with the necessary skills to grow in their career. The human resources management must tap into and develop these skills as they can help managers in their career progression.

This research will explore how political skills are important variables to the process of the managers' career progression in an organisation. In the upcoming literature section, the understanding of terminologies such as career progression and other constructs of this research are discussed to create a platform for this study.

This research explores the modalities of addressing this business problem and creates a framework related to organisational politics and career progression in organisations.

Various literature and organisational experience determine the importance of politics in the corporate world. A series of literature has been written and reviewed on the studies carried out on organisational politics for decades, yet there remains aspects of politics that need to be explored and these aspects will be seen in this chapter and discussed in detail in the forthcoming sections of this report.

Referring to history, Claessen & Skalník (1978) and Bosworth (2001) reference various literature on kingdoms such as the Mauryan State, Ancient Egypt State, and Conquest and Empire and they argue that it may be said that power and politics played a significant role in the historical kingdoms and empires. The then political scenario and strategy of the referred kingdoms and empires may be translated to today's corporate world, as it may well be compared to organisational politics where there is a race for occupying positions, acquiring resources and safeguarding jobs.

Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen (2010) argue that the human species possesses psychological attributes that manifest from a natural selection. The authors also state that human nature has changed over time to fundamental conditions that exist in work places. This human nature can lead to self-interest behaviour when it clashes with organisational threats and opportunities. This eventually leads to organisational politics.

Zaleznik (1970) buttresses this view when he highlights that, "Whatever else organisations may be (problem-solving instruments, sociotechnical systems, reward systems, and so on), they are political structures".

Organisational politics has been observed in various forms and has got various implications which are known and some are unknown. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic (2014) concurs with this view when he argues that, "All organizations are political – and to some degree, they always will be. The underlying reasons are psychological….Indeed, we all know people who have perished for their inability to navigate office politics in spite of being talented, hard-working and having the best of intentions. In that sense, one may regard politics as an inevitable force of nature to which we must adapt in order to survive."

Significant research from as early as 1960 has been carried out on organisational politics and its effects. Most of the early decade articles have concentrated on the negative perceptions and effects of politics in the organisations; however, this topic has been of great interest to business as well as to academics for a long time now. Though it is of interest, there are facets of organisational politics that are still under exploration.

Ferris and Judge (1991) highlight the fundamental assumption that power and politics are the organisations' facts of life. Moreover, they argue that organisations consist of various individuals who have diverse interests and these are from interpersonal influence especially when it comes to allocation of scarce resources.

An important aspect that research has shown is the perception that politics has an impact on an organisation's image. Within modern liberal societies today, be it in a public or private enterprise, an organisation's image may be formed by its politics and may have a negative outcome in terms of its image, from the employees and society's perspectives (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory 2006). This underlines the importance of managing politics well from an organisation's image point of view. With this consideration, a great responsibility lies on the organisation's senior management and executives as they need to manage politics well.

Studies have indicated that individuals with political skills are better equipped in understanding the context through the acquisition of power, meeting job requirements,

managing stress and conforming to situational demands (Jarrett, 2017; Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas & Lux, 2007; Blickle, Schneider, Liu, & Ferris, 2011; Blickle, Ferris, Munyon, Momm, Zettler, Schneider, & Buckley, 2011a).

Baddeley and James (1987) argue that the myth and belief that organisations develop politically skilled managers may hamper the growth and culture of the organisations. These cultures and beliefs should not discourage the organisations from creating politically skilled managers who are able to manage the organisation's variety of challenges.

Baddeley and James (1987) postulate that despite growing reminders of the need to be aware of politics there is a scarcity of guidance on the actual skills involved in this field.

"But despite growing reminders of the need to be aware of politics, there is a scarcity of guidance on the actual skills involved. Unless management educators address the issue of political skill, 'political incompetence', as a description of failure, may become a catch-all like 'pilot error' , a phrase which locates the fault with someone who is often no longer around and gives the semblance of understanding to a mystery" (Baddeley & James, 1987, p.4).

Lawrence, Mauws & Dyck (2005) argue that employees need to be appropriately skilled in politics so that their ideas flow from one process to another. This may be seen as a positive effect. Cacciattolo (2015) further argues that managers must understand that organisations need active actors who are willing to engage in political behaviour that pushes ideas forward. Research brings out the significance of politics that the organisations can be dysfunctional or functional depending on their management.

Blickle, John, Ferris, Momm, Liu, Haag, Meyer, Weber and Oerder (2012) suggest that future research should concentrate on exploring the influence tactics that may be employed to mediate relationships between political skill and work outcomes.

Banister and Meriac (2015) highlight that; future research should be on examining political skill as a predictor to leadership effectiveness. Considering leadership as an important aspect in career progression, political skills and organisational politics need to be explored in

detail, thus this research pays attention to the given subject in order to address the highlighted aspects that were laid down by previous academics.

The answers to questions on the advancement of the dark skilled individuals still remain unexplored; issues such as how they can advance well are not clear including aspects that differentiate dark employees from the ones who pass through all the stages of the chain of organisation in their career successfully from those who fail to do (Templer, 2018).

Other aspects that include why politically dark employees perform well or why they merely create a perception of performance remain unexplored (Templer, 2018).

Findings from various researches have suggested numerous research opportunities including qualitative and quantitative research in the field of organisational politics (Landells & Albrecht, 2017). The authors argue that "Very little empirical research has explored how organizational members actually view organizational politics" (Landells & Albrecht, 2017, p.44).

Ladells and Albrecht (2017) argue that though most of the studies carried out in the field of organisational politics are biased towards the negative perception of the politics, the organisational politics or behaviour is viewed differently by different people according to their perspective of the subject. It is suggested in their research that further research is needed to establish which lens is more effective than the other between a reactive lens, which is an indisposed perspective to politics or a perspective of strategic and integrated approach to organisational politics. Further to this, it is suggested that the relationship between individual differences and the different lenses on organisational politics could also be investigated (Landells & Albrecht, 2017).

Blickle, Schneider et al (2011) carried out a quantitative study which revealed that political skills provide a positive correlation to position attainment, income, and career satisfaction. The author further postulates that, the mechanisms through which political skill influences performance and career outcomes require continuous investigation The author's study has created more research interest in the political perspectives on the organisations and on issues regarding the role of politics and political skill in job and career success.

Career progression in a similar line to Blickle's (2011) work will be focussed on in this research in order to explore the effectiveness of the political skills through a qualitative study. Zettler and Lang (2015) suggest the direction for future research to be towards the effects of political skills beyond job performance which includes issues such as salary, promotions and leadership that may be studied in detail to understand the phenomenon of a U-shaped relation which they have demonstrated in their research between political skills and job performance.

Hawkins and Miller (2006) suggest that when the times are turbulent, political actions get even more severe and it is important for organisations and leaders to enforce a positive political strategy that is built to deal with such times (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Thus, in current times when there is a volatile economy and conditions not so favourable, good political skills may play a role in helping individuals and organisations in meeting their goals and objectives thereby drawing the attention of organisational politics for today's business. Hawkins and Miller (2006) show the direction to the future researchers by understanding the effect of positive politics on culture, history and ethics of an organisation over a period (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006).

Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen, (2010) suggest that knowing the fact that political behaviour in organisations can never be eliminated considering the natural origins of politics is advisable in order to look at the more developmental learning approach. In an environment of uncertainty and where there is, resource scarcity and conflicts. Organisational politics motivates individuals on goals and tasks or actions in order to acquire rewards, resources and influence in pursuit of self-interest. Dysfunctional politics can cost an organisation as they can result in a negative effect in the employees' performance, stress, low employee morale and staff turnover. Therefore, a need arises for the human resource development programme to work towards lessening the dysfunctional politics in the organisation with a more developmental and learning oriented approach. This also signifies the need for leadership competency that emphasises positive politics (Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010).

The 4I framework involving intuition, interpretation, ingratiation and institutionalisation highlights the importance of power and politics in providing the social energy to transform the insights and facilitate organisational learning (Lawrence et al, 2005).

From various studies and academics, it is evident that organisational politics and political skills play a major role in the corporate world and in work lives of the managers and therefore, it is important to understand this concept well by managing politics for organisational efficiency, organisational learning and for achieving organisational goals. At the same time, individuals grow in their career path by acquiring the required political skills and understanding of organisational politics. This research works as a step towards helping individuals and organisations towards their success in achieving their goals.

It is observed that a good number of studies on organisational politics were done and articles were written from the twentieth century until 2010. In comparison to earlier studies, good articles on the subject have been very limited in the last five years. In today's context where fast technological development and huge information flow is taking place, political skills play a role in contributing to a manager's career progression and success and this requires further exploration. Senior professionals or leaders can guide and mentor their juniors and mentor them on how organisations can benefit from leadership development and human resources development and this aspect is explored in this research. How good professionals can advance their career by neutralising dysfunctional politics and propagating positive politics, thus generally benefiting the organisation and creating a positive performing culture where employees like to work and remain motivated in achieving their goals towards organisational success is also explored in the research.

The success of individuals in the twenty first century with regards to managing politics is something that may not have been taken as a research area. How leaders reached the top positions, how managers accomplished their tasks well by managing politics, how effectively individuals can benefit by managing organisational politics in coming out with desired outcomes to result in an advancement in their jobs and career, are also some areas where research can be carried out in greater depth in current times.

The support that this study may provide organisations with is to link the career progression elements to political skills and organisational politics. This is a subject that various literature has suggested but it has not been a welcome topic for many managers and organisations to discuss and address openly, though it is observed from various studies and literature that organisational politics exists.

This study involves an understanding and collation of various aspects of the organisational politics, political skills, behaviour and career progression through the models and research carried out by academicians in their earlier studies. This includes the perception of the organisational politics (Landells & Albrecht, 2017), aspects of political skills (Ferris *et al* 2007), relation of political skills to the career success (Blickle *et al*, 2011)and the political model of managerial behaviour (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994) along with the ethical consideration of organisational politics.

1.3   Research objectives and purpose

This study explores organisational politics, political skills and career progression in detail in order to find some answers to the questions posed in some of the past researches.

1.3.1   Purpose statement

To explore the enablers' political behaviour and the skills that determine functional and executive level managers' career progression.

1.3.2   Sub Questions

1. How do the functional and executive level managers (senior executives) perceive political behaviour?

2. What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?

3. What enables political behaviour in organisations?

4. How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work and considering upcoming new technologies, innovation as well as new developments?

5. If the senior executives have to mentor somebody, what would their advice be on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?

CHAPTER 2:   THEORY BASE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

The previous chapter provided a clear and sufficient direction of this research project. This chapter advances the argument through the examination of the literature which is demonstrated through the constructs involved in this research. Organisational politics has been a topic of interest for a while and past researchers have done some significant work in this field. Literature demonstrates various facets of organisational politics, political skills, behaviour, human resources management, career progression, training and learning as well as ethics. This is highlighted by Blickle, Ferris, Munyon, Momm, Zettler, Schneider & Buckley, (2011, p.469) who argue that, "Theoretically, political skill represents a set of social effectiveness competencies that enable individuals to more effectively navigate the complexities of work environments, and the ambiguity of performance assessments across contexts". Literature also showcases the rich work carried out by other academics and this work has been used to provide a strong background for this research.

Vigoda (2006) highlights that organisational politics is a controversial and a common phenomenon in every organisation. Although it is common, little is known about its exact nature and boundaries. Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, (2006, p.xi) state that, "there is a growing need to fill in the missing pieces of this puzzle", as it has been a major step in contributing to the organsational politics field.

This research is contributing towards the missing links with the help of the work from various literature sources. In this chapter, the importance and need for political skills in order to be able to understand and train one in developing the ability to advance progress in one's career and also help the organisation in achieving its goals in today's modern world is explored.

Uncertainty, resource scarcity and conflict have been highlighted as the organisational conditions for organisational politics (Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010). In the changing world, increasing population, resource depletion, conditions of uncertainty and scarcity have been observed to be major factors affecting survival in the corporate world.

2.2   Career Progression

Career progression can be related to 'career successes. Career success can be defined from intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives. Some studies have revealed the subjective and objective aspects of career success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988). According to Schein (1971, p.402), "the career as defined by organisation is a set of expectations held by the individual inside the organisation that guide their decisions about whom to move, when, how and at what speed". Movement within an organisation can be vertically (rank & level), radially (as an insider element) and circumferentially (change of function or division) (Schein, 1971). The figure below depicts this understanding:

Figure 2.1: A Three-Dimensional Model of an Organization
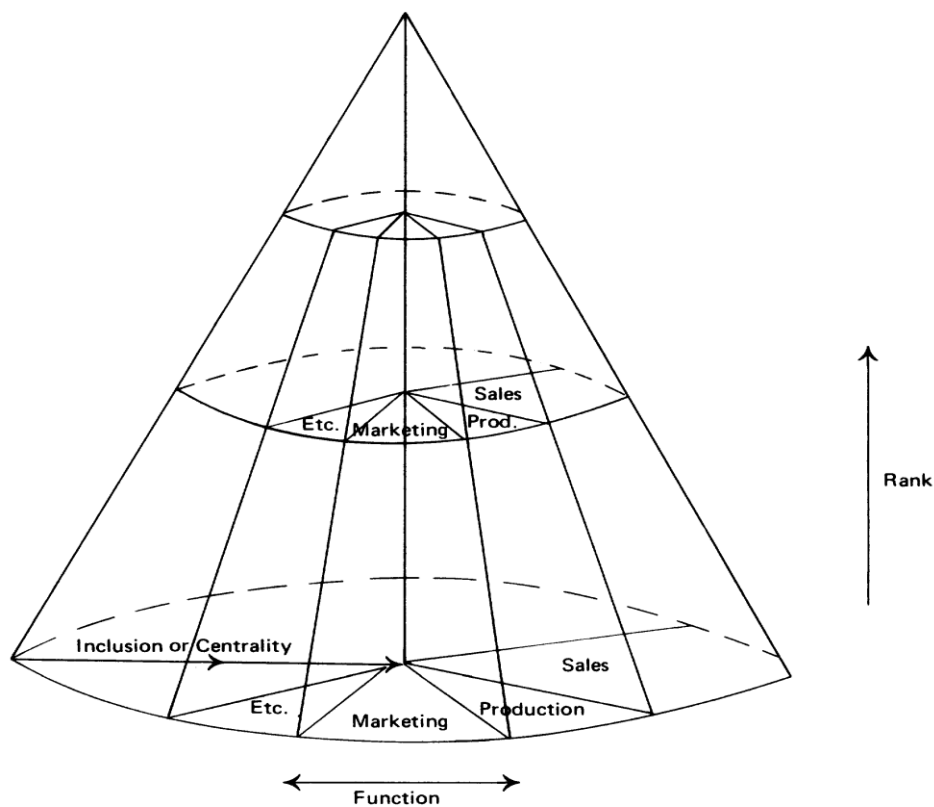
Source: Schein (1971; p. 404)

In this research, career progression is meant to be any one or more of the following (Schein, 1971; Blickle et al, 2011; Cacciattolo, 2015; Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005; Landells & Albrecht, 2017):

:

- A job advancement or job enlargement;

- Progression in an organisation such as climbing up the ladder;

- Getting access and control to better or larger resources;

- Larger monetary benefits;

- Better career development opportunities that include but are not limited to better roles, advanced training and skill development options;

- Activities or benefits that determine a better future for the individual;

- Attainment of better job security.

The above facets also consider the time period over which this has been achieved. If this is relatively achieved faster, it can be viewed as a better career progression for an individual. (Blickle et al 2011). Ismail and Reshani (2018) demonstrate that companies that fail to build effective career development systems for their employees fail to secure employee creativity. The authors also highlight that political skill arising as an important element for development of individuals is part of an individual's learning for career progression.

Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller as cited in Vigoda-Gadot and Drory (2006, p.331) postulate that leadership is, *"a political art rather than a strategic science".* Literature has suggested that organisations are a political set-up having power and influence tactics as the important elements to manage and operate. Landells and Albrecht, (2017) argue that, "Some of the benefits for individuals included career advancement, recognition, getting the job done, and promoting ideas. Some of the beneficial organisational outcomes included the achievement of organisational goals, improved decision-making, and improved communication".

Cacciattolo (2015) as well as Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) highlight the positive results of politics to include, "career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, attainment of personal and organisational goals, successful accomplishment of a job or policy implementation, and feelings of achievement, ego, control and success" (Vigoda & Kapun, 2005, p.256).

Many managers perceive politics in a negative way due to its association with unfairness, injustice, conflicts, turnovers, negative effects on organisational commitments and trust because of issues (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005; Vigoda and Drory, 2006, Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010). Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) state that when positive political competencies exist,

a conducive political environment that does not have injustice, unfairness and inequity is developed. Butcher and Clarke (2006) extend this argument that managers who are knowledgeable about the workplace's political domain can manage those political behaviours in order to stimulate equality (Cacciattolo, 2015).

Political skills are needed to effectively face and overcome the injustice, unfairness, and inequality and eventually pave the path for career progression or advancement.

Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen (2010) highlight the importance of politics and its prevalence in the organisations. It can be observed from their research that politics has been shown to be an important contributor to success within many organisations. The authors highlight how political skills can contribute to leadership skills and they also showcase the relevance of politics to work organisations by highlighting that thriving managers must become competent in politics.

Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen (2010) stipulate that various studies to establish the individual traits and organisational circumstances that are linked to political perceptions have been conducted, however, studies on the individual attributes of political contributors have been limited.

Kacmer and Baron (1999) have shown a collation of studies depicting a number of correlations (negative or positive) of personal characteristics with organisational politics. These include age, education, gender, locus of control, machiavellianism, need for power, race, self-esteem, self-monitoring, tenure, accountability, ambiguity, autonomy, career development, centralisation, cooperation, feedback, formalisation, hierarchical level, promotional opportunities, relationship with supervisor, size of organisation, skill variety, span of control and unionisation. These studies have varying outcomes on various characteristics. The findings on career development showed a negative correlation with organisational politics. On the other side, according to Luthans, Rosenkrantz & Hennessey (1985), there is a correlation between successful managers and the use of organisational politics. Further, the quantitative study of Blickle et al (2011) has shown political skill providing a positive correlation to position attainment, income and career satisfaction.

This research will explore this element in detail as well as highlight the political skills that support or do not support the managers' career progression.

2.3   Political Behaviour and Political Skills

Considerable attention has been given to politics until the last decade. However, there is no equitable amount of academic work that has been published in recent years. Literature suggests that as long as there are human interactions involved, there is scarcity of resources, competition and the need for power is existent in the organisations. This brings the need for political skills and behaviour to be explored in detail in order to understand how they can determine the managers' career progression in the organisations.

Political skill has been indicated as an individual's ability to appropriately choose the right behaviour or tactic such that it exhibits sincere behaviour that can be believed and trusted, thereby effectively disguising the individual's self-serving motive (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994). This is demonstrated where succession at General Motors was determined by the individual's skill in flattering his supervisor (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994).

Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas & Frink (2005); Ferris, Treadway, et.al (2007), Blickle, John, Ferris, Momm, Liu, Haag, Meyer, Weber and Oerder (2012), provide deeper insight on political behaviour, skill and its importance when they highlight that, "Political skill combines social understanding with the ability to adjust behavior to the demands of the situation in ways that inspire trust, confidence, and support, appear genuine, and effectively influence others" (Blickle, John et al 2012, p.299).

Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas and Lux (2007, p.291) define political skill as, "Political skill can be described as a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, with cognitive, affective, and behavioural manifestations". Examples of such expositions associating with peers, coercing colleagues, or paying close attention to verbal and non-verbal communication (Ferris, Treadway, et al, 2005). Political skill can also be defined as a hybrid of; political principles, thinking, feeling as well as acting. Research has also outlined that political skill can positively influence job performance (Blickle, Ferris, Munyon, Momm, Zettler, Schneider, & Buckley, 2011a; Hochwarter, Ferris, Gavin, Perrewé, Hall, & Frink, 2007; Zettler & Lang, 2015).

Political skill when compared to other social effectiveness skills that include but are not limited to emotional brilliance, self-efficacy and self-monitoring has been exhibited as the best indicator of managerial job performance (Semadar, Robins & Ferris, 2006).

Ferris, Davidson and Perrewe, (2005) as well as Ferris, Treadway, et.al (2007) conceptualise political skills under four critical dimensions which are social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity. Social astuteness comprises of good observation skills, understanding and interpretation of social interactions and others' behaviour as well as having the ability to attune to diverse social settings and being sensitive to others (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2007; Banister & Meriac, 2015). Interpersonal influence is, "unassuming and convincing personal style that exerts a powerful influence on others" (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2007, 292). It includes flexibility in adapting to different situations, people and goals. Networking ability defines the ability to develop friendships and build strong beneficial alliances through the identification and development of diverse contacts. Apparent sincerity is about being perceived as sincere or genuine individual and not possessing any ulterior motives (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2007; Banister & Meriac, 2015).

Politically skilled people have social skills that augment their personal and/or company goals through their knowledge and their interactions at work. Politically skilled are aware of themselves and others and this enables them network and adjust their behaviour to various contexts. This allows the politically skilled people to have influence over others because they are not viewed as manipulative. They appear to be highly genuine and as people of integrity which in turn makes them trustworthy. These competencies allow the politically skilled individuals to create useful networks that they can use for additional influence. Politically skilled individuals can manage various people with dissimilar interests. This claim is supported by Blickle et al. (2011a) who suggest a positive relationship between multiple-rater assessments of political skill and multiple-rater assessments of job performance. The authors argue that there is great support for ambidexterity skill (Smith, 2009; Blickle, John, Ferris, Momm, Liu, Haag, Meyer, Weber & Oerder, 2012).

Bannister and Merriac (2015) argue that an individual who possesses political skills may have better ability to understand the organisation's social norms and environment and must be able to adapt to that environment better, resulting in the creation of a better perception of

his superiors. This ultimately leads to better performance, good rating and better career advancement (Banister & Meriac, 2015).

Figure 2.2: Meta-Theoretical Framework of Political Skill

Political Skill Effects on Self	Political Skill Effects on Others	Political Skill Effects on Groups and
Intra-psychic Processes • Personal resources development • Personal goals	**Interpersonal Processes** • Influence tactics and strategies • Networking and positioning • Coalition building	**Group-level Processes** • Establishment of vision • Diagnosis of team climate • Facilitation of team member interaction

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Source: Ferris, Treadway, et al., (2007; p.300)

The four political skills dimensions constitute broader political skill constructs. A high degree of political skill can be associated with persons who are knowledgeable about themselves and their social setting. People will change their behaviour to enable themselves to fit into the organisation's culture or their situations in order to obtain the desired target outcomes. Individuals who have high levels of political skill can conceal their underlying intentions so that they can maximize their legitimacy, authenticity and sincerity. Such people should comprehend an organisation's culture and must be innovative enough to find better ways to enhance their performance. It is therefore, anticipated that politically skilled persons will be content with their job and have fewer reasons for leaving their current employment (Banister & Meriac, 2015).

Paadi (2014) refers to the essential components in terms of the skills that are required to enhance one's ability to become employable. One of the skills that determine employability is the generic skills. These are defined by Paadi (2014) as being similar to the political skills constructs that are highlighted by Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas and Lux (2007).

Drory and Vigoda (2010) have presented political skills aspects and behaviour extensively and have highlighted their relation to human resource management. Two major components of the model are political skills and the use of influence behaviour (Ferris & King, 1991). Bacharach (2005) distinguishes between two types of political skills that help individuals build coalitions and maintain them in the long run. The "positive" political skills include but are not limited to persuasion, rationality, exchange and impression management. The negative political skills include amongst others; sanctions, manipulations, and cohesiveness. Positive politics is present when there are individuals who can use positive influence and try to avoid negative behaviours. Positive political skills are important for an effective political environment and for companies that do not have harmful aftermaths of negative political tactics. A useful Human Resource Management (HRM) system must have positive political skills. An HRM system that uses legitimate political skills may be regarded highly with respect to amongst others equity, fairness and willingness to invest effort (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010).

Political skills were also notably an indicator of high overall job performance ratings both cross-sectionally and predictively (Blickle, Kramer, Schneider, Meurs, Ferris, Mierke, Witzki, & Momm, 2011b; Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewé, Weitz, & Xu, 2007).

Various scholars further argue that, "Among other things, this idea is built on the reasoning that individuals with high levels of political skill have an appropriate understanding of the (hidden) intentions and needs of their organisation, colleagues, or customers, a substantial network, and the competence to strategically adapt their behaviour and, in this way, can influence their environment to their own advantage. Accordingly, it has been suggested that individuals with high levels of political skill are likely to, for instance, get colleagues to support them, assert themselves in negotiations or sales conversations, or render access to resources such as back-up staff, technical equipment, or budgets, actions that all supposedly help them to perform better" (Zettler & Lang, 2015, p.543).

On the other hand, Zettler and Lang (2015) have provided the other aspect of the argument when they argue that, research has suggested that high levels of political skill are not associated with the highest levels of job performance when an existence of high levels of conscientiousness or procedural and distributive justice or organisational politics are observed. A few studies have, however, indicated that it is not guaranteed that the highest levels of political skill always result in high production levels (Zettler & Lang, 2015).

Zettler and Lang (2010) have discussed the concepts of political skills and job performance in their article *Employees' Political Skill and Job Performance: An Inverted U-Shaped Relation as shown in Figure 2.3.*

Zettler and Lang (2015) have also shown that, political skill can be linked to job performance. This is because people do not prefer employees who are highly politically skilled and they expect this notion to yield interpersonal costs for the said individuals and this can affect production levels. In addition, an excess of political skill can contrast with organisational effectiveness politicking can be done at the expense of organisational effectiveness (Zettler & Lang, 2015).

Figure 2.3: Different models of the relation between political skill and job performance
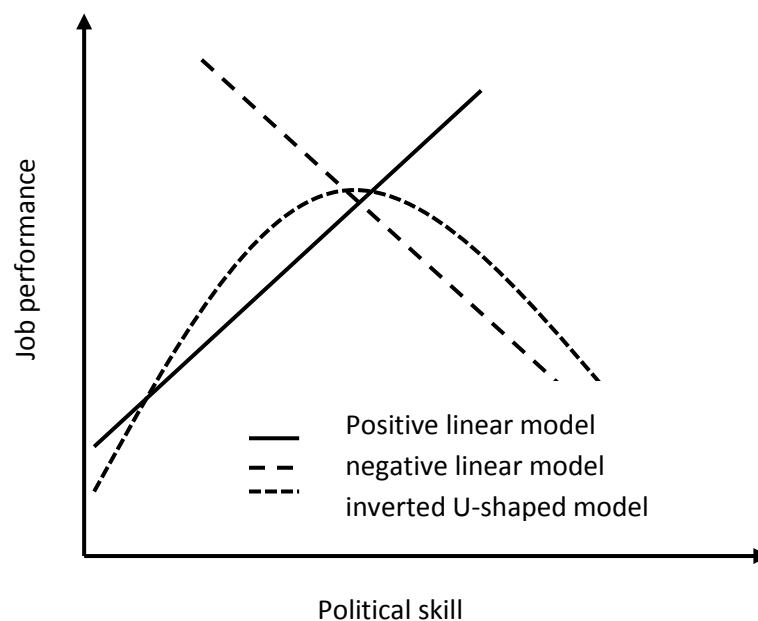
Source: Zettler & Lang (2015; p.548)

Further to Zettler & Lang model, according to Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris and Hochwarter (2008), political skills supersede self-efficacy in contextual job performance prediction.

A wider aspect on political model and managerial behaviour is shown below in Fig 2.4. The model shows the relationship between various elements with the political behaviour and related consequences (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994).

Models discussed in this chapter become the basis for the research carried out on the subject and creates a foundation for further development and exploration of these constructs.

Figure 2.4: Political Model of Managerial Behaviour
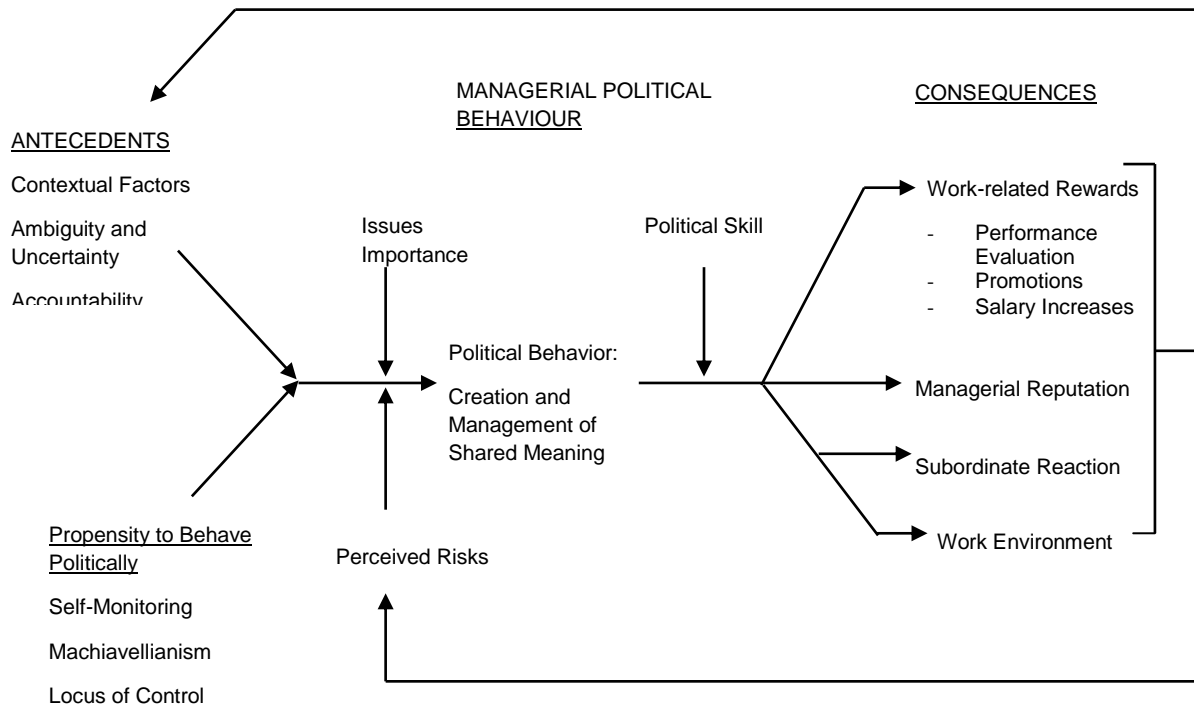
Source: Ferris, Fedor & King (1994; p.8)

Baddeley and James (1987) presented a quadrant diagram – Fig 2.5 to demonstrate the owl, fox, donkey or sheep behaviour in terms of the descriptive model of political behaviour. This demonstrates how an individual can be placed based on their extent of political awareness and acting with integrity. This demonstrates how a 'Wise' – 'Owl' can be beneficial to an organisation if they are politically aware as well as if they act with integrity (Baddeley & James, 1987).

Figure 2. 5: Descriptive Model of Political Behaviour

Source: Baddeley & James (1987; p.18)
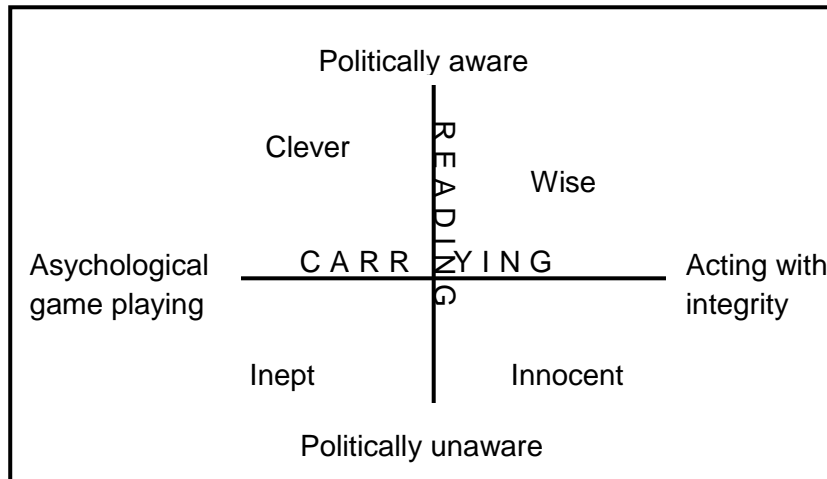
Political skill may also include but are not limited to disguising selfishness; appearing genuine and effectively influencing others; networking; persuasion; assertiveness; ingratiation; impression management; manipulation and Flattering skills. Depending on the situation and need, managers may apply one or more of the above elements to meet the desired objectives.

Kacmar and Baron (1999) highlight the set of basic principles on which the influence tactics usually rest. If any individual has a liking or has a feeling of friendship towards someone it is likely that the individual will comply with any request. If any individual has committed to any position, there is a high probability of experiencing a strong pressure within the individual to comply with a situation or request in relation to it. Scarcity emphasises value in an inverse proportion. Reciprocity is another principle of strong tactic to give back what has been received. Social validation is effective to influence and get the request done when there is a motive of being in line with social validation. Authority is a strong way to get things done well in comparison to the situation where any person is lacking authority. These principles and tactics can be used by persons engaging in organisational politics (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). The authors suggest that organisational politics may be related to motivation and leadership.

Ferris and King (1991) (as cited from (Drory & Vigoda, 2010; P 196) have devised a framework that shows the political influence in Personnel/Human Resource Management

and at a dyadic level of analysis. This analysis indicates the notions of political behaviour (leads to liking) or perceptions that fit the situation and may have consequence on outcomes to Human resource management decisions (Ferris & King 1991; Drory & Vigoda, 2010).

The model in Fig 2.6 depicts this relationship that will be further explored in the research.

Figure 2.6: The Politics in Human Resources decisions

Source: Drory & Vigoda (2010; p.196)
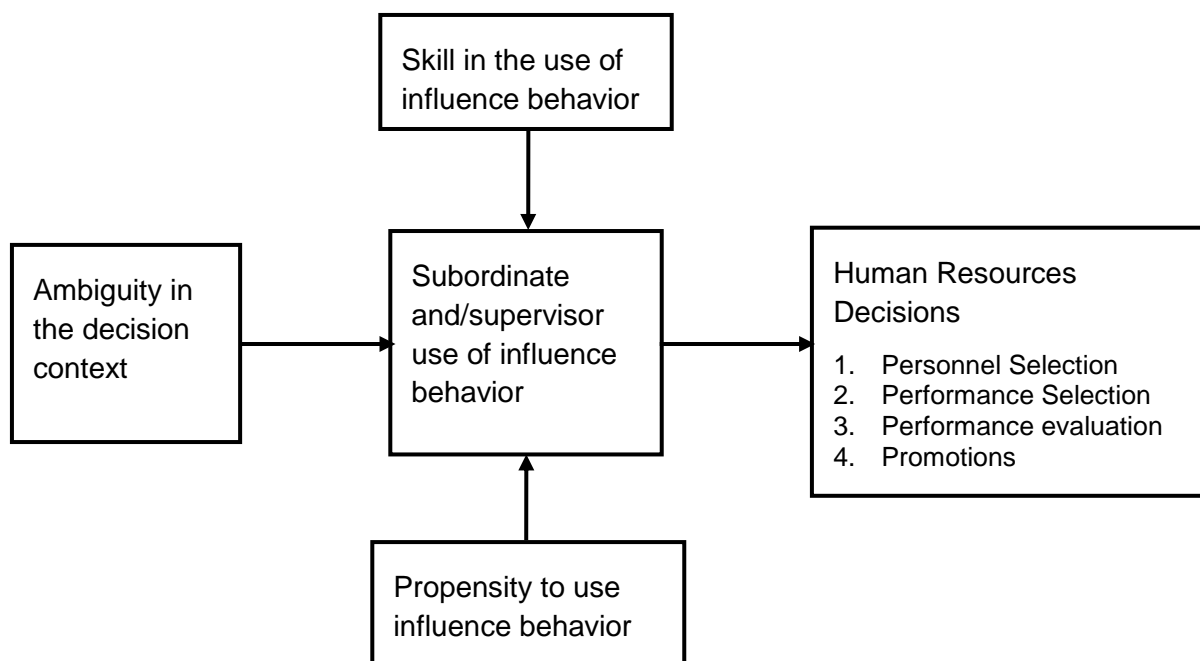
Barrick and Mount (1991) argue that there is a connection between personality and job performance. The study was conducted on the investigation of five big personality dimensions and job performance. The personality traits were inclusive of emotional stability, concurring, awareness and openness which comprise of some of the five key personality traits (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Ferris, Blickle, Schneider, Kramer, Zettler, Solga, Noethen, & Meurs, 2008 argue that political skill was found to have an influence on an employee's subsequent salary level, position and job contentment.

Templer (2018) has carried out a study where dark personality, job performance and role of political skill are demonstrated. The model is shown below:

Figure 2. 7: Indirect effect chain model

| Dark Personality | → | Political skill: Self-perception | → | Political skill: Supervisor rating | → | Performance rating |
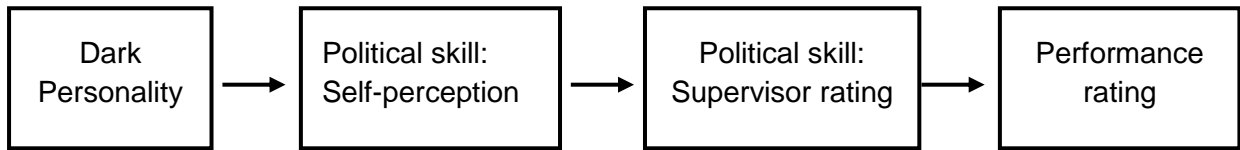
Source: Templer (2018; p.210)

During the research, it may be explored whether organisations can consider the processes to incorporate the political skills development as a part of learning process in the model that was developed by Alice Lam for tacit knowledge learning:

Figure 2.8: Political skills development as a part of learning process
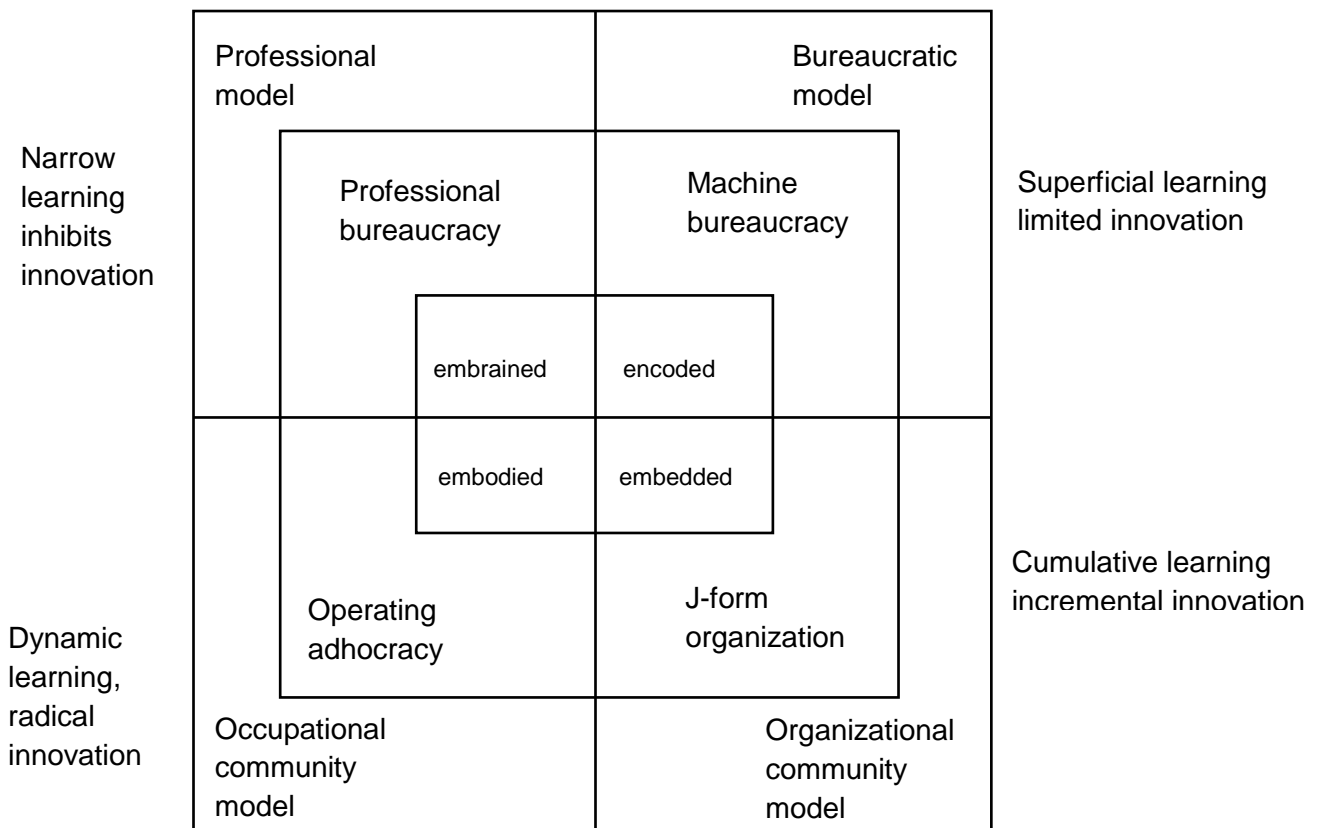
Source: Lam (2000; p.506)

Political behaviour may also be viewed in response to the new developments in the work places (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994; Ferris Treadway et. al, 2007). The individual's approach

towards technology (Arts van der wal & Adams, 2015) and the cyberpyschology concept (Norman, 2017) may have an impact on political behaviour. This element on new developments was explored in this research in order to understand its relation with political behaviour and its related career outcomes.

2.4   Organisational Politics

A survey of the literature reveals a lack of consensus among authors on the definition of organisational politics and the concept is in transition and under continuous debate (Drory & Romm, 1990; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Landells & Albrecht, 2015).

The authors' approaches highlight that intentionally using politics in companies stems from personal, situational and social backgrounds. The authors highlight that, "organizational politics has many definitions but all of them relate to use of personal or aggregate power to influence others and achieve one's goals in the workplace" (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006).

Moreover, Vigoda and Drory (2006) state that, organisational politics is a very important phenomenon in organisations because it influences a number of facets and aspects of outcomes and performances in the organisations. The authors also highlight that it is not easy to research organisational politics as employees at all levels are wary of revealing political secrets and the strategies that they use to advance their agendas (Ibid).

Drory and Romm (1990) define and analyse organisational politics as that which comprises of different elements and is not just confined to individuals but to groups and organisations. The analysis was done and included outcome, means and situational characteristics.

The figure 2.9 represents these organisational politics elements that occur at three levels which are individual, group and organisational.

Figure 2.9: Organization Politics (OP) definition elements
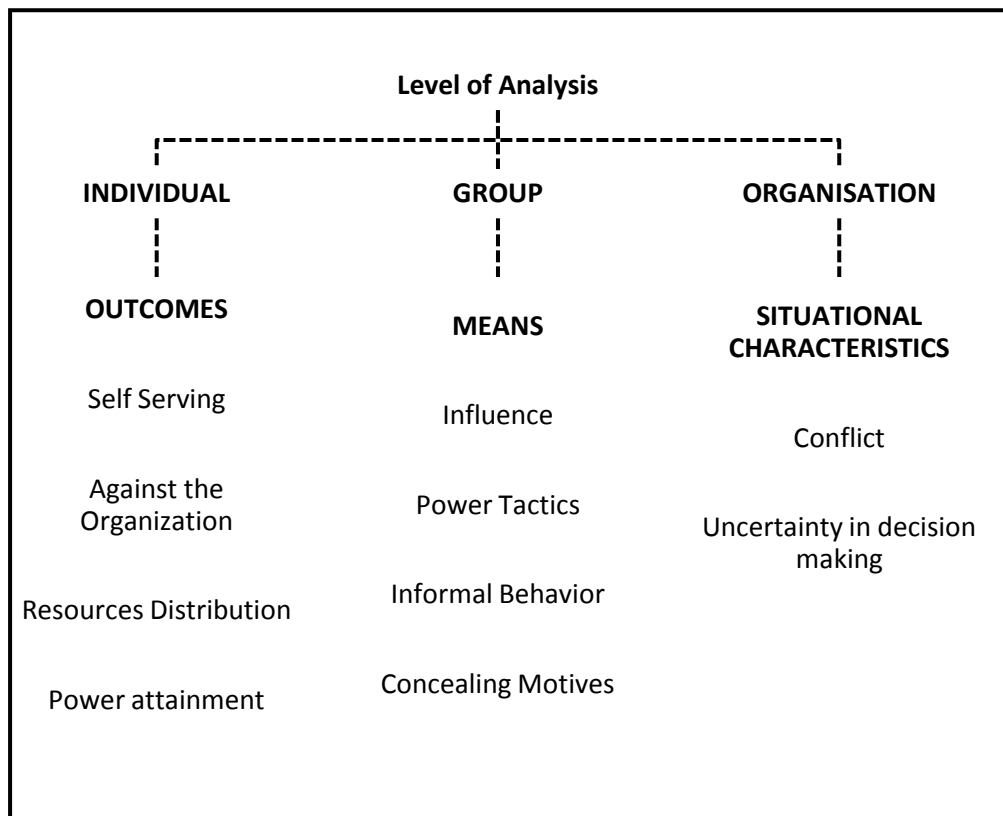
Source: Drory & Romm (1990; p.1135)

As stated by Vigoda and Drory (2006), the definition of politics is in transition and debates and therefore different meanings and definitions of the term is encountered. Organisational politics comprises of the people's willingness to use power to convince others and obtain favours or, alternatively, avoiding negativity in the company (Bozeman, Perrewe, Kacmar, Hochwarter, & Brymer, 1996). Vigoda (2003) describes organisational politics as the distinctive interpersonal networking in a work space (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Drory & Vigoda, 2010).

One of the Harvard business review articles articulates it as, "Organisational politics refers to a variety of activities associated with the use of influence tactics to improve personal or organisational interests" (Jarrett, 2017).

According to Hawkins and Miller (2006), real politics is about achieving consensus and effectively aligning people through integration of their interests, persuasion and influence. A working definition of organisational politics is it is "a neutral concept that can be either positive or negative in how it occurs" (Vigoda & Drory 2006, p.331). According to Hawkins

and Miller (2006, p.331) "Organizational politics is an exercise of power and influence that primarily occurs outside of the formal organisational processes and procedures. The behaviour is based upon influence and tactics designed to further self and/or organisational interests and is aimed at reconciling potential competing interests. Those interests may be the individual's interests versus the organisational ones or they may be the individual interests versus the interests of others and/or groups" (Vigoda & Drory, 2006, p.331).

Fedor, Ferris, Cook and Russ (1998) came up with the multidimensional nature of political perceptions and proposed three basic dimensions which are supervisor political behaviour, co-worker political behaviour and political organisation policies as well as practices. Further in their studies it was found that the existence of dominant groups, organisational reward practices and co-workers' political behaviour are the distinguishable dimensions of political perceptions. The authors also came with the evidence that, "different dimensions of organisational politics predict different attitudinal outcomes" (Fedor, Ferris, Cook & Russ 1998, p.1765).

With the limited studies in this complex field, studies have concentrated on employees' perception of politics comprising either influence tactics at work or a subjective perception of politics. It was assumed that the politics may be best understood through its perceptions of individuals (Vigoda & Drory 2006).

To highlight the power and politics dimension a referral to Abraham Zaleznik's article - Power and Politics in Organizational Life (1970) that articulates the power and politics with the help of concept of scarcity and competition may be made. In the article, the author stipulates that a political pyramid is existent when there is a competition for power in an economically scarce environment. As a result of the scarcity of power, a competition arises on this distribution of power in a structure. Scarcity of power arises when either power is gained at someone else's expense or when there is a shift in the distribution of power. This results in the psychology of scarcity and comparison. Individuals' self-esteem create the venues for comparisons and the feelings of acquisition or loss of power relative to others. This tendency of comparing with others is deeply ingrained in human beings, and therefore creates these avenues for the politics in the organisations (Zaleznik,1970).

Executives may be required to map politics under two dimensions. One is the political activity, which takes place at individual level or organisational level. Second is the source of power which is formal or informal. This may be required by the executives to understand the political terrain before they can act. "Understanding the political terrain can help executives fight dysfunctional politics" (Jarett, 2017).

For organisations to look at human resource management in relation to organisational politics there are four types of HRM that may be considered and these are:

Positive/constructive HRM; Negative/ destructive HRM; (3) Ineffective HRM and Virtual HRM (Please refer to Figure. 2.10). The four HRM types are the outcomes of the level of organizational politics (high OP or low OP) and the actor's type of interest (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010, p.197).

Figure 2.10: The four types of HRM associated with the political sphere in organizations

Source: Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, (2010; p.197)

2.5   Positive politics and negative politics

It is highlighted that most of the literature has focused on the dark and negative side of the politics and political behaviour relating to terms like cunning, manipulation, self-interests, employee turnover, low performance, achieving goal in improper way, illegitimate force relations and ingratiatory conduct in the organisations (Ferris et al 1996; Vigoda, 2003; Vigoda & Drory 2006; Drory & Vigoda 2010). However, politics has been an important element of leadership and when effectively implemented to positively influence the systems and people in the organisations it can lead to important positive outcomes for the organisations (Vigoda & Drory 2006).

A number of studies conducted on the outcome of the organisational politics have shown a positive correlation of intention, turnover and job anxiety. On the other side they have shown a negative correlation with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational support and satisfaction with supervisor (Kacmar & Baron, 1999).

The intended OP-HRM relationship in Figure 2.10 showcases two main elements that show the difference between positive OP from negative OP. Examples of such factors can include but are not limited to the level of political skills and the distinction of if behaviour is aimed at serving self-interests or organisational interests. Serving of personal or organisational interests using political skills may depend on social and cultural factors. Normally a person is inclined to secure their interests thereby serving their own interests. Enculturisation processes, socially acceptable standards and beliefs, as well as social and legal connotations may affect one's behaviour. Such features could lead to a connection to a company's goals and the creation of an inclination to embrace some organizational interests (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010, p.198).

According to Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2006, p.341 as cited in Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006), the links and networks that are based on faith and conform to the company's goals and objectives, may be "politically positive". The authors argue that organisational politics may be a foundation competition if employees have the right knowledge. Politically skilled management can successfully manage volatile company situations through showcasing feelings of trust, confidence and sincerity (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010; Cacciattolo, 2015).

Randolph (1985, as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010) also highlights that organisational politics are an additional mechanism that employees can use in the workplace to advance a variety of goals (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010).

Many mangers perceive politics in a negative way due to its association with unfairness, injustice, conflicts, turnovers, negative effect on organisational commitments and trust (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005; Vigoda and Drory, 2006, Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010), however, Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) state that when positive political competencies exist develops a positive political environment in the organisation that does not have injustice, unfairness and inequality. Other negative effects of organisational politics can be on job performance and restricted behaviour of individuals on information sharing and communication as a part of their political behaviour (Curtis, 2003; Poon, 2003; Cacciattolo, 2015).

Kumar and Ghadially (1989) (as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010) argue that even if politics can destroy an organisation, it can also profit from it. The negative effects they list include the risk of losing power and status, animosity from other companies, guilt, and decreased production. The positive impacts of organisational politics include career progression, validation from others, improvement of personal power, cognisance of personal and organisational goals, a feeling of achievement, being egotist, self-control and self-realisation (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010).

Saleem (2015) has demonstrated that leadership styles can affect the employees' perception of organisational politics. This perception may have an effect on production. Saleem (2015) suggests that effect of transformational leadership creates a more positive environment for job satisfaction and the positive perception of employees than the use of the transactional leadership style (Saleem, 2015).

Conflicts and politics can be responsible for the equilibrium of the powerful as well as those people who lack power. They also; enhance the organization's adaptability and potential to deal with an evolving environment, prevent stunted organisational divisions, stimulate growth and restoration, prevent group-thinking and enhance decision-making processes. Knowledge of organisational conflict can enhance the understanding of organisational

politics. Organisational politics are used when there are disputes but they do not always result in conflict. Finally, organisational politics can be seen as the normal reaction to organisational conflicts. Such conditions have streamlined important information and they are adaptable with regard to methods of action (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010).

2.6   Functional and Executive Level Managers

In this research functional and executive level managers are defined based on the general designations that are assigned in various organisations (Encyclopedia). Functional and executive manager levels for this study include:

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Executive Directors or Executive Chairman;
- Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer,
- Functional or Divisional heads of large organizations or Multinational companies;
- Business Heads;
- Country Managers.

2.7   Ethics and Politics

Literature observes that there are positive and negative aspects of politics. Certain positive aspects appear to be welcome by the organisations because they are perceived to be helping organisations in achieving the desired goals. This is also perceived to create a healthy and competitive environment as managers exhibit strong political skills (Cacciattolo, 2015; Landells & Albrecht, 2017).

The below excerpt highlights how ethics and politics affect an organisation:

"It is argued that a deontological framework is of particular importance for the proper management of negative political behaviour, whereas a virtue-ethics context can be employed so as to foster positive political behaviour at the workplace" (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010).

There are two distinct ways of looking at organisational politics, one is as a manifestation of social influence processes leading to beneficial effects for the organisations and the other way of looking at it is in the narrower sense as self-serving and unsanctioned attempts against the organisational goals (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010).

Beugre and Liverpool (2006) discuss organisational politics perceptions and organisational justice. The authors argue that managers may work towards reducing the perception of unfairness in organisations through the reduction of the effect of politics and its perception in the organisation (Vigoda & Drory, 2006).

Beugre and Liverpool (2006) suggest that organisation may teach managers to recognise political behaviour and the realities of political perception. This is with the view that managers with more power are in a better position to satisfy their own needs and interests at the expense of others who have fewer political resources and influence. They can do this by getting their needs fulfilled and they are less likely to perceive politics in the organization. Their actions will be less likely to curtail any (negative) politics in the organisation Thus it is important that they recognize the presence of political behaviour and take necessary actions to keep it confined for organisational benefits (Vigoda & Drory, 2006).

Hawkins and Miller (2006), highlight that any act is considered as unethical when done with negative intentions or done in the extreme. It is mentioned in the studies that understanding and following business ethics and dilemma is not easy, what may appear as just a business problem may be an ethical dilemma, however, leaders may not be able to distinguish it. The authors, therefore suggest that some questions related to rightness, fairness, transparency, consequence and common sense are addressed before taking any decision on ethical dilemmas and this may help in measuring the ethics of the decision. When decisions are made ethically, it helps in mediating a positive political behaviour and action in the organisation and helps in building a positive strategy (Vigoda & Drory, 2006).

Understanding organisational politics and its facets is a process and the negative definition of politics should not deter the intentions to do things with right intentions and motives. The understanding of the definition of organisational politics also opens a number of possibilities for analysing the ethical part of organisational politics (Vigoda & Drory, 2006).

Wang and Murnighan (2011) explore the understanding of the dynamics of greed and greedy behaviour. Greed has been studied in the political perspectives context in order to attain a deeper understanding. Personal gains, desires, being over ambitions and self-interest are drivers that can be used to acquire control and power and they have necessitated the political behaviour in the system (Wang & Murnighan, 2011). The self-centric approach and greed are explored in this research in order to understand the roots of the negative aspects of politics and the ethicality elements.

The ethical aspects need to be explored while carrying out this research. The aspect that is explored in this research is the dividing line between self-serving interest and the interest of the organisation. Another perspective to observe ethicality is the intention of the application of the political skills in the organisation and how ethical leadership may be viewed in conjunction with positive political behaviour. This aspect will be explored while interviewing the senior executives in this research.

2.8   Conclusion

The figure below demonstrates the eight factors that must be considered in order to develop a political strategy (Hawkins & Miller, 2006).

Figure 2.11: Model of organizational politics

Influence

Communication/
information

History

Culture

Past plays

Ethics

Relationships /
alliances
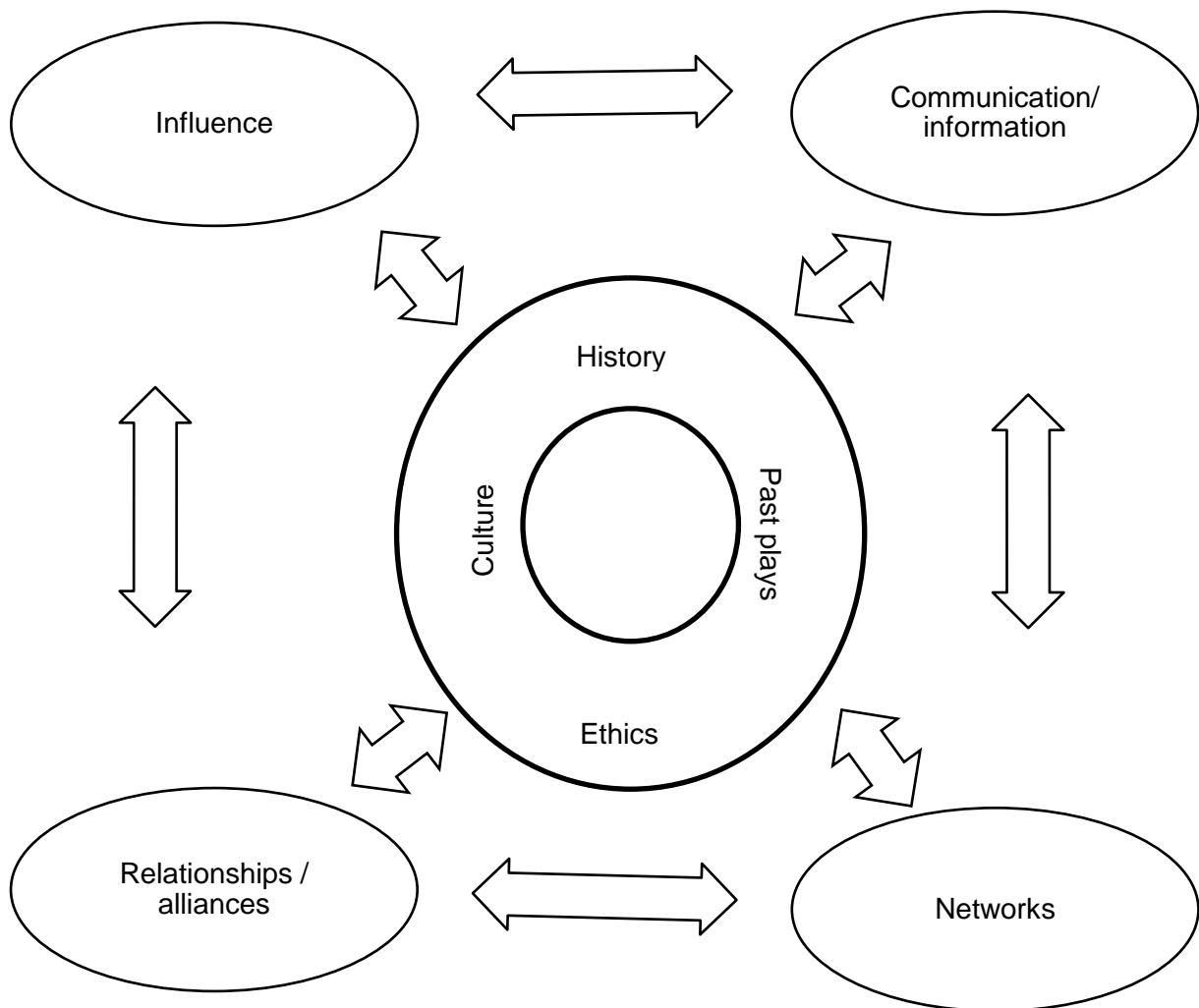
Networks

Source: Hawkins & Miller - Vigoda & Drory (2006; Chp 19; p.336)

When a positive political strategy is designed, it needs to be viewed within a social system where interaction among participants, network or relationships, beliefs, values, history and memory occurs (Vigoda & Drory, 2006). Thus all the given factors need to be considered while forming such strategies.

As the Figure 2.11 has demonstrated, the consideration of various factors by Hawkins & Miller (2006), acquiring inspiration from that, in the similar lines, this research aims at integrating various constructs of organisational politics including; the perception of the politics, enablers of politics, political behaviour and skills, changing factors in today's world of work, ethical aspects and their influence on career progression. These constructs are aided

by the learning models that can help in acquiring the required skills in order to make a career a success.

In other words, knowing the political skills and how they work at the work place and learning how to acquire and implement them in a positive manner, may influence progression in careers and this aspect is explored in this research.

These constructs described in the literature section pave the path for the attempt at creating a combined model comprising of the constructs and their support in career progression.

Past literature and academics' works provide a strong foundation to take this research forward and work towards attaining the aim of this research.

CHAPTER 3:   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1   Research objectives and purpose

This study is an in-depth exploration of organisational politics, political skills as well as career progression and its intention is to find some answers to the questions that were posed by past researchers that have been discussed in the previous chapters.

3.1.1 Purpose statement

To explore the enablers, political behaviour and the skills that determine functional and executive level managers' career progression.

3.2   Sub Questions

How do the functional and executive level managers (senior executives) perceive political behaviour?

This question will assist in determining the managers' perceptions on organisational politics. This will also set a foundation for this research as the perceptions will enable the understanding of the positive and negative views as well as the known approaches from the literature, and the understanding will help in exploring the research objective's determinants (Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Cacciattolo, 2015; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994).

What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?

This question explores the managers and the organisations' political behaviour in order to understand if their behaviour has helped them to advance their careers. The situations that enabled the managers to progress in terms of their political environment will be explored in detail. More importantly, the sub- question's objective is to provide a platform to explore the skills that are helpful in managing or neutralising politics in order to advance one's career (Templer, 2018; Cacciattolo, 2015; Banister & Meriac, 2015; Zettler & Lang, 2015; Vigoda-

Gadot and Drory, 2006; Ferris et.al, 2005, 2007; Lawrence *et al* 2005; Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994).

What enables political behaviour in organisations?

This question aims to determine the organisation's political drivers and the in-house political behaviour. This sub question required an in depth research in order to determine the root causes of this phenomenon in the organisations (Templer, 2018; Wang & Murnighan 2011; Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994; Ferris and Judge, 1991).

How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work and considering upcoming new technologies, innovation as well as new developments?

Political behaviour has been in existence as per the literature reviewed for a long time. However, in recent years, with fast changing technologies, innovation and developments, the question of whether there has been any change is something that will be explored by this question. This may help in determining if the nature of skills, behaviour or politics has changed. (Banister & Meriac, 2015; Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006)

If the senior executives have to mentor somebody, what would their advice be on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?

This question aims to identify the right approach and skills that were acquired through the senior and executive level professionals' experiences in order to create learning experiences for the young professionals. Their experiences may help the young professionals in advancing by managing organisational politics well. This is where there can be an understanding of the managers' ethical views while mentoring young professionals. (Ismail & Reshani 2018; Banister & Meriac, 2015; Paadi 2014; Blickle et al, 2011; Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010; Ferris et.al, 2005, 2007; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006).

CHAPTER 4:   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN:

4.1   Rationale for Qualitative Research

Zettler and Lang (2015), Blickle et.al (2012) as well as Barrick and Mount (1991), have adopted the quantitative research method on the organisational politics subject. Their research objective was the descriptive approach where they demonstrated the link between organisational politics, political skills and similar characteristics to job performance and other factors.

The research carried out in this study required the explorative approach in order to delve deep into this complex subject and it intended to find some answers or aspects related to organisational politics, political skills and career progression.

"Despite numerous calls for qualitative research regarding organizational politics, this is one of very few qualitative studies in this area" (Landells & Albrecht, 2017, P.41). This excerpt shows the need for qualitative research in this field. Thus with the help of open ended questions, details and information are collected to explore more on the influence of politics in the career progression of functional and executive level managers.

The research's goal was to explore the senior managers' experience, perceptions and beliefs on politics and their importance in career development. These experiences and perceptions have been linked to past studies in order to explore and develop the theory. This research was guided by Ferris, Fedor and King's (1994) approaches, in order to develop and work on the subject's theory and framework.

The political approach and career progression appeared to be a subjective approach and therefore for further exploration, it required a qualitative research methodology. Thus the methodology adopted for this research was qualitative.

The research's objective was to develop and build on the theories and frameworks that have been developed by known academics in past research papers. Based on the qualitative

research, further aspects of theory were explored to build a framework with the help of the details collected from the study's interviews.

The research intended to explore the executives' perceptions and experiences on organisational politics and known various perspectives, dimensions and complexities that are involved in it. This would include their perception of politics, role of politics in present times; the skills that may be required for career advancement; how ethics and politics conflict with each other; and the exploration of theory and frameworks.

4.2 Approach of Methodology

In this research there was a need to understand organisational politics' various aspects as well as the exploration of political skills and how these concepts can have an influence on individuals' career progression. The interpretivism approach helped in studying these social phenomenon and processes in order to determine the outcome of the research's objective.

An interpretive approach was observed in the study carried out by Landells and Albrecht (2017) for the research topic: The Positives and Negatives of Organizational Politics: A Qualitative Study. This gave a direction of exploring this phenomenon in detail for the present study and this was made possible by following a qualitative approach.

In this research, a bottom up approach was followed for theory development. It began with specific observations and studies of the interviews with the intention of observing the phenomenon's specific patterns as well as its occurrences and then a conclusion was made (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

There was a need for a more flexible approach in order to permit changes in the research's structure as the progress was made based on the research's emphasis (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Thus, this inductive approach was adopted for this research proposal in order to explore the alternative explanations and arrive at a conclusion based on the findings of the patterns from the interviews.

A single (mono) qualitative method has been used for data collection and data analysis (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Latif, Abideen and Nazar (2011) mention that, "Identifying the internal-external, vertical-lateral, and legitimate-illegitimate dimensions of political behaviour provides added insight to the current understanding of organizational behaviour, and it offers options for future research" (P.206). The study explored various dimensions, perspectives of politics and understood the phenomenon well and the intention was to know where political skills could play a role in the senior managers' career progression.

The study was based on the aspects that came out in the academic literature, and these were incorporated into the interviews in order to explore the topic and acquire new insights by asking new questions and assessing the topic (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

This research is building on the existing theories and frameworks developed by past academics and literature as laid down in the research's previous chapters, in order to extend and create a framework or model that has been demonstrated in the subsequent chapters.

Some aspects of the qualitative content analysis approach were adopted in order to help in the development of the existing theories and frameworks created by some great scholars (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

4.3   Cross sectional time horizon

The senior executives were interviewed once. This was done over a period of three to four months. The research did not seek to measure changing attitudes or responses to any interventions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.4   Techniques and procedures

A semi-structured questionnaire and face to face interviews were the data collection methods that were used to conduct the research. Face to face interviews of senior executives from various organisations were conducted in South Africa. The executives were South African residents at the time when this research was conducted and they have had

the experience of working in developing countries such as South Africa, India and some other African countries.

The interviewees were requested to be open in their interviews and share information and experiences frankly without holding back any important information that can help this research in attaining a fruitful outcome.

The interviews were not confined to a set time limit as the duration was determined by the quality of the data and on the aspects of achieving the research's objectives and in order to fulfill the minimum questions or information required from the interviewee. The average time of interviews ranged between 20 minutes to 45 minutes depending on the details that the respondent was comfortable to share and their individual experiences and views. However, the importance of data was not governed by the time taken in any interview rather it was more focused on the quality of the data from a given interview.

4.5   Population

The research's population comprised of senior executives such as CEOs, COOs, board of directors, country managers, business heads or equivalents in other organisations. The underlying assumption was that they were promoted in their organisations and they could have come across organisational politics and have the experience and skills to contribute to this research.

The population for this research was kept general in terms of the sectors and industries. The individuals were selected from any industry or sector be it private or public. The assumption that was taken while carrying out this research is that politics is prevalent in all industries and sectors, however, what may possibly vary is the intensity and the effect of organisational politics.

4.6   Unit of analysis

Keeping the research problem, questions, objectives and overall population in mind, this research was based on the unit of analysis as an individual that is a senior executive in an organisation.

4.7   Sampling method and size

The sampling method that was used in this research was the convenience sampling method, with executives who are working in private or public companies that have set-ups in South Africa. As mentioned in the previous section that the executives had working experience in developing countries such as South Africa, India and other developing countries; it is known that developing countries are still in the phase of development and with the scarcity of resources, the competition to acquire limited resources is prevalent.

The participants needed to be comfortable to answer the questions in an honest and relaxed environment. This access was only possible in South Africa where this research could be conducted in order to come up with more accurate outcomes. Thus professionals who were South African residents who had work experience in developing countries were selected in this research.

The sample size depended on the attainment of the saturation point. This saturation point as is discussed in the subsequent chapter of this research was reached in 15 interviews that were conducted with senior officials or executives.

As can be deduced from the table in the subsequent pages of this chapter, the professionals' demographics were a mix of:

- Males and females as it was crucial to have both genders in order to appreciate both their perspectives;
- Age group – The age group factor varied with the type of the industry. In certain industries such as information technology services or the financial services sectors, some younger professionals were seen holding senior positions. However, in core engineering or manufacturing sectors, older professionals held senior positions. Considering the positions, experience and the industry, the age ranges of the selected senior executives varied from 32 years to 56 years;
- Executives from Private and Public companies – This was to give a balanced approach, in order to get information and data from different types of organisations. The intention was also to, acquire the required insight into this research topic and to avoid possible biases;
- CEOs, business heads, large function heads, country heads and senior executive level officials in organisations who were s experienced enough to have led large divisions or companies and could share insights, perspectives and experiences on the topic were selected for the interviews for this research.

Table 4.1: All Participants who were interviewed were South African residents at the time of this research

Participant No	Age (Yrs)	Industry or Sector	Nationality	Total Work Experience (T) & Out of which Experience held at senior position (S) (no of years)		Countries of experience	Gender	Highest Positions held in overall experience
				T	**S**			
1	52	Steel	Indian	28	15	South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, India	Male	Business Head Chief Executive Officer of Subsidiary
2	52	Minerals, Metal & Power	Indian	31	10	South Africa, India	Male	Managing Director of Subsidiary
3	56	Distribution & Holding Company	Indian	33	20	South Africa, Zambia	Male	Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
4	53	Financial Services	Indian	33	24	South Africa, India, USA	Male	Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director

Participant No	Age (Yrs)	Industry or Sector	Nationality	Total Work Experience (T) & Out of which Experience held at senior position (S) (no of years)		Countries of experience	Gender	Highest Positions held in overall experience
5	36	Engineering - Consulting, Power, Construction	South African	14	5	South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, India, Germany	Male	Director Part of EXCO
6	55	Agriculture, Manufacturing, Distribution	South African	30	27	South Africa, Germany, USA	Male	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
7	46	Information Technology	Indian	23	6	Indian, South Africa	Male	Country Manager
8	50	Power Sector in Chemical Industry	South African	37	25	South Africa	Male	Senior Executive - Technical Manager
9	39	Government Procurement	South African	15	7	South Africa	Female	Director
10	32	Finance	South African	11	7	South Africa	Male	Head of Department

Participant No	Age (Yrs)	Industry or Sector	Nationality	Total Work Experience (T) & Out of which Experience held at senior position (S) (no of years)		Countries of experience	Gender	Highest Positions held in overall experience
11	46	Services	South African	22	8	South Africa, Botswana, Canada, France, Switzerland, Zimbabwe	Male	Chief Executive Officer Chairman
12	56	Government Power, Oil & Gas, FMCG	South African	27	18	South Africa	Male	Chief Procurement Officer
13	50	Automobile	Indian	27	13	South Africa, India	Male	Head of Business
14	40	Petrochemicals, Mining, Infrastructure	South African	20	10	South Africa, Zimbabwe	Male	Chief Executive Officer
15	42	Automobile	Indian	18	2	South Africa, Kenya, India	Male	Head of Business

4.8   Measurement instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed and it contained the themes that this research required as well as a series of open-ended questions in order to acquire information and data on the executive's background, context, and industry experience. The Interviews comprised probing questions which were used to expand, clarify and get an appreciation of the participant's responses and they were also utilised to explore the nature of this study for deeper insights. The questions in the interview guide are provided in the interview schedule in the appendices.

The order of the questions varied depending on the flow of the interview and the data as well as the information that was revealed in the interview. The order and approach of addressing the questions also differed depending on the flow of the interview and on the participants' responses. The probing and detailing approach in the interviews was supported by the executives' experiences and they helped in providing insights on the research topic.

The overarching objective and the sub-research questions were addressed with the specific questions that were asked from the participants in the interview.

The table 4.2 below demonstrates the research sub-questions that were addressed with the help of the questions asked in the Interview schedule:

Table 4. 2: Research sub-questions asked in the Interview schedule

Research Sub – Questions	Questions in the Interview Schedule
How do the functional and executive level managers (senior executives) perceive political behaviour?	What are your views on organisational politics and political behaviour in organisations?
	Please share your experience on organisational politics and political behaviour encountered during your work life?
	What ethical considerations do you believe are important in organisational politics?

Research Sub – Questions	Questions in the Interview Schedule
What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?	Please share your experience and any situations where politics adversely affected your career or position at a certain career stage. Please think of situations and experiences when organisational politics was a deterrent/inhibitor to your success.

During your career has there been any time when you felt that organisational politics has helped you in progressing in the organisation? Please elaborate.

How do you view career progression and success in your life?

What skills do you believe are necessary for successful organisational politics?

Have political skills played any role in your career progression and success? Please explain. |
| What enables political behaviour in organisations? | What enables political behaviour and organisational politics?

What are your views on organisational politics and political behaviour in organisations?

Please share your experience on organisational politics and political behaviour encountered during your work life? |

Research Sub – Questions	Questions in the Interview Schedule
How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work and considering upcoming new technologies, innovation as well as new developments?	Have political skills played any role in your career progression and success? Please explain. Do you think that politics, political behaviour and political skills have shifted or changed in line with today's world of innovation, technology and modernisation?
If the senior executives have to mentor somebody, what would their advice be on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?	How would you advise your juniors or mentees on the use of political skills and behaviour to progress their careers? What skills do you believe are necessary for successful organisational politics? What ethical considerations do you believe are important in organisational politics?

4.9   Data gathering process

While proceeding with the data collection process, this qualitative inquiry looked for verbal accounts or descriptions in words or observations (Elliott & Timulak, 2005).

An open-ended strategy was used to obtain data from the interviews. The semi-structured approach provided a guiding force to the interviews and highlighted certain boundaries and categories such as organisational politics, career progressions and political skills. The combination of the semi-structured and open-ended approaches provided flexibility to gather information pertaining to the research problem and it fostered communication and gathered the data process from the executives' rich experiences in order to make each interview unique (Elliott & Timulak, 2005).

The interviews were conducted with the executives from the profiles mentioned in the previous section in order to collect the research's required data. All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. A consent form was signed by the researcher and the participant to ensure the ethicality of the data and confidentiality of the respondents. Interviews were transcribed so that they could be captured and coded according to the research's themes. The voice recordings and transcripts captured the data from the interviews quite effectively.

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were given an overview of the research so that they could get an appreciation of how this research would be conducted and how the data would be used. The interview consent form and the interview schedule included a brief about the topic and its objectives in order to enable the respondents to know the purpose of the interview. The Interview consent form and the interview schedule were provided to the interviewees either by email or in person before the interview. This was meant to enable them to go through the questions ahead of the actual interview and to give them time to absorb the questions and to help them recall their experiences and understand the research's topic or objective. This would further assist the researcher in collecting the relevant data pertaining to the research topic.

The first interview was treated as a pilot in order to understand if the questionnaire was not too long or if it was not deviating from the topic or research objectives. It was also utilised to check if the questionnaire was providing insights that may be relevant to the topic. It was observed that no changes were required in the semi –structured questions and the questions would be enough to extract the required data for the research objectives. The rest of the interviews were thus conducted in line with the semi-structured set of questions as mentioned in the earlier sections.

In order to alleviate potential anxieties, the interviews were conducted in an environment and venue that was preferred by the interviewee. The approach towards the interview was based on honesty and trust between the interviewer and interviewee in order to enable a free and open flow of information and conversation, thereby facilitating insights into the research subject (Arsel, 2017).

4.10   Analysis approach

All the interviews were recorded and transcripts were made. The voice recordings and transcripts formed the basis for the data to be analysed for this research. All the data from these interviews were analysed carefully. Various patterns, themes, theories and aspects addressing the research problem were derived out of this analysis of data; this has been described well in the subsequent chapter (Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The analysis was based on the identification of the common themes and insights that emerged out of the collected data. The thematic analysis approach was adopted where themes were derived from the collected data and these could be related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Mapping of the existing theories and concepts along with the findings of the research through interviews were combined after a thorough analysis which led to emerging themes and patterns that could be used to develop a framework or model.

The approach towards this qualitative research was to make all the best attempts to keep it credible, trustworthy, transferable and dependable.

The data in the form of transcripts and recordings were translated into the theory models or frameworks and the researcher was aware of the possible biases and kept all the possible biases away from the research work.

The approach was taken with full integrity to reflect the true data as gathered from the interviews. The data gathering was done with full precision in a manner that was the best possible in human ability.

The record was kept meticulously. All the transcripts were verified by revisiting the voice recordings before deriving any conclusions or carrying out any study from the transcripts for the research.

For the subject selection, an attempt through convenience sampling to provide a mix of the participants in terms of industry, race, culture, gender, country experience and type of organisation. This was intended to provide a correct representation of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Voice recordings of the interviews were transcribed and this data was perused for purposes of familiarisation with the contents well. This data was coded to generate themes. These codes and themes were built on the research's key constructs. This acquired data was analysed and interpreted and finally a report was generated based on the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data that was collected was analysed through thematic analysis. According to Crowe, Inder and Porter, 2015, thematic content analysis consists of becoming familiar with the data, generating codes, identifying and defining themes/constructs, illustrating themes with examples and synthesising the themes in relation to each other. As suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006, thematic analysis provides flexibility and is an easy and quick method to learn as it is accessible to researchers with little or no qualitative analysis experience. Themes were identified and coded making use of the quaitiative analysis tool, Atlas ti. According to Friese (2014) codes should be clear and unclumped, that is, codes should be grouped under one code name, rather, they should be developed in layers.

From the coding procedure, the principal run was done haphazardly to distinguish all subjects, while assigning codes based on describing the identified quote. After all quotes had been identified, some of the codes that correlated were merged into one code to avoid having redundant codes. Codes were grouped and assigned to themes that would later help answer the research question. From the project, a total of 15 transcripts were used; 24 themes generated; 83 codes generated; and 226 quotes generated. Figure 4.1 shows how codes and themes in Appendix 4 and schematic diagrams can be interpreted. It shows that the first prefix identifies the research question being answered that is sub questions 1,2,3,4 or 5. The second prefix number identified the ranking of themes as shown from frequency tables in Chapter 5 and the third number would show the frequency ranking of the code amongst other codes assigned to one theme. Few of the identified codes had a fourth prefix number which would still identify ranking of code amongst codes assigned to one code.

Figure 4.1: Research questions rankings
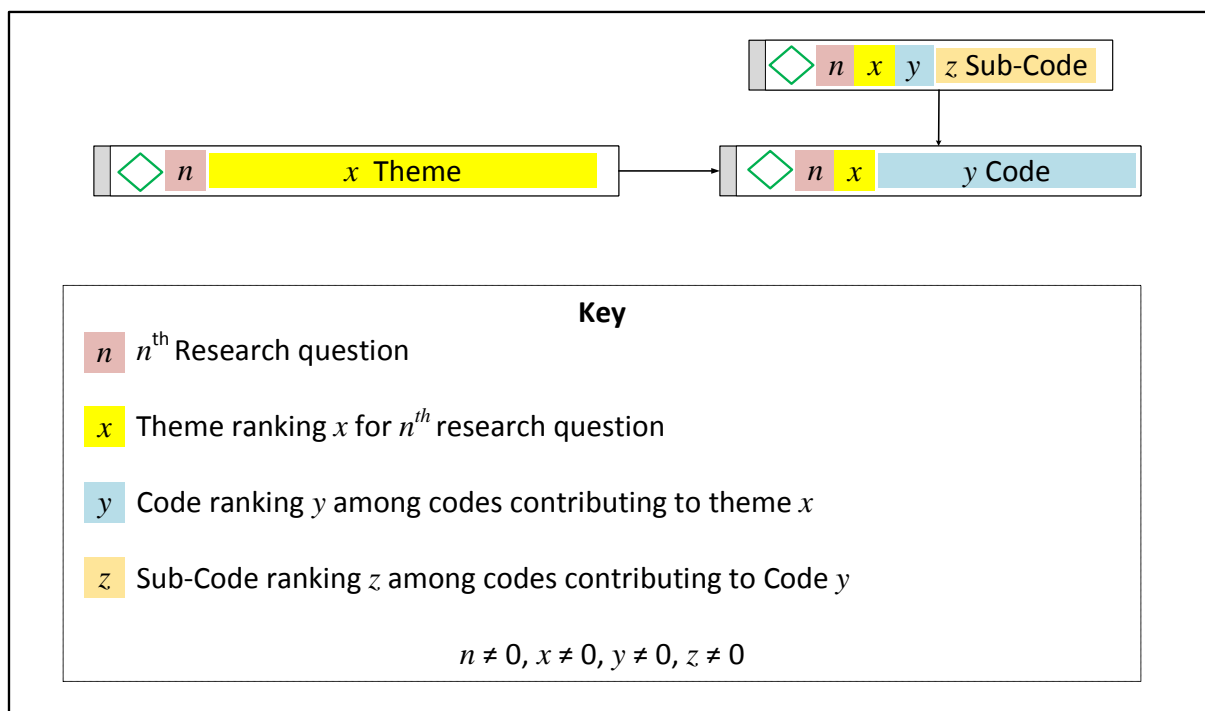
As mentioned in this section, the benefit that thematic analysis brings to this research is that it is flexible, easy and it is a quick method to learn. It is also accessible to the researcher with little or no qualitative analysis experience and there is the ability to have a useful summarisation of large data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.11   Credibility and Fit

Considering the importance of data credibility and fit in qualitative research, due care had to be taken by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of this research. The first step towards ensuring the credibility and fit of the data was to consciously be aware of the possible biases and errors in this qualitative study. An objective approach was adopted by the researcher in all possible ways in order to avoid any personal biases interfering with this research (Saunders & Lewis 2012; Brink, 1993). The subjects were presented in a neutral approach or view while interviewing to avoid any influencing factor in their responses. Questions were designed such that they tried bringing out a negative or positive response pertaining to the experience of the individual. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher to avoid any differences in approach. The respondents were given the research's background in order to for them to understand what the research is about to ensure the

reliability, transparency, trustworthiness and fit of the data collected from the respondents (Brink, 1993; Lindgreen, Xu, Maon & Wilcock, 2012). The convenience sampling method helped in building an environment of trust between the interviewer and interviewee in order to ensure that the collected data is valid and has an open minded approach. The method also ensured that the information is shared by the respondents to the best possible extent.

Being aware of the sampling biases, efforts from the researcher were made to ensure that all the aspects in terms of demographics that include age, gender, industry, sector and type of organisation (at least one interviewer in all the possible categories) are covered in the initial research sample.

The interviews voice recordings and the multiple cross checking of the transcripts ensured the validity of the data collected from the respondents so that there is a sound understanding of the respondents' responses (Brink, 1993).

The researcher was mindful of the social context and the environment where the interviews were taken and all the influencing factors around the interviewees that may have had an effect in the responses of the respondents were avoided to ensure the validity and reliability of the data (Brink, 1993).

4.12   Limitations

There were various limitations due to method and personal biases in this research. Various researches and journals have highlighted these limitations (Arsel, 2017; Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Latif, Abideen & Nazar, 2011; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003; Brink, 1993).

. Some of these limitations are provided below:

- Sampling method limitations and biases- There were biases and limitations in terms of selecting the samples and getting the true representation of the population;
- Confining to one mode of data collection –Collection of data through interviews and being confined to selected numbers of participants had its limitations;
- In the sample, not all the sectors or industries or gender could be considered as a balanced mix in terms of demographics. The most prevalent one was the gender, where males dominated the interview list;

- Data collection was cross sectional, however, there was a possibility of variation in terms of collected data over a certain period (ranging between 3-4 months);

- While undergoing the process of the interview, one thing that was difficult to avoid was any impact of the state of the individual's mind while responding to the questions of the interview. The interviewee' state of the mind at that point in time could have some effect in terms of the precise outcome through their answers;

- The individuals' strong views and biases could not be avoided;

- The interviews were face to face; it is quite possible that interviewees responded in a socially desirable manner;

- There may be limitations due to the researchers' own biases;

- The researcher had limited experience in conducting such interviews and qualitative analysis;

- The research was not possible in a controlled environment and other factors affecting the study may have existed in the environment.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the interview findings based on the research objectives that were formulated in Chapter 3. The findings were collected through the use of open-ended questions which were used by the researcher in order to prompt the participants to highlight and expound on their knowledge of the subject. Questions were also used to explore the interviewees' knowledge of the enablers, political behaviour and skills that determine the career progression of functional and executive level managers.

5.2   Description of the sample

A total of 15 interviews were held with randomly selected interviewees who were willing to participate. The entire sample consisted of 14 male respondents and one female respondent who were specialists from various corporate sectors that included the energy division, financial sector and the industrial sector. All participants held high positions in the companies that they worked for. The detailed summary of the participants' demographic information is provided in Table 5.1 below. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for two that were conducted using Skype. An analysis of the meeting transcripts was done using Atlas.ti which utilised a thematic content analysis approach to identify themes. Codes for each of the identified themes were assigned and grouped based on the relevant sub-question that the theme emerged under.

Table 5.1: The details of the respondents

Respondent	Highest Position held	Experience in senior position (Years)	Gender	South African Industry
1	Business Head	28	Male	Steel
2	MD	10	Male	Mineral, metal and Power
3	Exec. Director of Finance	20	Male	Distribution and Holding Company

Respondent	Highest Position held	Experience in senior position (Years)	Gender	South African Industry
4	COO, CFO, Executive Director	24	Male	Financial services
5	Director	14	Male	Consulting, Engineering
6	CEO	27	Male	Agriculture, Manufacturing, Distribution
7	Country Manager	6	Male	IT
8	Senior Executive	25	Male	Power
9	Director	7	Female	Government/Procurement
10	Head of BD	7	Male	Finance
11	CEO/ Chairman	8	Male	Services
12	Senior GM/ CPO	18	Male	Power, oil and gas/ FMCG
13	Head of Business	13	Male	Auto
14	CEO	10	Male	Petrochemical, mining, Infrastructure
15	Senior GM	2	Male	Auto

5.3   Presentation of results

The results are presented as per the research questions that were formulated in Chapter 3. The five sub-questions aim to provide perspectives on political behaviours and skills that determine the career progression of Functional and Executive Managers.

5.3.1   Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do the functional and executive level managers perceive political behaviour?

The aim of this research question was to understand the perceptions that functional and executive level managers have about political behaviour. The questions were set up to identify of whether functional and executive level managers have similar views on political behaviour within organisations.

Table 5.2: How functional and executive level managers perceive political behaviour frequency table

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Respondents
1	Bad	4	R6, R9, R13, R15
1	Both Good and Bad	4	R1, R4, R5, R10
2	Good	3	R2, R3, R7

There were mixed views provided on how political behaviour was perceived by the participants.

5.3.1.1   Political behaviour perceived as bad

Respondents 6,9,13 and 15 perceived organisational politics as a negative attribute and suggested that it is something that needs to be avoided at all costs.

Respondent 6 expressed that he had been involved in organisational politics but however, came to the realisation that it impacted negatively on the company, as all companies have a human element associated to them. *"I did it myself, but as I got older I actually realised that is really actually very bad for organisation. If you can get it out of the way, it's far better"* (R6 6:4).

Respondent 9, who worked for a government department commented that, 'Involving one's self in politics could lead to one getting on the wrong side of people, which could be detrimental to one's career. These are very-very expensive enemies that you cannot afford to have. So, like I said for me it was a lesson that came very early in my career. I took it and I started embracing it. I'm still not in politics even now I still call myself political illiterate" (R9 9:2). What is interesting to note is that Respondent 9 commented that since organisational politics cannot be avoided, one needs to find a way around it *"...Organizational politics in my experience is that they are there. We can't get away from them, and you need to find a way to navigate around them."* (R9 9:1).

Respondent 13 commented that it is important for individuals to be aware of the presence of politics; however, the interviewee firmly suggested that one needs not participate in it, "*The*

key thing to understand is that one must always understand the politics. It is very crucial to understand the politics especially in the organisation that you are working in and try not to participate. It is easier said than done but understanding organisational politics is important, but never participate" (R13 13:2). Respondent 15 reiterated the same notion and suggested that people need to be aware of what happens within organisational politics, however, they should not get involved.

5.3.1.2 Perceived as both good and bad

Out of the 15 participants, 4 mentioned that they have clearly acknowledged the impact of political behaviour; however, they perceive political behaviour to be both good and bad.

According to Respondent 1, political behaviour can be rewarding as it allows one to progress in their careers. The responded also highlighted that, there is also a concern that it could be demoralising to someone that is doing well and has not been recognised because of in house politics. *"A boss will always have a preferential person. And obviously, he will also want to know what is happening in his department and how the people are working towards the goal It could be a motivational thing that keeping competition by playing politics between the colleagues. The other way is that it could also demoralize somebody who intends to do good things but obviously lost interest because of the politics between the groups. So, there's always a positive and negative"* (R1 1:15).

There is also a perception that the type of political behaviour that is present, (i.e. good or bad), is also dependent on the nature of senior management, or as Respondent 4 put it, *"…it's for the senior management to drive the politics in an organization…"* (R4 4:4). The respondent further goes on to say, *"…the senior management or the supervisor can turn that kind of negative politics into positive politics…"* (R4 4:7).

Respondent 5 believed that politics could be negative or positive and it is dependent on an individual's agenda, however, the main focus is to align people to what one is aiming for. According to this respondent, politics is, *"basically trying to get people, get the power base on your side, majority of these stakeholders to support you going forward"* (R5 5:3).

Respondent 10 mentioned that promotions are often based on the influence of political behaviour rather than on performance. The respondent had been both a victim of politics and a beneficiary of political behaviour; *"I've been a victim of it and I've also seen it when we are sitting in the Senior Management meetings, Senior Executive meetings and we are deciding who we are going to promote, and you just see how things play out. It's not always*

based on facts, or the delivery, the performance of the individual…" (R10 10:3). Respondent 10 perceived politics in a negative light and also indicated that it is present within organisations, *"...My views on political behaviour are that it's unfortunate that they even exist to start off with…" (R10 10:1).*

5.3.1.3 Good

Respondent 2 mentioned that politics is a good thing if it does not victimise anyone, *"politics is an element to achieve something as long as it is ethical and doesn't affect others, not at the cost of others, it is a bit positive and to achieve something there is always a bit of tactics required, be it internal, inwardly, within the organization, or as the member of the organization to interact with the outside members"* (R2 2:4).

Respondent 3 shared similar sentiments and suggested that it was better to have politics within organisations than not to have it, "so organisational politics, like any other thing in the working environment, is a regular thing; the absence of which would be more frowned upon than its presence. So, I think it is a necessary part in any organisation" (R3 3:2). The respondent further says, "...You may not be advocating it, but somebody else may be doing it or playing that role" (R3 3:19). From all the respondents, Interviewee 3 is the only one who states, "...I have not encountered any politic, of a negative kind…." (R3 3:15).

Respondent 7 commented that having politics within organisations is necessary in order to enhance organisational growth, "so, I believe organization politics and political behaviour is very important. It's a key for growth and it should be encouraged in any organization" (R7).

5.3.1.4 Conclusion

The respondents have acknowledged political behaviours to be both good and bad for the organisation. It is also evident that functional managers and executives do acknowledge the existence of political behaviour; this in turn shows that they might be using it in their day-to-day experiences.

5.3.2 Sub-Question 2

What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?

The aim of the question was to prompt the participants to think about political behaviours; skills or situations that have helped them advance in their respective careers. From the

responses obtained from interview transcripts, five themes were identified to describe political skills that help enhance one's career progression. The identified themes included strategic skills (skills that enable one to think strategically and tactically), social networking between peers and colleagues, apparent sincerity, the confidence that one portrays and social astuteness (person who can assess and understand situations before reacting).

Table 5.3: Frequency table of political skills one should have in order to achieve positive career advancement

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Respondent
1	Strategic Skills	10	R1,R2,R4,R8,R6,R7,R8,R11,R12,R13
2	Networking	6	R3,R5,R8,R10,R11,R12
3	Apparent sincerity	3	R1,R5,R6
4	Confidence	3	R7,R14,R8
5	Social Astuteness	2	R7,R13

5.3.2.1   Strategic Skills

Out of all the respondents, ten out of 15 respondents acknowledge that having good tactical behaviours such as being strategic leads to one having progress in their career. Respondent one mentioned that, *"…As much as you are a hard-working person, you have to be a smart working person. When I say smart working person, that whatever you do you need to take your team along with you, you follow ethical practices and you keep transparency within your team. Then the success will follow…" (R1 1:49). The* Respondent expands by saying, *"…smartness in how you handle your people…" (R1 1:52).* This highlights that handling people is one of the keys to career progression.

Respondent 4 indicated that, "…*if there is someone out of greed who is competing with me and adopting not unethical, but un-corporate so as to say behaviour and means to do that, you can fight the situation by putting your best effort and doing better than that person, by competing with that person with your positive energy and beat him*…" (R4 4:18).

Some respondents mentioned that having tactical skills comes after being involved in a situation. Respondent 2 shares how they had to learn to handle situations saying, "…w*ithin three, four months I could realize and then I had to do my tactical part in order to overcome it… (R2 2:15).*

Respondent 8 shows how they used tactical skills to solve conflict between workmates, *"…we interface daily with our electrical instrumentation and production disciplines. We also interface daily with support functions like HR, Finance, Commercial and the Buying Department. Therefore, we have that interface as well. We also interface with external clients and service providers. I think the challenge for me is to try and keep the balance between how all these departments and functions interact with each other and still getting the job done…" (R8 8:7).*

The use of tactical behaviour can create recognition from others. Recognition can be positive or negative. Respondent 6 shows how implementation of strategic plans gained them recognition amongst colleagues. *"...some colleagues in North America and Europe decided that there is a new rival starting to arise, because under my leadership, this company's turnover tripled very quickly, because we had a very good strategy in place. People embraced the strategy and they went for it, and the employee engagement shot through the roof because we had a very successful company…" (6 6:18).*

Respond 7 shows that tactical strategies come after one knows exactly what is happening within the organisation and within conflicting parties. With that knowledge, one will be able to solve conflict, *"...When I confronted that person or those people when I confront, I first do my homework very well because I don't want to be on the wrong foot. Then I ask them why they do what they are doing, then I try to understand…" (R7 7:21)*. This is further supported by Respondent 8 who shows that it is more of a choice, one has to decide what is right and what is wrong, *"...a lot of people play politics to try and elevate their own-self and ego. Therefore, you need to make the decision what's right for what you are doing. Be on a technical decision or on a management decision…".*

Respondent 11 shows how one can also make a strategic choice to advance their own career, *"...What it did was that it actually forced me to take a different approach to my engagement in the organisation. I was prepared to go to the grass roots of the organisation and learn. I had a career for many years, but I had to sit in a call centre, just to understand the world of finance and listening... how people speak to each other and things like that. It humbled me, from that perspective. The other thing that I had to do was watch people and almost ask them if I could just sit in and ask them how people interact with each other" (R11 11:7).*

Respondent 12 shows the importance of having a sponsor saying, *"...It led to a situation where I understood it is better to brief people who are going to sponsor you, before you go into a meeting. In addition, that pre-briefing before the meeting was part of playing the*

political game. Because you are saying without the sponsorship I won't get this through and it is important that I get it through…" (R12 12:8).

Respondent 13 shows the need for one to protect themselves by mentioning that, "...these are the skills that prevent you from becoming a victim of politics…" (R13 13:12).

5.3.2.2 Networking

One of the reasons why people network with others, especially with management is to gain recognition, this is mentioned by Respondent 3, *"…the more you start interacting with the senior leadership team, in a company, in any company, if your interactions increase… that is organisational politics…" (R3 3:20).*

Respondent 5 shows the same sentiments as Respondent 3, *"…my sort of network in the region, showed and it swayed the choice to show that I was better in the end. I did get a role higher which was made for me…" (R5 5:18).*

Respondent 8 mentions that, *"…very important to network, also with senior managers. And that does help you when there are other career opportunities. They get to know you and they see you as a responsible person…" (R8 8:16).*

Some benefits of networking are shown by Respondent 10 who mentions, *"…I love engaging with people, building relationships, sharing my story. I left my first employer and was headhunted by the second company, so they came after me…" (R10 10:10).* Respondent 11 supports the notion saying*, "…one of the things that I started to understand was the power of building networks within your own department, and your own organisation, and understanding how people are allocated budget and what is it for. one of the things I began to understand was that certain people had certain budgets that were allocated, and secretly allocated, and for me it was really about forming relationships with them with the view of being able to identify that certain parts of my programmes complimented theirs, and it was also an opportunity for them to partner with me, so it enabled them to also look good to their management when accounting for budget…" (R11 11:14).*

5.3.2.3 Apparent sincerity

Respondent one sees the need for one to be honest, *"...You need to tell them that ok if you're not transparent obviously you are not going to get what you deserve as results…" (R1 1:51).*

Respondent 5 mentions that, *"...do what you think is right…" (R5 5:20).*

Respondent 6 brings in an aspect of humility, *"...be willing to be humble. Don't think you know everything. The other big thing is the willingness to appoint people different from you…" (R6 6:26).*

5.3.2.4   Confidence

Respondent 7 shows how being confident gives one influential power to drive an agenda*, "...a person who is self-confident will never let somebody who is playing dirty politics stay in that organization because he is self-confident, and he knows he can manage without him, than somebody who plays dirty politics…" (R7 7:25).* Respondent 14 shares their experience on how they used confidence to get influential power, *"...I managed to rebuild the confidence within my team and for some reason the entire team, more than fifty percent of it, they were on my side and the labour ruling was that we're dismissing all the allegations, and I happened to be the person that was appointed for the position…" R14 14:7).*

Table 5.4: Political Behaviours

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Respondent
1	Social Astute Behaviours	13	R1,R2,R3,R4,R6,R7,R8,R10,R11,R12, R13,R14,R15
2	Goal Aligning behaviour	6	R13,R4,R12,R13,R14
3	Uniform Treatment	5	R1,R6,R7,R8,R13
4	Complain to supervisor	3	R1,R2,R6
5	Self-discipline and work life balance	3	R2,R12,R13
6	Self-Centric Behaviour	2	R1,R4
7	Competitive behaviour	2	R1,R4

5.3.2.5   Social Astute Behaviours

The number of respondents who acknowledged one having social astute behaviours such as maintaining transparency, maintaining integrity, honesty, as well as being influential as qualities that are integral for one to have to maintain positive political behaviour in their career was 13.

Coercion behaviour is an act of one influencing and even persuading and involving others into doing what they want using threats or force. Ideally, it sounds as if it is bad behaviour but some respondents acknowledge that this kind of behaviour can be used in order to manipulate career progression as well as to influence productivity within the workspace.

Respondent 8 shows how this kind of behaviour emanates from one's inherent personality, *"...My attitudes have always been like: if there's frictional politics I will take it head-on and I'll stop it. The guys must sort it out immediately…. last night where one manager phoned me. He was upset because another manager was trying to take over his work... I had to sort that out first this morning. I called them aside and told them, "this is how we are going to work; you need to sort that out and move ahead" (R8 8:12).* Respondent 8 expands by saying*, "...So, you need experience and I think you need authority. Like I said the more senior you are I think the easier it is to be able to steer politics, and what other skills…" (R8 8:21).*

Respondent 14 goes on to show how a person in an authoritative position can use this behavioural trait in order to push an agenda, regardless of hierarchy, *"... I take the idea but because what I need to achieve is for the goods to be delivered, is for the plant to be constructed within the agreed cost, quality and schedule. So what I do then is I say, I accept the idea or the decision from my boss but I in a way will enforce these three things: delivery within cost, quality and schedule because I know that if this company fails then my boss is also going to fail…" (R14 14:8).*

5.3.2.6 Uniform Treatment

Having uniform behaviour within a workspace can help one to grow in their career as mentioned by the respondents below. Respondent 1 shows the importance of treating co-workers with respect without any favouritism, *"...when you start treating your own people in a good way, and then they will also start behaving in the same way. However, if you start differentiating between your own team, then obviously they will also be behaving in the same manner. Therefore, you as a boss has got a responsibility to behave well and not become more non-political… (R1 1:43).* Respondent 6 simply states that, *"Very focused on treating people as people..." (R6 6:24.)*

Respondent 7 shows how they exercised maintaining uniformity even when the situation was to their disadvantage. The respondent maintained, *"I was aspiring for a role, or for the next role, and I did not get that role, and if somebody else got that role. Say for example my boss was replaced by somebody else and not by me, would I feel sad? If I truly believed that I deserve that role, I will feel bad. However, will I not support my boss? No, I will completely support him to help him to grow…." (R7 7:21).*

This is supported by Respondent 8 who made mention that, *"...You mustn't be biased; you need to be neutral. In addition, I think to be neutral you need experience. Therefore, I also see that it is very difficult for young engineers or young people in the business. If they try and*

direct two groups of people and steer the politics, if they don't have experience, they don't get it right…" (R8 8:20).

Respondent 13 shows how they are unmoved and unshaking in their decision making. by mentioning that*, "...Having the strength to stand up and say, "Look this is the way I want to do this. I am going to be upfront; I am not going to take sides…" (R13 13:6).*

5.3.2.7 Complaints to supervisor

Respondent 1 acknowledged that complaining to one's supervisor can enhance one's progression, *"…I had to literally take a call that whether I should continue in this department and I should really look for another opportunity. Then I actually had to contact my boss to say that this is not correct. Therefore, you are not doing it correctly. If you think that you are not happy with my performance for any other reason, it is good that we part ways and that you transfer me to some other department or I will have to look for another job…" (R1 1:38).* This brings to light how a supervisor helps one in their career.

5.3.2.8 Self-discipline and work life balance

Respondent 5 mentions, *"…the way I have been brought up. I don't have that type of politically matured brain or something; but if the boss or any superior, he likes you, and you perform according to his need, which is the organisational need, then sometimes you get some additional mileage…" (R2 2:22).* This shows that one can survive in the business without being politically mature.

5.3.2.9 Goal aligning behaviour

Respondent 3 shows how having a drive within one's own career and motivation leads to positive career projection. The respondent mentions, *"...I think, every day getting up in the morning and saying, "How can I make a small difference in the life of my organisation and what can I do to improve my organisation whether it is directly in terms of revenue, or indirectly in terms of cost production or in terms of risk mitigation?". Whichever way that you can help the organisation? If that is your ethos, that makes you get out of bed and come to work and you look forward to coming to work, that is the first approach to know that you are in the right occupation…" (R3 3:9).*

Respondent 3 also shows how one's goals may be influenced by the organisation by saying, *"…the goal is created by the organisation, you're motivated by the organisation to achieve that goal. You don't realise that the company is playing a trick with you. But it is a positive trick…" (R3 3:17).*

Respondent 4 supports the notion by saying, *"…I knew what the goal of the company was, whether that is political environment, I don't know. It has helped me on daily basis…"* (R4 4:22).

Respondent 12 mentions that, *"When I talk about organisational politics I am broadening it up to include what I call sponsorship. That progression and success is also in being able to achieve goals is significantly by whether you've got the correct sponsorship, i.e. people who would seek to understand your views and where you are not able to verbalise them yourself, they can help you to verbalise them and get them across to where people are making decisions. Sometimes in the board where you may not be sitting, other meetings or in the same meetings that you are sitting in…"* (R12 12:7).

5.3.2.10   Competitive behaviour

Respondent 1 shows how having unbiased decisions encourages competition amongst employees. Competition is concluded to be healthy, as competitors will be rewarded based on performance and competencies, and not based on favouritism, *"…when you are asked to produce your results, your boss look at everyone equally. Then he'll decide whether you deserve that recognition or not, or whether you are less deserving than another person is if they have done exceptionally better, differently. That is healthy competition that has been created..."* (R1 1:45).

Respondent 4 mentions that, *"…it's a positive politics because you try and be better than your competitor…"* (R4 4:12).

Although these were all the skills and behaviours identified to help executives progress within their careers, some participants mentioned political skills and behaviours that actually deterred them from progressing further.

5.3.2.11   Sabotage

Respondents 1, 6, 7, 11 and 12 suggested that corporate sabotage is a negative political behaviour. These interviewees suggested that such behaviours were used to pull down a person and deter their progression. Respondent 1 shows how one's career can be deterred when the awarding of a promotion is done based on favouritism. Respondent 1 commented that, "*…it had become a challenge for me in that although most of them may not have that much of knowledge and experience in the same department, but they're being projected at*

early stage, and there are given promotions …I felt that: "ok this is going to be a more political game than and performance level competition…" (R1 1:37).

Respondent 6 supports the sentiments by stating that, *"…people tend to appoint people similar to who they are, and that does not enhance or develop the company. It creates a lot of harmony in the company, because people tend to think the same, behave the same…" (R6 6:27).*

Respondent 7 identified that some leaders deliberately sabotage juniors based on their own experience, suggesting, *"…when people do not see their own growth, because they're not given an opportunity and somebody else get an opportunity, they will naturally start playing politics with that person, because they start looking and trying to measure themselves against that person. They believe, "I did not get that opportunity let me also not allow this person to get that opportunity…" (R7 7:9).*

Respondent 11 commented that there were some promotions that were granted based on the wrong reasons to not only sabotage the affected individual who was meant to get the promotion, but also the organisation, "…because of the requirements of legislation for BEE, as well as employment equity, I was brought in because I kind of seemed like the part, but I was not necessarily skilled to be the part. Their approach to learning and development and upskilling me was not something they were interested in…" (R11 11:)

Language barriers and the unwillingness of others to teach the language has been identified by Respondent 12 as a way of segregating individuals, the respondent mentioned, *"…from a language point of view, because people in the environment were speaking Afrikaans, and I was not good at all in Afrikaans. Within our team, being the one that was odd in terms of those 2, the cliquing was more in favour of people who could speak Afrikaans and who were following what people were talking about, and people were easier as fiends than as colleagues. That really affected the information flow as well…" (R12 12)*

This shows that the negative politics played by other individuals could hamper career progression. The people who play such politics do so not only at the expense of others, but at the expense of the company as well.

5.3.2.12 Apparent sincerity

Apparent sincerity was picked up earlier to be one of the political skills needed to help advance one's career. However, as suggested by a few participants, it is not in one's best interest to always be sincere, as it could hinder career growth.

Respondent 13 mentions that, *"…There are times I have been very upfront and straight forward and that is not always the smartest thing to do, and sometimes, it is better to remain silent than upfront about certain things..." (R13 13).* Respondent 13 further on expands

saying, *"…these qualities identified required one to have "strength of character" to use these skills…" (R13 13).*

Respondent 1 gets to show how speaking out can end up in the leader not changing due to the resistance to change, *"...in the process, there are many lessons learnt that you can't take head on with your boss because it won't help you anywhere. Because you can't create an atmosphere. Then working will become really difficult. So, subsequently, I had to move out of the company to take a higher position" (R1 1:13).* Respondent 2 supports this by describing a situation where he was sincere and upfront about his relationship with his boss to senior executives, *"…And with the intervention of the General Manager, my boss got a big firing, very big firing, and the parcel and welfare officers they also got a big firing and all those things happened. So, it battered my relationship with my immediate boss, so he was always looking for things, faulting me..." (R2 2:15).*

5.3.2.13 Conclusion

The research question intended to uncover the main political behaviours and skills needed for career advancement. Based on the data collected from interviews, after asking interviewees on what political behaviour and political skills they consider essential for career progression, the most dominant political behaviour and skill that was mentioned was astuteness. Respondents emphasized the need for one to first listen and understand situations before reacting. Participants agreed on the following behaviours, being astute, uniform treatment, complaining to supervisor, self-discipline, goal alignment, being self-centric and competitive behaviour. Being astute and uniform treatment were ranked highest. The political skills that are needed were identified as strategic skills, networking, sincerity, confidence and social astuteness. Strategic skills and networking were ranked the highest amongst the skills that were identified by the respondents as essential. However, insight from the interviews shows that for one to have networking capabilities, they need to also have strategic capabilities.

5.3.3 Sub-Question 3

What enables political behaviour in organisations?

Respondents were asked this question in order for the researcher to recognise which factors actually contribute towards political behaviour within organisations. Four clear themes/constructs were identified to be the main enablers of political behaviour. There were

also two themes which were identified that seemed reasonable. The relevant themes identified during the analysis of the data are shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Relevant themes identified during data analysis

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Respondent
1	Human nature, behaviour and culture	6	R3, R4, R8, R9, R12, R13
2	Personal Ambition and Rewards	4	R2, R4, R5, R7
2	Career progression	4	R1, R4, R7, R15
3	Insecurity	3	R2, R10, R13
3	Diversity	2	R4, R11
3	Company Culture	2	R6, R9
4	Set mindset/ Resistance to being challenged	2	R8, R11
4	Need to be recognised	2	R1, R13
5	Technology	1	R6
5	Hidden agendas	1	R13

5.3.3.1   Human nature, behaviour and culture

Out of the 15 participants, six expressed that the major enabler of political behaviour is inherent human nature or culture. Respondent 3 went on to say that human beings are social animals and only the intensity of the political behaviour exhibited would be different, *"it is an inherent part of human culture and I think that it is stemming from that behaviour, because man is a social animal, what would be different is that the intensity would be different"* (R3 3:8).

Respondent 4's comments had the implication that political behaviour is a result of human behaviour, however, this was also a result of management, as management drives the level of organisational politics that is present; *"it comes with human behaviour of the employees, and it is driven by the by the management" (R4 4:9).*

Respondent 8 simply puts it as, *"dependent on specific people" (R8 8:2).* The implication being that an individual's behaviour determines the type of political behaviour displayed, if any.

Respondent 9 goes on to say that political behaviour is linked to the human element and this is also partially influenced by the culture of the organisation. According to Respondent 9, *"…it's culture. You have human beings, you cannot separate the human element of our existence, so they are enabled by a number of things. They could be enabled by how the organisation came into being, how the working came into being" (R9 9:3).*

Respondent 12 suggests that it depends on the leadership's behaviour and the expectation of people which is also a result of human nature and culture. *"…it is normally I think the leadership behaviour and expectation of people. If people expect people to respond to them, not because of thought, but because of power they hold and because of who they associate with" (R12 12:4).*

Respondent 14 states that, *"I'm just going to say there are people that are just born with that aggression and they need to be recognised" (R14 14:3).*

The two themes that emerged received the same number of frequency counts, with four respondents each commenting that ambition and career progression were enablers of political behaviour. What should be noted is that, it is thought that one needs to be ambitious in order to progress in their career. These two themes are seen to be cross-linked.

5.3.3.2 Personal Ambition and Rewards

It is seen from the responses received from two of the interviewees that underlying greed (often disguised in the form of ambition) is a strong motivator of political behaviour in the work space. Respondent 1 puts it as follows: *"sometimes what happens, is that people become greedy and, they think that they can achieve something more through this political channel" (R1,).* The inherent implication being that people use political moves to progress and gain more rewards. Respondent 4 shares similar sentiments to that of Respondent 1 and highlights that human beings often work so that they can be better than the rest. *"It's the employees that create that negativity. Because there's only that piece of pie and that competition among the employees that I will not say greed but that drive to do better than the rest and the drive to achieve more through whatever means" (R4 4:15).* It is interesting to note that this respondent specifically refers to the employees as the cause of negative politics.

Respondents 5 and 7 touch on the aspect of being rewarded and the need to be provided the same opportunities as others as a basis on which political behaviour within the work space is founded. This once again is due to the ambitious nature of the individual. Respondent 7 states that, *"A person has certain dreams, that person has certain aspirations,*

that person has certain goals, it drives him to create certain behavioural patterns" (R7 7:21). An interesting insight provided by Respondent 5 is the fact that political behaviour tends to get rewarded, hence they drive an individual to partake in politics; *"one is it tends to be rewarded depending on whoever is involved, but most of the time this political behaviour is rewarded" (R5 5:5).*

5.3.3.3 Career Progression

According to Respondent 4, people indulge in politics to improve their growth prospective, *"…people do not see their own growth, because they're not given an opportunity and somebody else gets an opportunity, they will naturally start playing politics with that person, because they start looking and trying to measure themselves against that person" (R7 7:10).*

Respondent 4 states that, political behaviour is driven by the need to, *"do better than the rest and the drive to achieve more through whatever means" (R4 4:15).*

Respondent 1 highlighted that in order for one to advance in their career, it is important to be noted and be present in the eyes of seniors, hence political behaviour allows one to be recognised, *"everybody wants a recognition for what they are doing from their bosses" (R1 1:9).* This point was further supported by Respondent 15 who stated that people want to be *"in that consideration list of the people to be promoted or to be given that position or to be managed" (R15 15:6).*

5.3.3.4 Insecurities

Three out of the 15 respondents felt that political behaviour is enabled by insecurities within individuals on their capabilities or their leadership. According to Respondent 2, people tend to compete and partake in political nuances because they feel that they are inferior to their counterparts, and hence they see this as the only way to progress, *"Some incapable people when they feel that, okay, they are not able to compete with their counterparts or peers in the organisation, they resort to those kinds of activities, you know, to ensure to grow higher up the in rank, or the organisational ladder and to get some extra benefit, whatever way they can manage" (R2 2:6).*

Respondent 10 suggested that political behaviour is enhanced by leaders that are not confident in their leadership capabilities and who are not willing to let go of the reigns. It is also practiced by. *"people having their own insecurities and not understanding the true essence of leadership, and just wanting to be bosses that dictate to their staff and they don't want to be challenged" (R10 10:7).* Respondent 13 reiterated similar stances, stating that political behaviour, *"exists when the leadership is a bit weak, and exists when the leadership*

facilitates political behaviour" (R13 13:9). This type of behaviour then is recognised to promote non-performance and lack of transparency.

5.3.3.5 Diversity

Diversity is an enabler of political behaviour as it shows how people with different backgrounds interact with each other regardless of gender, race and age. Respondent 4 mentioned that, *"...employees come from varied backgrounds and culture so they're bringing their own experiences to an organisation…." (R4 4:5).* These respondents want to show how some people will respond in terms of political behaviour based on their past experience.

Responded 11 gave examples within South Africa, where racial factionalism is present, *"...prevalent in South Africa, particularly around racial lines. You find somebody that joins an organisation for the first time. He maybe Sotho and therefore more likely to identify with more Sotho speaking people. So, that is what they are more likely to do. Same thing with Afrikaans, you will draw to people that will look like you, sound like you and act like you…" (R11 11:6).*

5.3.3.6 Company Culture

Respondent 9 identifies that the company plays a crucial role in enabling political behaviour within a workspace, due to its direct interaction and influence with the human behaviour. The respondent mentions that*," ...its culture. You have human beings; you cannot separate the human element of our existence, so they are enabled by number of things. They could be enabled by how the organisation came into being, how the working came into being (R9 9:3).* Slackening within company procedures and protocols also introduces company political behaviour, *"...the company does not do anything since a person who actually raised actually raised it unnecessarily. That is being left alone as well…." (R 6 6:15).* This gives room for people to take advantage as they see their political moves being benefited.

5.3.3.7 Set mind-sets

This theme was brought up by two of the interviewees. According to these two respondents, people already have a specific pre-dispositioned mentality; hence they are resistant to change. This sort of mind-set could therefore enable political behaviour. According to Respondent 8, *"so, you will find people that have been a lot longer in an organisation are more set in their ways. Well, a lot of times they do not want to change. They just want to follow the way they've been doing it", (R8,).* This point is further reiterated by Respondent 11

who commented that, *"a lot of people will come into a particular working environment with strongly held beliefs. They are likely to look for people that they can relate to in that environment"* (R11 11:4).

5.3.3.8 Recognition

Two respondents felt that political behaviour was enabled due to the need of an individual to be recognised for their work. Respondent 1 simply put it as, *"everybody wants a recognition for what they are doing from their bosses", (R1 1:10).* This tune was in sync with what Respondent 14 felt as well, *"people that are just born with that aggression and they need to be recognised", (R14 14:3*).

5.3.3.9 Technology

Respondent 6 felt that the main enabler of political behaviour was technology*: "technology and information today causes people to much be… much more aware, and knowledgeable about what is going on. The availability of information has really forced us to change the way we manage, or the way we lead" (R6 6:7).*

5.3.3.10 Hidden Agenda

Respondent 13 shows that people will take part in political behaviour to drive a hidden agenda, *"...The fundamental reason for political behaviour is hidden agendas. In my view, that is the single most reason…." (R13 13:4),* but however, this is because Respondents 5 shows that political behaviour is always rewarded, *"...it tends to be rewarded depending on whoever is involved, but most of the time this political behaviour is rewarded…" (R5 5:4).*

5.3.3.11 Conclusion

From the results, it has been highlighted that the main contributor to political behaviour within the work place is inherent human nature and culture. Politics is enabled by organisations as suggested by some of the respondents; however, it seemingly is up to the individual themselves to ensure that the political environment is either positive or negative. Furthermore, political behaviours are enhanced by the need for progress and recognition in one's career, and potentially underlying zeal to achieve and do better than one's peers. An interesting facet is that political behaviour can often be induced by insecurities within individuals, and these insecurities are often stemmed by the need to remain in power, especially in individuals in senior positions.

5.3.4 Research Question 4

How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work, considering upcoming new technologies, innovation and new developments?

This research question seeks to identify how politics has been affected or changed with advancements in technology.

Table 5.6: Research Question 4 frequency

Rank	Theme	Frequency	Respondents
1	No change with Technology – based on human nature	8	R1, R3, R4, R5, R7, R9, R14, R15
2	Political Behaviour Changed with Technology	7	R2, R6, R8, R10, R11, R12, R13

5.3.4.1   No Change with Technology

Eight respondents felt that innovation and advancements in technology have not influenced or changed organisational politics or political behaviour in any way. These participants highlighted that since political behaviour stems from human nature and behaviour, technology changes have minimal effect on it.

Respondent 1 states that as long as there are people, even with ever changing technology, politics will remain - *"...If there are 10 or more people, the politics will remain…" (R1 1:10).*

Similar sentiments were shared by Respondents 3 and 4 who stated that since there will always be a human element within businesses and organisations, political behaviour and organisational politics will be present. Respondent 3 states that, *"...because businesses are not entirely worked by the computers and an automated environment, there is still a human factor behind it…." (R3 3:53).* Respondent 4 further highlighted this point by stating that *political behaviour is driven by human behaviour…" (R4 4:34), and that"…the raw material are the people and with people comes politics. They are not machines…" (R4 4:35).*

According to Respondent 5, politics still exists even with technology; it is just that political strategies have to be adapted to suit the changes in technology. *"…So, I think the nature of politics changes. I don't think the political skills change, and where I found this, again so when you modernise, or you are bringing technology, and the way I saw it again is from a*

change perspective". Respondent 14 shared a similar view point stating that, ultimately it is not about the technology, but rather about the political skill or the individual, *"I think political skills remain a very dominant skill for anybody to have. You may have the technology but if you cannot convince the people then it's just as good as bad technology"*.

Respondent 7 states that, political behaviour is not going to change due to the influence of technology because politics is often driven by an individual's mind-set. *"...People's behaviour is not going to change, because people behaviour is driven by the mind. The mind has got three parts: the new brain, the middle brain and the old brain. The new brain is all about emotions, the middle brain is all about reactions, and the old brain is all about surviving. Whether you do Chat-bot or whether you do whatever, these three things will exist.…" (R7 7:32).* In fact, this respondent held the notion that technology will just be used as a different tool to get the politics and political behaviour across. However, this does not mean without technology political behaviour will disappear.

Respondent 9 summed up the link between humans, their behaviour and technology as follows, *"...Technology, modernisation, Innovation, it's basically how we do things, but corporate politics is how we relate to each...It's not like when innovation came and now there's a computer between you and me. You talk to a computer, there is still human relations... the higher you get into a corporate ladder, the more interpersonal skills are important... there still are technologies but I still have to sit in meetings I still have to talk to people. I still must sit and have public meetings in our environment. Community protests and then you must go to a public meeting. I must sit there and hear what the MEC wants me to do. So, the only technology part is me recording the conversation. Or maybe having an app that will transcribe our conversation to make it easy when I get back to office or whatever the case may be, but the human interaction is still there.…" (R9 9:4).*

Respondent 15 takes an interesting stand and states that as long as organisations are not run in a bureaucratic manner, politics will exist, whether there are innovations or advancements in technology, *"...If the politics is not there, then it is bureaucracy…We talk about process, process, process. But processes also lead to bureaucracy…" (R15 15:1).*

An interesting insight brought up by Respondent 3 is that cultural change has been introduced into the working world as a result of modernisation, saying; *"...The start-ups always had the same culture. The culture was: involve everybody, take answers from everybody; have everybody's views. That kind of a consensus approach…an inclusive environment. Somewhere it changes where the organisation starts maturing and starts becoming profitable and sustainable; then you find that there is a slight shift, and that shift is towards the typical pyramid; lesser number of positions, a greater number of people wanting*

those positions…." (R3 3:54). This implies that technology could induce politics because many positions are becoming automated, and fewer positions are becoming available to human resources. Respondent 3 further goes on to acknowledge how women have recently recognised modernisation and the implementation of gender equality policies, *"...And over the ten odd years there has been talk about gender equality and women breaking the glass ceiling, so I think, those things have softened that aspect of organisational politics which used to be there in a largely male dominated organisation. So, with a larger number of women in the work force, I think it has naturally curbed…." (R3 3:54)*.

5.3.4.2   Change with Technology

Seven of the 15 respondents feel that enhancements in technology have impacted the political behaviours within companies. Most of these participants see this as a positive change in that advancements in technology have made the work environment more open and transparent and brought in diversity; thereby reducing organisational politics.

Respondent 2 states that politics is often driven by experience and having a particular skill or knowledge of a particular system. According to Respondent 2, the availability of information and knowledge sharing has improved because of technological innovations and advancements; hence this has decreased politics, especially from senior positions to junior positions. Respondent 2 commented that, *"...anybody who achieved any particular skill or even knowledge…. can make a lot of politics out of it. He can send his subordinate and not tell him the clue and make him a fool in front of the superior and then he goes and rectifies the mistake quickly. This kind of politics has almost gone away with the system improvement because now the knowledge is captured. Knowledge is anywhere; you can access anybody who is joining today, and you can access this without any trouble…" (R2 2:2)*.

Respondent 12 also shares similar sentiments and brings forth that technological advancements have made the working environment more transparent, with information being readily available. *"...I think previously people could make biased decisions and hide it and get away with it. Now as transparency is required people are relying more and more on cliques and support, external from themselves…" (R12 12:6)*.

Respondent 6 also felt that technology has helped in decreasing politics within organisations because of information being readily available and accessible to everybody *"...I think it is good. I think the technology and the availability of information is forcing us today to really start to treat people as people…" (R6 6:27)*. Respondent 8 also supported this stating that, *"...in the olden days, the politics was governed and led by the older generation due to the experience, where younger generation are thinking differently…." (R8 8:9)*. The implication

being that there is constant knowledge sharing because of technological advancements; hence there are not certain individuals that are privy to certain skills or knowledge based purely on their experience. This means politics especially from a senior level to a junior level is mitigated to some point.

However, it is also interesting to note that Respondent 6 also feels that technology and its advancement could contribute negatively towards politics as well, increase the political behaviours within organisations. Respondent 6 suggests that employees and managers may also misuse technology for their own self-centred achievements, *"...one thing which I've seen happen in the last ten years especially, is that people are using the technology to their own advantage, because it creates that anonymous wall. So, you can hide behind a wall of, "we will not declare who is raising the complaint" …" (R6 6:29).*

Respondent 6 elaborated how technology can be used in the wrong way by mentioning, *"…it's really hard when somebody uses the compliance line to come after you and then the company behave in a certain manner and luckily for me and all six cases, nothing could be substantiated…"* (R6 6:3). However, the respondent further goes on to talk about how company culture can affect follow through to a matter saying, *"…the company does not do anything since a person who actually raised actually raised it unnecessarily. That is being left alone as well…" (R6 6:4).* This is supported by respondent 13 who mentions other ways in which technology has made it easy to negatively implicate someone; *"...blind-copy in an email. That is the most powerful tool for playing politics in an organisation. So yes, with technology; I can write to a group of people, what is going on and then I can blind copy the boss showing that to him. Again, like I said lack of transparency…" (R13 13:3).* Respondent 11 mentions that*, "...I think technology has been a very useful, but also dehumanises us…" (R11 11:5).*

Respondent 10 also feels that there is a change in political behaviours experienced with modernisation and advancements in technology, especially within improvements of diversity within the work force, saying that, *"...I'm finding that previously a lot of the Executives or Senior Management used to be males. And if I'll be controversial they use to be white males. Now we see more and more females coming into the senior roles, not as much as they should have, but we're seeing a lot more black people coming into the roles. I think the diversity is allowing…" (R10 10:5).*

5.3.4.3 Conclusion

The findings of this sub-question indicate that political behaviour and organisational politics is inherently a result of human nature and behaviour. The implication being that as long as

there are groups of individuals within organisation, there will naturally be some form of politics. Technology advancements have shown to decrease political behaviour somewhat, most exclusively linked to the fact that information is readily available and accessible to everyone. This has particularly impacted on the political activity between individuals on a higher level to those on a junior level. At the same time, some participants showed that technology can be misused, and this could contribute to an increase in political behaviour and organisational politics.

5.3.5 Sub-Question 5

If the senior executives have to mentor somebody, what would their advice be on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?

This question aimed to understand the type of advice managers provide to their juniors and mentees. This was also strategic in that it allowed the researcher to understand the ethical foreground placed by these managers to junior level staff.

Table 5.7: Research question 5 frequencies

Rank	Construct	Frequency	Respondents
1	Integrity and being ethical	9	R1, R2, R3, R7, R8, R9, R10,
2	Social Astuteness	7	R1, R4, R6, R13, R12, R11, R15,
3	Concern for others	7	R1, R3, R5, R6, R11. R12, 15
4	Authenticity	5	R7, R8, R9, R10, R15

5.3.5.1   Integrity and being ethical

The most prevalent responses that were given were aligned to integrity and being ethical. Out of the 15 participants, nine participants supported ethical behaviour that is linked to integrity. Integrity is identified as the ability of a person to have turned decisions and not to be shaken or convinced into taking part in illegal activities whilst at work.

This is shown by Respondent 1 who says, _"The word ethical itself says that you don't follow the wrong practices. The important point we need to understand is politics is part of your career and your organisation. But if it is not doing harm to the organisation and it is viewed_

in a positive way, it is the most welcome thing and I don't think you can stop it. Because everybody wants to grow, and everyone wants to have success… (R1 1:52). Respondent 2 tries to bring out the link between being ambitious and having integrity at the same time. In their discussion, they found out that ambition can either lead to one exhibiting an egotistic behaviour or a behaviour that embraces others within the business space. *"…There are three buzz words in it. One is being ambitious. If someone becomes ambitious, I'm not meaning greedy. What I mean by ambitious, it means that he dreams, he wants to be something. Second, is that when he is not able to achieve in a straightforward manner…."* (R2 2:23). Respondent 2 believes that juniors and mentees need to be ambitious, however, they have to have integrity and do things in an ethical manner in order to achieve success and career progression.

Respondent 3 commented that*, "…the ethics is not something that you bring into an organisation. It should be the way of life. Ethics should be the way of life. The right thing is the only thing to do…"* (R3 3:41).

Respondent 7 suggests that one needs to be ethical and maintain integrity in any tasks that are taken on, i.e., ***"…don't do any commitment without knowing absolutely sure that you can commit to it…"* (R7 7:3).**

Respondent 8 acknowledges the presence of emotions when making decisions. He strongly suggests that. one should be clearly discreet between making decisions and not make decisions emotionally, *"…I think you need to be true and it's important to do the right action. Like I said, not to have your decisions led by emotions…"* (R8 8:27)

Respondent 9 shares their experiences on how they have encountered situations that have challenges to use integrity to survive within the workspace. He specifically mentions that working in a government-controlled environment requires one to have a high level of integrity. Lack of integrity may result in having expensive enemies, *"…in government procurement, the worst space that you can find yourself in is two spaces: sleeping with the politicians; or be the politicians' enemy. Those are the two extreme places you going to find yourself in. You don't want to find yourself being too loved by politicians that you going to be their puppet…"* (R9 9:6).

Respondent 10 mentions the point which is highly relevant to people who are still growing in their career and who are still being managed by a higher authority. This respondent advised mentees on the importance of achieving deadlines, *"…As a youngster you need to have integrity, if there's a deadline, and you said you'd meet it, you need to meet that deadline. If*

you realise that you'll struggle to meet that deadline, then communicate to your superiors…" *(R10 10:30).*

Seemingly, most managers felt that juniors and mentees need to behave in an ethical manner, and act with integrity in everything they committed to.

5.3.5.2 Social Astuteness

The second most prevalent advice given by executives to the mentees is to have social astuteness that is seeing the capability of one to take a back seat and observe, with reference to political behaviour. They will be observing how others behave so that they can align their own behaviour to match how they interact. Seven out of the 15 participants were identified to advise their mentees to have social astuteness.

Respondent 15 identified the importance of having characteristics such as patience to drive one's social astuteness, *"...most important is patience; trust in your capability, and perseverance…" (R15 15:4).* They further go onto discourage mentees from taking part in political behaviours within the organisation. They only encouraged to take part when need be, *"...Never indulge in politics but be aware of it. Play when it starts hurting you. Don't play for the fun of getting into politics. See politics is gossiping behind the back of others, back-biting about others, bragging about yourself…" (R15 15:11).*

With an understanding of how people behave, Respondent 1 gives the advantage of having social astuteness, *"...So, you will get into that situation but don't get scared or don't lose heart…" (R1 1:60).* One easily knows how to manoeuvre themselves out of the situation. Respondent 6 shows how one manoeuvres themselves out of the situation, *"...the one thing is just focusing your skills sets because understand one thing, you are getting into a position because of your skill sets, and use your skills sets... "(R6 6:11).*

5.3.5.3 Concern for others

Due to the constant interaction with other parties who are from different and diverse backgrounds, seven participants advised mentees to show concern and respect for other fellow employees regardless of hierarchy.

Respondent 12 brings out the aspect of not only showing concern towards others but also concern towards achieving organisational goals, *"...takes into account the needs and goals of the organisation, which is all the targets which need to be achieved…" (R12 12:30).*

Respondent 6 brings to light the power of manipulating people in a good way using skills, *"...every person, every moment, when you deal with them in a way that they feel they matter. So, take that moment in time to open yourself up, look at it personally and talk only to that person in that moment. That matters to people…" (R6 6:6)*

As much as one has got values, Respondent 11 made it clear that, others have values too and they need to be recognised and acknowledged, *'...so it's about also to understand about those other people have values, at the same time it's also understanding the values that you have with your other colleagues to…" (R11 11:23).*This is also expanded by respondent 1 who encouraged career growth but not at the expense of others, *"...Don't demoralise the people and don't give a wrong direction to the people" (R1 1:53)*.

Overall, the functional and executive managers that were interviewed felt that juniors and their mentees need to show a genuine concern for others and the organisation. The aim is to progress and advance in one's career, however, what should be noted is that it should not be at the expense of the wellbeing of other individuals.

5.3.5.4 Being authentic

Five out of the 15 respondents encouraged mentees to show authentic behaviour. Authentic behaviour may include being accountable, honest and truthful*.*

Respondent 9 brings to light how being unethical on the job can end up in one having the wrong friends for the wrong reason*, "...in government procurement the worst space that you can find yourself in is two spaces: sleeping with the politicians; or be the politicians' enemy. Those are the two extreme places you going to find yourself in. You don't want to find yourself being too loved by politicians that you going to be their puppet…" (R9 9:6)*.

Respondent 7 shows that authentic behaviour involves declining opportunities for career progression if it is not aligned to ones beliefs ,*"...let go of an opportunity even if it has a very gross margin but it involves doing something that you should not be doing because, sometime or the other, it will come back to hit you…" (R7 7:4)*.

5.3.5.5 Conclusion

It is evident from the results that juniors and mentees need to show integrity in the work that they perform as suggested by nine out of the 15 respondents that were interviewed. Another key factor is to have the ability to deal socially on an amicable level. This helps form good relationships which also plays an integral part in career advancements. Overall, all participants shared the notion that youngsters should act ethically and show concern for

others. This in a way informs the juniors and mentees to suppress the need to play into negative and dirty politics within the workplace.

5.4   Overall chapter conclusion

The political behaviour, skills and organisational politics that are crucial for career advancement and progression were presented in this section. Respondents made it apparent that politics is present in organisations and it cannot be avoided. This implies that individuals need to be cognisant of the political environment that they are in. The choice was up to whoever is taking part in politics to use it in the right way, or to remain *"politically illiterate".* Expert perceptions suggest that politics can be neither labelled good nor bad but it is dependent on the intended use. However, the political skills and behaviours portrayed in the study were suggested to be inherent and often driven by management and the organisation's culture. The findings also indicated that astuteness was a necessary political skill which could advance one's career growth. Additional insights were given by respondents with regards to how modernisation and changes in technology impacted political behaviours. Respondents acknowledged that technology is merely used as tool for politics, however, since, there needs to be a human element present, it was evident that the role of political behaviours were not affected much by innovation and advancements in technology. Respondents also illustrated that one needed to impart knowledge to juniors who were still climbing the corporate ladder (mentorship). From the findings it was also evident that juniors do not play politics that much, with some not even being aware of the existence of politics, however, the results highlighted that as the corporate ladder becomes narrower, one begins to become more aware of the existence of politics, with some playing politics by default due to the responsibilities that came with a position.

CHAPTER 6:   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1   Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses in detail the results that were presented in Chapter 5, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the role of organisational politics in the career progression of functional and executive level managers. This section links the findings to the existing literature presented in Chapter 2. The researcher aims to build a model that can clarify the connection between political enablers, the required response to politics, the technological developments and the value of political behaviour. These connections will then be used to decide the enablers, political behaviour and aptitudes that determine the career progression of functional and executive level managers. The profundity of the discoveries from this investigation gave a view of organisational politics and political behaviour in work spaces.

6.2   Discussion of Results for Research question 1

Research Question 1: How do the functional and executive level managers perceive political behaviour?

Lin and Sun (2018) define perception as the processing, interpreting, selecting and organising of information by people. This sub-question aims to uncover the perceptions that functional and executive level managers have about political behaviour and organisational politics in an attempt to understand more about political behaviour. This aim is in line with Vigoda and Drory (2006) who state that political behaviours can be understood by listening to the perceptions of others.

All the 15 participants that were interviewed commented on how they perceived political behaviour within the work place. From the presented results, three main themes emerged under this sub-question; (1) Political behaviour and organisational politics were perceived as bad; (2) Political behaviour and organisational politics were perceived as good; (3) Political behaviour and organisational politics can be both good and bad.

6.2.1   Perceived as bad

As indicated in the findings in Chapter 5, four of the participants perceived political behaviour and organisational politics as bad. One of the reasons for this view was that political behaviour and organisational politics revolve around self-centred endeavours which make them *"very bad for organisations"*. The results show that a self-involved leader is one who

will always see themselves as the next successor and will use all possible opportunities to eliminate competition. This implied that people often do whatever is necessary to drive their own agenda even if it is at the expense of others, which is in line with the findings by Beugre and Liverpool (2006), who state that, often those that are in a better position and have more power satisfy their own needs and interests at the expense of others.

The findings also indicate that if instead of focusing on career progression and organisational goals, one chooses to take part in politics that could create, *"very-very expensive enemies"* who could have a very detrimental effect on one's career progression. Curtis, (2003) and Poon (2003), support this notion that involvement in politics negatively impacts job performance, or as Dixon (2002) puts it, 'political skills and behaviours are detrimental to growth'.

An interesting piece of advice that was provided was that one needs to be aware of politics, as it is *"always there"*, but, at the same time, one should stay as far away from it as possible, by "*understanding"* and finding ways of *"navigating"* around politics. This makes sense, as Vigoda and Drory (2006) highlight that the presence of political behaviour should be confined through necessary actions in order to ensure organisational benefits.

From these findings, it is evident that political behaviour is more often than not associated with negative impacts as it is associated with self-centred gain and greed. This can never be a good thing, because as Wang and Murnighan, (2011) note that, behaviours such as greed can directly influence the well-being of others and they can induce conflict between parties, which can prove to be detrimental for one's own career advancement and organisational growth.

6.2.2   Perceived as good and bad

There was an equally distributed notion that politics could prove to be either a good or bad influence depending on how it is used, that is, it can be both *'positive and negative'.* Kumar and Ghadially (1989, as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010) have a balanced and value-free approach towards organisational politics as they state that while politics can harm the organisation, organisations could also profit from it. Kacmer and Baron (1999) also acknowledge that politics can be both good and bad as its effects can run from termination of jobs to promotions. This point was further highlighted by Vigoda and Drory (2006, p.331) who state that politics can be, "a neutral concept that can be either positive or negative in how it occurs".

It was identified that skewness of impact was dependent on how the user intended to use politics and behaviour. The impacts of politics and political behaviour are often dependent on

'*senior management's drive'*. This fact is evidenced by Kacmer and Baron (1999) that suggest that there is a number of correlations that impact politics and these include but are not limited to age, gender and the need for power.

Furthermore, the findings show that some of the decisions that involve recognising and promoting an individual were seen to '*not always be based on facts',* but rather on emotions which could '*demoralise'* the affected party. This is true as according to Hawkins and Miller (2006), politics is an exercise of power and influence that primarily occurs outside of the formal organisational processes and procedures and it forms its basis on influence and tactics.

At the same time, however, awareness of such potential decisions leads one to take part in healthy '*competition between the colleagues'.* This implies that the use of political behaviour through healthy competition and if done using strategic and tactful ways that do not inflict harm on others, could potentially improve one's career growth and allow one to further their career. This notion is supported by Kurchner-Hawiks and Miller (2006 as cited in Vigoda & Drory, 2006), that organisational politics may be a foundation of competition if employees have the right knowledge. According to literature, healthy and competitive environments can help employees to exhibit strong political skills (Cacciattolo, 2015; Landells & Albrecht, 2017).

Overall, politics and political behaviour were perceived to be both good and bad, depending on how they were utilised. The findings show that politics could create a sense of healthy competition amongst colleagues which could help them further their careers, however, not having one's achievements recognised due to preferential treatment could have a demoralising effect on an individual and their career progression. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that sometimes political behaviour could be vested to improve personal interests over organisational interests, which could prove good for an individual's growth and advancement but could be detrimental to the organisation.

6.2.3 Perceived as good

Of all the participants, three perceived political behaviour as positive. Politics is regarded as '*regular'* in work environments and its absence can be *frowned upon'.* It was noted that leaders and managers in this age are the ones that get to shape and direct the company towards organisational goals. These findings are supported by Saleem (2015) who postulates that leadership has a stronger effect on the employees' attitude towards their jobs through the way they relate and portray themselves. Furthermore, findings highlight politics and political behaviours as '*necessary'* and as being '*key for growth'* in the fast-changing

world. According to Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2006, p.341), having networks and political influence is considered politically positive. Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) further list some of the positive results of positive politics which include but are not limited to career advancement, recognition and status (p.256). Luthans et.al (1985), Randolph (1985) (as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot,2010) and Blickle (2011) further strengthen the claims linking prosperous managers using politics as they also support the claim that organisational politics has many positive aspects.

Overall, a few of the participants identified that political skills are crucial for success in organisational politics, as they enable one to make clear decisions that are can enable one to influence and gain support as well as recognition when they attempt to achieve something. However, achievement of goals had to be in line with ethical considerations.

6.2.4   Conclusive findings for sub-question 1

This sub-question was an attempt for the researcher to understand and contextualise the perceptions that functional and executive level managers have when it comes to politics and political behaviour. From the findings it can be concluded that there is a perception that politics can be considered as positive or negative, depending on how it is used. How politics is perceived and ultimately used is based on one's values and beliefs. This is because political behaviours require the use of strategy and tactical behaviour which is used at the discretion of the person taking part in politics. This implies that the use of politics could help achieve both good goals necessary for career advancement or can also be used to destroy and connive against another's career, acting as a hindrance to the career progression of others. At the same time, politics may positively enhance an individual's career growth but it can also be detrimental to the organisation's goals.

6.3   Discussion of Results for Research question 2

Research Question 2: What political behaviour, skills or situations have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?

Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas and Lux (2007, p.291) define political skill as, "a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, with cognitive, affective, and behavioural manifestations". Political skills and behaviour can contribute to leadership skills and career advancement (Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010). This is supported by various authors whose literature reviews show that skills are job performance indicators (Blickle, Kramer, Schneider, Meurs, Ferris, Mierke, Witzki, & Momm, 2011b; Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewé, Weitz, & Xu, 2007).

The purpose of this sub-question was to identify the political behaviours and the skills that shape the senior executives' careers. As evidenced by Ferris, Fedor and King (1994) there needs to be an inherent ability to appropriately choose the right behaviour or tactic to ensure success in career advancement. This sub-question also aimed to identify the political skills and behaviours that helped advance the senior executives' careers, as well as those skills and behaviours or lack thereof, which may have hampered their careers in any form.

6.3.1 Astuteness and Strategic Skills

Ferris, Davidson and Perrewe (2005) and Ferris, Treadway, et al., (2005) state that smart workers are associated with high levels of astuteness. From the discussions, the researcher picked up that there needs to be a level of astuteness (smartness/intelligence) in order for one to be successful and progress in their career. This theme ranked the highest with the majority of respondents (13 out of 15) indicating that it was important to be a *"smart worker"*.

The study also recognised the need for individuals to be discrete and for them to know who to speak to, when to speak and how to speak in order for them to progress in their careers. Ferris et al (2007) agrees with this by stating that one needs to be able to skilfully speak with their supervisors and network properly in order for them to progress further. The authors also go on further to say that such individuals will have a tendency to pick their hierarchical fights admirably and they should be able to survey circumstances before choosing how to voice their thoughts to other people. Jarett (2017) also supports these findings and explains that one needs to be self-aware and smart in order for them to be able to know how to tackle situations. If this is done in a plausible manner, career progression is inevitable. Furthermore, the results indicated that individuals or managers who consider whether to voice an idea or an inclination, will not wreck their professions, as they will have applied smart thinking. This sort of behaviour requires high levels of emotional stability and conscientiousness. These traits were identified by Barrick and Mount, (1991). Butcher and Clarke (2006, p.297) also argue that managers who are knowledgeable about the workplace's political domain can manage political behaviours.

It is also evident that companies or organisations play a role in developing an individual. Ismail and Reshani (2018), highlight that companies can facilitate the learning of astute skills and behaviours which can then lead to career success.

Participants also highlighted that being strategic and tactful in politics and within a political environment helps one to maintain transparency within the team and assists in handling people and the various situations that may arise within the workplace. Landells and Albrecht,

(2017) support this view and also add career advancement and recognition as part of the benefits.

Overall, it was revealed that it is important to display a level of intelligence or astuteness, which enables one to make strategic and tactful decisions in order for them to progress in their career. As seen from literature, political behaviours such as astuteness are the ones that get to determine the political skills one uses (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994).

6.3.2 Networking

The second most prevalent theme was networking skills. From the findings, networking skills were identified as enablers of interaction and they encouraged career mobility and *"presented opportunities"* for advancement.

Ferris et al., (2007) suggest that networking is one way by which individuals can lobby for support from subordinates. The results also indicated that having good connections *"swayed"* higher management to exercise their power in an individual's favour. Ferris, Blickle, Schneider, Kramer, Zettler, Solga, Noethen and Meurs (2008) elaborate that politically skilled individuals are aware of themselves, which enables them to network and adjust their behaviours and such individuals can create useful networks that allow them to have additional influence.

From a managerial point of view, networking can also help individuals to form relationships and working connections that help them to gather support from subordinates. These findings is in line with that of Ismail and Reshani (2018) who elaborate that managers who have a strong networking ability fabricate kinships and beneficial working connections. Positive networkers are seen to know when to approach others, know who to approach and are viewed as people who are ready to respond. Networking ability creates beneficial alliances with diverse people. Zettler and Lang (2015) identify networkers to have good negotiating skills and Vigoda (2003) argues that, networking skills enhance the influencing abilities one has.

Overall, it can be concluded that networking skills have a role to play in one's career progression as it has been shown that those who network are likely to be more influential and are supported more than those who are scarce in social circles. Networking allows one to develop friendships and build strong beneficial alliances (Ferris, Treadway et al, 2007).

6.3.3 Goal aligning behaviour

The findings indicate that aligning one's self to company or organisational goals could help advance one's career. Goal aligning behaviours were identified to promote alignment to the organisation and progressing company goals, that is, *"you are motivated by the organisation to achieve that goal"*.

As stated by Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010), a company is a human resource system that is coupled with good political skills that are aligned with positive political behaviours and goal-oriented individuals who contribute to the company's success. Hawkins and Miller (2006) support aligning goal-oriented individuals who are parallel with the company's aims and objectives and claim that they are crucial as these individuals will help boost the organisation's profitability. This is an interesting insight as participants indicated that companies tend to *"trick"* individuals so that they can achieve their goals and they often make use of politics to do so. This is not to the advantage of the individuals but the organisation. However, as indicated by Landells and Albrecht (2017), aligning to organisational goals could prove beneficial for those individuals that help the organisation to grow because it allows for career advancement and recognition.

6.3.4 Deterrents to career progression

From a management point of view, it was revealed that one needs to treat everyone the same in order to help each other to progress in the chosen career. However, the political environments and skills that are portrayed by individuals could lead to favouritism among employees. The findings indicated that supervisors tend to have decision-making biases that are aimed at gaining support thereby, making uniformity *"hard to achieve".* Furthermore, with the rise of technology, uniform treatment has been hard to achieve due to lack of human interface. The compliance hotline is manhandled by poor performing or jealous employees who, secretly and intentionally make up unethical claims to stigmatise individuals they view as competition. Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2006) support these sentiments by indicating that unethical acts are associated with negative politics. Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2006, p.341) also state that organisational politics may be a foundation for competition. Many individuals reported that they have often been at the wrong end of unfair treatment, wherein they have experienced consistence in supporting subordinates even after losing a healthy competition for a post. This implies that the lack of uniform treatment from superiors could be a factor hampering the career advancement of some individuals within a politically charged environment. Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010) recognise that such unfair environments are created by the level of organisational politics and the type of interests and the intentions that individuals possess while coming out with their political behaviour and skills per say.

Furthermore, Drory and Vigoda (2010) suggest that effective HRM is also associated with the actors' level of politics and interests in order for them to determine the environment towards the development of individuals in an organisation. The combination of organisational interests and self-interest as discussed by Drory and Vigoda (2010) may not only determine the kind of politics that is played in an organisation but may also determine career progression according to the findings of this research.

Although displaying astuteness is a good thing that can enhance career progression, it can also be used in negative politics. Individuals can use the sense of knowing when to speak and when not to speak, to raise a complaint (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994). Complaining to a supervisor requires an individual to have a certain level of transparency and they should be upfront. *Being honest,"* straightforward and *"blunt"* were skills that were identified as vital for one to have in order for one to have positive career advancement. In negative politics, this behaviour can be manipulated to achieve one's own personal goals. Such sabotaging behaviours within organisations are meant to deter and hinder individuals from progression or they can cause career progression at the expense of others. When one loses coercive powers over a subordinate to another subordinate, there is bound to be social undermining and sabotage. This was highlighted when one of the employees was identified by a new mentor whilst they already had one. According to Ferris, Fedor and King (1994), one will use their political power to drive their disguised self-serving motives.

Figure 6.1: Influence of political behaviours, skills on career progression
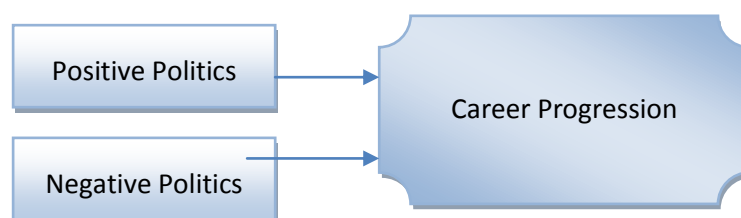
6.3.5   Conclusive findings for research question 2

Ferris, Davidson and Perrewe, (2005) as well as Ferris, Treadway, et.al (2007) conceptualise political skills under four critical dimensions which are social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity. All four of these skills and behaviours were identified in the findings, with astuteness and networking ability/skill identified to be the most prominent and it was highlighted that it needed skills and behaviours to advance one's career. Political behaviours may be seen in three forms; upwards which entails that one is in need of recognition and support; downwards which means managers are influencing or suppressing subordinates and laterally, which is when

there is competition between subordinates, team working or formation of coalitions. Coalitions as highlighted by interviewees are not necessarily negative, they can be constructive to one's career when used alongside legitimate political behaviours. What is interesting to note is that, there needs to be a factor of uniform treatment that is added into the mix in order to ensure that there is fairness when identifying those who are worthy of promotion or career advancement. Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010, p.197) suggest that environments that do not promote injustice and unfairness are conducive.

6.4   Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What enables political behaviour in organisations?

The researcher sought to identify the main enablers of political behaviour in organisations. Landells and Albrecht, (2017 argue that benefits to partaking in politics include career advancement, recognition and achieving outcomes. The main enablers that emerged from this discussion include human nature, behaviour and culture, personal ambition and rewards, career progression, insecurity, diversity, company culture, set mind-set/ resistance to being challenged, need to be recognised, technology and hidden agendas. The top five themes identified in the study as indicated in Table 5.5 matches the enablers of ~~career progression~~ political behaviour identified by Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen (2010); Vigoda and Drory (2006); Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005), as well as Ferris, Fedor and King (1994).

6.4.1   Human nature, behaviour and culture

Literature suggests that as long as there are human interactions involved, there will be a need for political skills and behaviours within organisations. The results of this study portray a similar notion by identifying human nature, behaviour and culture as the most prevalent enablers of political behaviour. Political behaviour was seen as an *"inherent"* part of human nature, which also agrees with the study conducted by Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, (2010) who postulate that human behaviour and the situations that one has encountered drive politics.

Individuals aim to be better and want to achieve more than their counterparts and this is natural as people are born with this drive. This is supported by Ferris et al., (2007) who argue that inherent political behaviours can be used for personal ambition as personal resource development. Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris and Hochwarter, (2008) as well as Barrick and Mount (1991) also indicate that there is a link between self-efficacy and job performance. People who intuitively crave competition might be wanting to progress.

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However, in line with these findings, there was a sense that this culture and human element becomes more prominent or is enabled when it is connected to organisational culture, that is how the *"organisation came into being and how the worker came into being".* It was also noted that the behaviours and cultures exhibited by staff within management positions were more of a stimulus to political behaviour. The implication is that the organisational culture and inherent behaviour of high-level staff plays a role in determining the organisation's political landscape. This finding makes sense as Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, (2010); Gotsis and Kortezi, (2010) as well as Cacciattolo (2015) all indicate that politically skilled management could manoeuvre volatile company situations by showcasing feelings of trust, confidence and sincerity.

6.4.2 Personal Ambition

The second-highest ranked enabler of political behaviour was found to be personal ambitions. Respondents mentioned that personal ambition is often a driving force for political behaviour, and it is closely intertwined with human nature and the experiences one has faced. People feel that, *"they can achieve something more through this political channel".* As identified by Wang and Murnighan (2011, p.288), people are naturally becoming enemies because they desire the same objects, or they foresee the likelihood of wanting similar items and they look to pre-empt each other. This could also be attributed to the concept of scarcity and competition (Zaleznik, 1970).

Personal ambition is the individual's drive to achieve more results by trying to influence others' decisions and it is particularly seen in those people who are in management positions. Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2 shows how one's ambitions can lead to interpersonal processes that will need the individual to employ political skills (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2007). Randolph (1985) (as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010) supports these findings by stating that personal goals often drive politics in a work space. This is further supported by concepts of dark personalities created due to their personal interests and ambitions (Templer 2018) and demonstrated in Figure 2.10 of the HRM model of Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, (2010) where the extent of self-interest determines the outcomes of politics and organisational goals.

What should be noted is that if there are no areas or avenues for personal ambitions to go recognised, it will enable political behaviour. Ismail and Reshani (2018) demonstrate that companies that fail to build effective career development systems for their employees fail to secure employee creativity which could potentially create competitive environments with scarce resources.

6.4.3 Career progression

Another factor that was identified to drive political behaviour within organisation was the need for career advancement. Cacciattolo, (2015) supports this finding and suggests that political behaviour and skills may be important facets in career progression. Blickle (2011) comments that there is a positive correlation between political skills and career progression.

This need to *"do better than the rest and the drive to achieve more through whatever means",* could see individuals using influential skills to lobby for support from senior management (Ferris, Blickle, Schneider, Kramer, Zettler, Solga, Noethen, & Meurs, 2008; Todd, Harris, Harris, & Wheeler, 2009).

The lack of career progression could be more of an enabler of political behaviour than the need to advance in one's career. As seen from the findings, people can encounter an extensive variety of difficulties in their careers, from being laid off; not being requested to join an undertaking, accepting rejection on a basic proposition, being denied a coveted advancement and often failing to progress in one's career and all these could result in negative political behaviour. In fact, a correlation by Blickle (2011) suggests that career development shows a negative correlation with organisational politics. This implies that if there is scope for individuals to advance in their careers, then organisational politics does not have much of an effect on one's career progression. This is in line with Kacmer and Baron (1999) who note that promotion opportunities and lack of promotions give rise to politics.

6.4.4 Insecurity

A few participants recognised "insecurity" as a factor driving political behaviour, it is important to highlight that political behaviour could inherently stem from negative feelings and traits. Respondents insinuated that, *"the fear of losing a job"* is an insecurity that will probe one to want to rise up the ladder at a faster rate than their peers, that is the need for career progression is due to the need for better job security (Schein, 1971). "S*carcity of resources"* could also create insecurity and the need to move up the corporate ladder in fear of retrenchment. These findings are supported by existing studies such as the one by Vredenburgh and Shea-VanFossen, (2010) who show that scarcity of resources create organisational politics.

6.4.5 Diversity

Although not noted as the highest ranked, diversity, was also identified to contribute to political behaviours within organisations. According to participants, diversity, which inherently is associated with human culture, behaviour and nature is, *"present in organisations"* and it is a result of being brought up in *"different backgrounds"*.

The fifth ranked sub-theme was identified as diversity and it was said to be an enabler of political behaviours. Differences in people induce political behaviours that prompt one to react in a particular way. There were two respondents, R4 and R11 who both identified diversity to be *"present in organisations"* and argued that it was due to being brought up in *"different backgrounds"*. This is in line with findings from Drory and Romm (1990) who identify organisational politics as being diverse. Fedor, Ferris, Cook and Russ (1998) also support the view that different dimensions of organisational politics predict different attitudinal outcomes.

Figure 6.2: Enablers of Political Behaviour
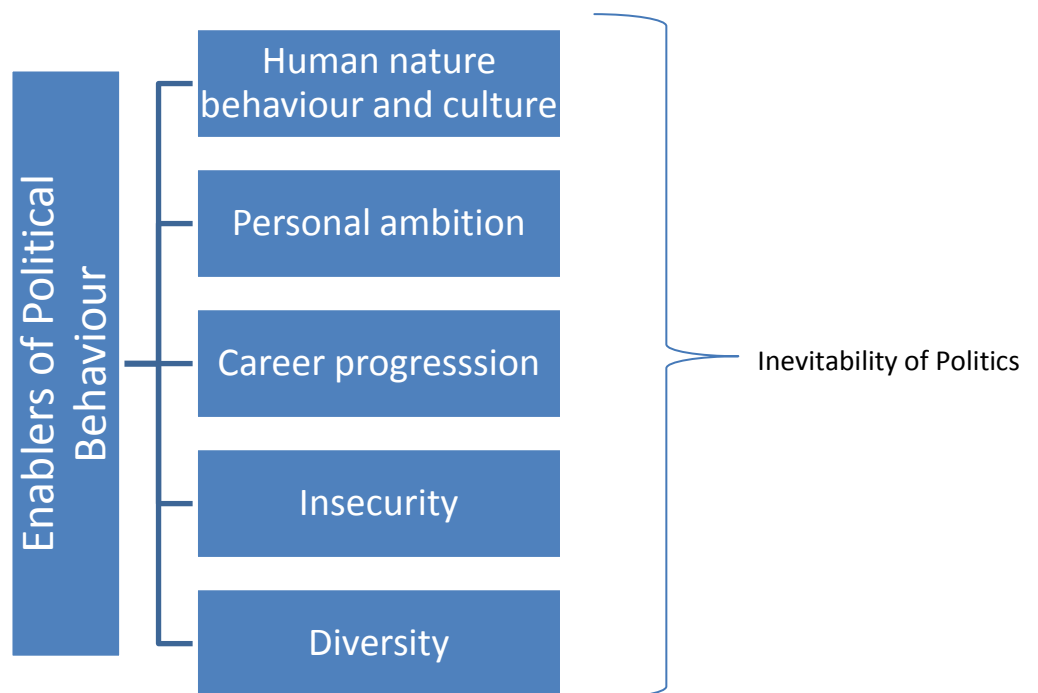
6.4.6   Conclusive findings for Research Question 3

It can be concluded that political behaviour is distinctly enabled by human nature, culture and behaviour. In fact, political behaviour is enabled by situations that induce one to react in a way that will favour one's own goals and purposes, whether it be personal gains, career advancements or recognition. Career progression is enabled by political behaviour, but what needs to be appreciated is that often, it is used by an individual, to progress themselves and it could be at the detriment or disadvantage of others. Typically, personality and background have a huge factor to play in the political behaviour exhibited in the organisation, if any is present at all.

6.5   Discussion of Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4: How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work, considering upcoming new technologies, innovation and new developments?

This sub-question explored the concept of cyber psychology and how political behaviour may have changed with modernisation and innovation in technology. Norman (2017, p.9) defines cyber psychology as the study of the impact of computers, technology and virtual environments on the psychology of individuals and groups. Arts van der Wal and Adams, (2015) identify technology as a dual-faced force in need of guidance.

Most participants believed that the role of political behaviour had not changed in anyway because of changes in technology, innovations and new developments. The findings indicated that politics and associated political behaviour are influenced by human behaviour rather than innovations in technology. The findings revealed that politics is about "*how we relate*" while technology is about *"how we do things".* This implies that human interaction is always needed for politics to exist (Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994). Furthermore, political behaviours were identified as useful tools that were used to *"convince,"* and they cannot be done using a computer. These findings are substantiated and are in line with observations from Ferris, Treadway, et al. (2007) who demonstrate that influence and the ability to convince can be involved in exposing others to manipulation in order to sway decisions. Additionally, individuals use their flexibility and adaptability to correlate to the person whom they are trying to persuade and this cannot be done using technology (Banister & Meriac, 2015). It is the ability of humans to interact with one another and influence each other that impacts political behaviour. In addition, Lam (2000)'s model shows that professionalism narrowed learning and inhibited innovativeness. This means that individuals who drive politics inherently and use human behaviour rather than incorporating and embracing

technology would not see the impact of technology as it inhibits innovativeness. This study further supports the findings presented in Chapter 5.

However, a number of participants believed that changes in technology did bring about changes within the role of political behaviour within organisations. Results indicated that technology has brought in an aspect of data analytics, which comes as a way to move away from having decisions that are influenced by emotions. The participants also highlighted that technology enabled people to have logical decisions that have calculable goals that can measure the most precise and efficient means for the resolution of problems which will increase the availability of information. These changes could lead to greater levels of transparency. According to Ferris et al., (2007) and Jones (1990) a leader who can disguise their ulterior motives and be able to maximize the perception of legitimacy, genuineness, and sincerity possesses high political skills. This means that advances in technology, have led to improved transparency within organisations as there will be no room to "disguise ulterior motives", thereby reducing the influence of political behaviour in organisations. In contrast, however, this form of transparency could lead to the formation of *"cliques"*, which according to Bacharach and Lawler, (1980) and Pfeffer, (1981) could promote growth. This implies that there is still a human element of involvement that is still being promoted, even with changes in technology.

Advances in technology are also thought to influence the type of power that organisation leaders will have in the future. This is in line with Boyd and Crawford (2012) who refer to big data as a system of knowledge that is changing the objects of knowledge, while additionally having the ability to educate how people comprehend human systems and networking. Findings also suggest that changes in technology would bring about diversification of the organisation and improved respect for others by *"treating people as people".* In countries such as South Africa with policies that include BEE and BBBEE, this could lead to black community and women empowerment. However, Irene (2017) opines that such changes will create more factions and undermining behaviours.

Figure 6.3: Advances in technology and modernisation
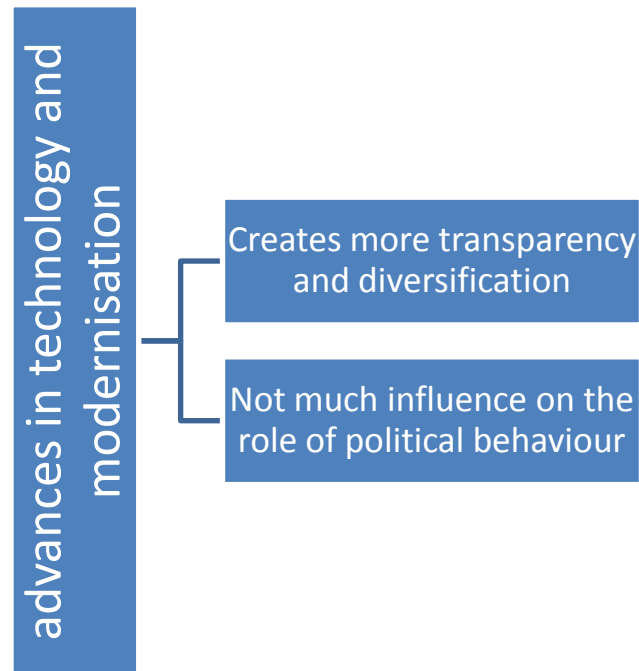
6.5.1 Conclusive findings for Research Question 4

It is evident from the findings that how one perceives technological advancement, innovation, and the modernisation theory of effective political behaviour, is exclusively founded on their experience within senior management positions, the generation in which they were born in and the type of industry the individual works in. Although technology may bring about changes in organisations with the creation of more transparency and diversification, it should be noted that ultimately, political behaviour and its role will remain unchanged as long as there is a human element or interaction involved. Technology could be used as a tool to promote political behaviour but evidence suggests that political behaviour would be non-existent without the human element. Interestingly, it should be noted that factors such as diversification were identified as enablers for political behaviours which is an indication that advances in technology would help humans display further political behaviour within their work space.

6.6 Discussion of Results for Research Question 5

Research Question 5: If the senior executives have to mentor somebody, what would their advice be on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?

Through this sub-question, the researcher sought to uncover the advice senior executives feel is important for junior staff and mentees in order for them to be aware of the political skills and behaviour that are needed in order for them to enhance their career progression. This sub-question tested the elements of ethics and how they add or play a role in politics within the organisation. The main constructs that emerged from the results included the need to act with integrity and ethics, social astuteness, the need to have concern for others and being authentic. Mentoring has also been highlighted as an effective tool in managing politics by Ferris et al (2007).

6.6.1 Integrity and being ethical

The findings show that it is vital for one to have integrity and be ethical in the work they do. This is reaffirmed by various authors in existing literature. However, the existence of ambiguity within companies which creates loopholes was seen to be the main instigator of the lack of integrity and ethics in organisations. Respondents advised that these gaps need to be covered and they encouraged younger employees to have integrity and *"get the job done"*. The quadrant model set up by Baddeley and James (1987) supports these sentiments that were expressed in the findings of the study. From the model, it is apparent that an individual needs to conjugate between being wise and clever, by always being politically aware and acting with integrity or psychologically playing the game (Baddeley & James, 1987).

Findings also indicated that ethical behaviours are a part of human nature, *"inherent"*. This means that an ethical person will be ethical even outside the work space. What is interesting to note, however, is that ethics need to be highly linked with organisational politics (Vigoda & Drory, 2006). This makes sense, as described and indicated by previous sections, human nature is a driver of political behaviour and the type of politics played out (positive or negative) would be based on the individual's ethical values. It was noted that good politics came with good ethics and bad politics came with bad ethics. This is in line with Hawkins and Miller (year), who highlight that any act was considered unethical when it was done with negative intentions or done in the extreme. Supporting sentiments came from Dixon (2002) who urges political leaders that they need not get their hands dirty and maintain high levels of honesty and ethical conduct.

6.6.2 Social Astuteness

Ferris, Treadway, et.al (2007) gave a breakdown of social astuteness as social awareness, networking abilities and apparent sincerity. Politics is acknowledged to be prevalent and regular in work places, and it *"can't be stopped",* hence, as indicated in the findings, self-awareness is necessary for juniors and mentees to recognise people who want to take

advantage of friendships in order to obtain favours. This advice is in line with Bannister and Merriac (2015) who state that individuals who possess a sense of awareness have a better ability to understand social norms and environments within the organisation. Furthermore, these individuals can adapt to change of environment better.

One of the ways that was shown to avoid politics was to "*never indulge*" in politics and focus on skill-sets that are useful in the growing economy. Focusing on skill sets was supported by Braddy and Campbell, (2014), Ferris, Davidson and Perrewe, (2005) and Ferris, Treadway, et.al (2007) who suggest that social astuteness comprises of good observation skills, understanding and interpretation of social interactions and others' behaviour as well as having the ability to attune to diverse social settings and being sensitive to others (Ferris, Treadway, et al., 2007; Banister & Meriac, 2015).

Due to lack of knowledge and experience from juniors in work places, astuteness was encouraged to be obtained from having mentors and sponsors. Mentorship and sponsorship were used as vital tools for gaining knowledge. Ferris et al., (2007) identify mentoring as a developmental experience which is gained/given by role modelling and used as a way of showing mentees how political skills can be used positively. Some of the mentorship experiences identified from findings involve learning conflict management, networking, showing concern for others and learning how interpersonal influences can be used. Mentors can show mentees how to portray political behaviour by playing as part of the team and leading the team to success. Career functions associated with mentoring included: sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and visibility as well as challenging work assignments.

6.6.3   Concern for others

Seemingly, the findings suggest that there needs to be a level of concern for others and the ability to be mindful of fellow colleagues, subordinates and seniors as this will ensure that there are no detrimental effects of political behaviour.

These findings are supported by Randolph (1985) (as cited in Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010) who identifies that showing concern for others is one of the positive impacts of organisational politics. Zettler and Lang (2015) also advise that a level of discreteness should be maintained and they also highlight that politics should not be overdone as it becomes more detrimental than helpful.

Of particular interest were the sentiments that were stating that it is necessary to make people feel important when dealing with them. This is particularly needed for graduates who come straight out of university who often undermine other subordinates who have no

qualification or who have a lower qualification than they do. Graduates have high expectations after completion of their studies as seen by Paadi (2014), who states that some graduates think that degrees open employment doors and they feel that they should not struggle like those who have lesser qualifications (Paadi, 2014).

6.6.4 Authenticity

Although, this did not emerge as a high-ranking theme, it was evident from the findings that there needs to be a level of authenticity that an individual need to protract. Authenticity is a skill that requires an individual to have high levels of accountability, truthfulness and honesty. However, of interest was the advice that was provided that one should not allow themselves to be taken advantage of by being *"too loved by politicians"* such that they become *"puppets"*. Authenticity needs to be coupled with stern decisions that help distinguish what to do and what not to do. Showcasing honesty and accountability are ingredients that can be used by one to manage situations and these sentiments are in line with the studies conducted by Drory and Vigoda-Gadot (2010, p.195) and Cacciattolo (2015).

6.6.5 Conclusive findings for research question 5

There is clear evidence that mentorship is a vital contributor to the type of political behaviour or landscape that is developed in any organisation. Mentees and juniors lack experience, especially from a social front, hence the need to learn to be socially astute (intelligent), authentic, and act with integrity as well as ethics. As evidenced from the discussions, if mentors can instil the value of integrity and ethics into juniors and mentees, they would be able to use politics in the right manner, which could enable them to progress in their careers.

Figure 6.4: Advice to Mentees and Juniors
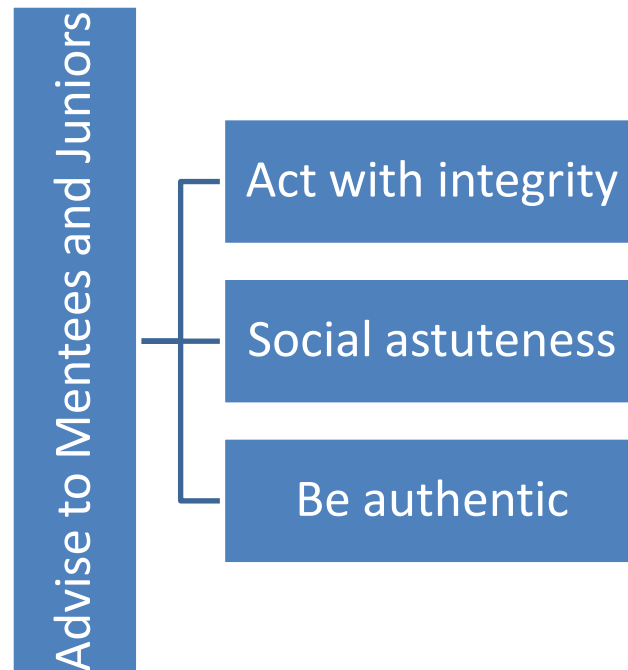
6.7 Overall Conclusion

Analysis of the results confirmed that the study has met the objectives outlined in Chapter 3. The findings confirm that there is indeed a relationship between career progression and political behaviour, and the vast majority of the participants mentioned that political behaviour and type of politics exhibited (negative or positive) is inherently a result of human nature, behaviour and culture. Furthermore, astuteness (intelligence) strongly emerged as a necessary skill in a political environment, which could aid in advancing one's career. An interesting finding, however, was that the lack of platforms to enhance one's career, such as promotions could potentially lead to negative politics. In addition, it was noted that an element of mentorship is needed to steer junior staff in the direction of positive politics. Respondents illustrated that one needed to impart knowledge to juniors who were still rising up the corporate ladder (mentorship). This would guide how politics can be used in the work place. Overall, these findings supported and agreed with the many studies presented in Chapter 2. The analysis has also provided substantial insight to answer the overarching question set out in the beginning of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 7:   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   Introduction:

This chapter discusses the framework that emerged out of this research work and it is based on the work presented in Chapters: 2, 5 and 6. The literature presented in Chapter 2 provided a strong foundation which aided the researcher in formulating the research needs and it paved the path for the findings, discussion and conclusion chapters.

Based on the research findings and discussions, some suggestions, recommendations, managerial implications, future research as well as limitations are presented in this chapter.

7.2   Framework on Politics and Career Progression

The findings and discussions chapter paved a way for the framework presented in Figure 7.1.

The elements of the framework include; enablers of politics; politics' value or need; presence of negative or positive politics; required response and skills to a political situation; mentorship; ethics; perception of politics; latest developments and career progression.

The elements of the recommended framework are briefly discussed below:

7.2.1   Enablers of politics

The factors driving politics in the organisations have been discussed in the earlier sections of this report and they were supported by the findings (Templer, 2018; Wang & Murnighan 2011; Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994; Ferris & Judge, 1991).

The politics enablers that were found in this research include; human nature; ambitions; insecurity; diversity; company culture; mindset; need for recognition and hidden agendas.

As a manager it is important for an individual to know the driving political factors in any context. This can not only equip the manager to understand the people who are present in any system but also it enables him to understand their intentions and the possible political actions that may be plotted against him. Thus, this becomes a determinant of need for politics and the response to politics using good skills.

Figure 7.1: Framework for role of organisational politics in career progression

Some of the Enablers of Politics:

- **Human nature**
- **Ambitions**
- **Insecurity**
- **Diversity**
- **Culture**
- **Mindset**
- **Need for recognition**
- **Hidden Agenda**

SOME FACTORS OF CAREER PROGRESSION

POLITICS
(VALUE, NEED, INEVITABILITY)

POSITIVE POLITICS

NEGATIVE POLITICS

POLITICAL SKILLS

MENTORSHIP

ETHICS

PERCEPTION OF POLITICS

AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENTS AT WORK PLACE

CAREER PROGRESSION
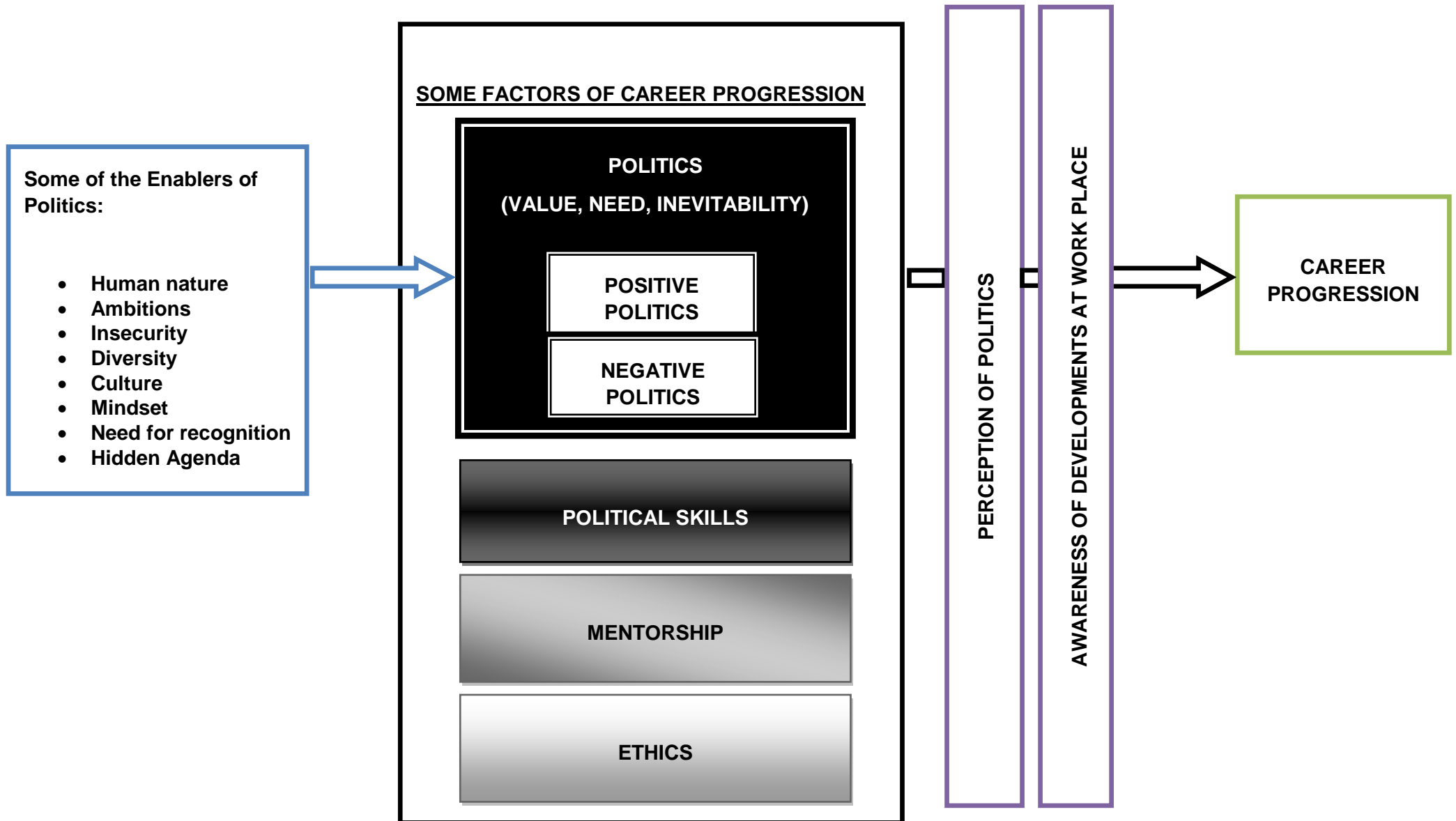
7.2.2 Politics

Most of the literature, findings and discussions have demonstrated in the corporate world, politics is inevitable. Politics has always been present in public, private, small or big organisations, though the intensity may vary (Templer, 2018; Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Banister & Meriac, 2015; Wang & Murnighan 2011; Vredenburgh & Shea-VanFossen, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Ferris et.al, 2005, 2007; Lawrence *et al* 2005; Ferris, Fedor & King, 1994; Ferris & Judge, 1991).

It is noticed from the literature and it is also evident from the findings that politics can be either negative or positive. It is determined by various factors and actors that are involved in a certain context in order to determine the face of the politics. The need of politics to manage the work outcomes and not to get affected and influenced by the negative politics around a manager's work life is very important and it is a difficult task to attain. The ability to manage negative politics and promote positive politics is an outcome from this framework.

Due to the inherent nature of human beings, the presence of politics in the organisations may not be denied. Politics comes at the centre of this model and it is determined by the context factors and the drivers of the politics.

7.2.3 Political skills and the response to the political environment

Political skills as highlighted by Ferris *et. al* (2007) as well as Blickle *et. al*, (2011) and the responses to encounter politics were discussed in Chapters 2, 5 and 6 to highlight the skills importance in a manager's life so that they can be able to respond to certain political situations. Literature as well the findings have provided the evidence that managers may come across various political encounters at different stages of their career and their response will determine the outcome of the situations.

This 'response to politics' based on an individual's skills, operates in coherence with 'politics' to make these as important factors for 'career progression' in the suggested framework. In order to be able to come up with a positive or favourable outcome, the prudent application of political skills is required by the managers. Thus, the skill and expertise of a manager in this block of the framework is a key determinant of the manager's career success.

As a summary, the skills that became evident from this research and comprise of political skills include; strategic skills, networking, apparent sincerity, confidence and social astuteness. The application of these skills in the given context may enable the managers to manage a political situation effectively.

7.2.4 Mentorship

Literature as well as findings highlight that in order to manage politics, it is important to acquire the right mentor who can guide and take one through the process in various stages and situations in work life in any organisation. Ferris et al (2007) and Barker et al (1999) highlight the way mentoring can help in developing required skills and also discuss the experience and the ability in professionals to handle political situations. In the recommended framework as well, mentorship becomes one of the factors that may determine career progression in the organisations' political environment.

7.2.5 Ethics

The importance of ethics has been highlighted in the research's literature, findings and discussion sections (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010; Saleem, 2015). It is understood from this research that as a leader, ethics are paramount for the managers to attain sustainability in their successful career path.

The perception of people around a manager may determine the respect acquired by the individual, thus the perception of being perceived as a fair and honest person establishes a reputation for the manager in the team or organisation. Political skill comprises of 'apparent sincerity', however, as a manager how close one may try to attain the values in reality may determine the leadership of the individual from transactional to transformational.

The ethics of managing the politics in a positive manner become important such that managers are not naïve that they get abused in the system due to others' politics, nor are they so greedy that they become a dark personality and harm others with negative intentions. The right balancing act may be the key.

7.2.6 Perception of politics

Positive and negative perceptions have been discussed extensively in Chapters 2, 5 and 6 (Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Bannister & Merriac 2015; Cacciattolo, 2015). Politics can be perceived as good or bad or neutral in approach. This perception provides a fundamental input to politics and its need in a system. Any manager would require an understanding of this perception in any context where they are operating in. This perception will determine how politics in a context is viewed by people around the manager in an organisation and what may be the managers' appropriate response to any given context, thereby, enabling managers to acquire success in their tasks and attain progression in their career.

7.2.7 Latest developments

This element of the model has been presented in Chapter 5 in the findings and discussed in Chapter 6. For the managers to understand politics, they need to be aware of the latest developments that are related to their place of work. The findings and discussions have shown that it could be technology or processes or any other development related factor that may be utilised as a tool to play politics. These development tools may be utilised to play a positive or a negative political game. Thus as a good manager or a leader, it is the responsibility of the individual to determine the use of such tools towards the greater good and for the attainment of an organisation's goals.

7.2.8 Career Progression

Career progression has various facets as discussed in Chapter 2 of this research. Politics in an organisation and its varying effects on progression in ones career has been studied and discussed in this research. The ability to take through the ideas, plans and agendas through one's team, superiors and peers is an art that determines the success in attaining a given task in the organizations (Cacciattolo, 2015; Blickle et al, 2011; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Ferris et.al, 2005, 2007; Lawrence *et al,.* 2005).

It is also evident from this research that based on politics' existence in a certain context; the response to politics may act as a determinant of career progression. If the response is not

suitable for the given politics and context, it may lead to a negative outcome on one's career, on the contrary if the response is well crafted by utilising the sets of political skills to suit the given context and politics, it may lead to positive outcomes at work. In today's world of competition and ever changing environment, the role of good political skills becomes important in the managers' career. Moreover, it is noticed from the findings that if individuals fail to acquire the desired success in their career, they acquire the path of negative politics due to their insecurity, greed and other instincts. As a good manager or leader, it becomes important for an individual to understand the recommended framework and work towards acquiring the given skills, understanding the context and responding to politics appropriately in order to progress in an organisation.

Another aspect that came out of this research is that when managers do not attain success and progress in their career, they may take the path of negative politics. It is important that managers and professionals understand the presence, need and value of positive politics and that they acquire the right skills and ability to take their ideas and plans through the organisation in order to attain success.

Finding and seeking guidance from a good mentor within the organisation has also been advised by a few participants that came out of this research. They argued that this would enable managers to manage politics, even when encountered with negative politics, and they will attain progression in their careers.

7.3   Managerial Implication

This research highlights the need for the managers and organisations to understand and manage politics. The inevitability of politics arising as an outcome of the past studies and this research suggests that avoidance of politics in the career life may not be an option. The likely approach for the managers could be acquiring the understanding of the dynamics of politics, its perceptions, its enablers and the latest developments in the work places.

Managers or organisations when faced with negative politics or any negative outcomes of politics face challenges. Professionals also come across many dark personalities in their career life and decide to quit. Quitting may not be an option for managers because such personalities and politics may be encountered in any workplace situation as per the research

findings. Thus, one of the approaches of the managers or professionals may be to handle this situation wisely. This is where the study cites the importance and need for managing politics for career progression for managers. When managers may understand the facets of politics and acquire the required political skills (Ferris *et al* 2007; Blickle *et al*, 2011) it may make their tasks and ability to handle a situation effective.

Similarly, senior leadership in organisations may want to apply the model to bring in more awareness on political behaviour and skills in order to facilitate a more positive politics and healthy environment at the work places to enable employees to work towards the organisational goals (Cacciattolo, 2015; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). The study also highlights that mentoring may help younger professionals in managing the politics well within the organisation to encourage progress in their career (Ferris et al, 2007; Barker et al, 1999). The ethical element discussed in this research draws the attention of managers to be aware of their conduct in order for them to become responsible leaders and so that they can have a sustainable career progression (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010; Saleem, 2015).

Managers may be advised to manage politics and acquire career progression at the work places. In order to do this they need to:

- Work towards acquiring the right political skills;
- Understand the context in which politics is playing a role;
- Assess the enablers and drivers of the politics that are leading to a certain behaviour and adapt their response with their political skills;
- Be aware of how politics is perceived in a given environment or context; their response may also be influenced by the perception element;
- Be aware of the developments – Technological or process or any other, taking place at the work place that may have an influence on organisational politics or political behaviour;
- Acquire support and development through mentorship in acquiring skills, experience and ability to manage political situations;
- Develop and conduct programs for young professionals in order for them to understand, appreciate and manage organisational politics and acquire the necessary political skills to effectively work in attaining organisational goals and develop the career of professionals.

Other than the above steps, the most important aspect for the managers to remember and apply at the work place and in their lives is the creation of the positive political environment at the work places that is ethical which can determine a sustainable career progression for managers.

Therefore, this research makes a contribution to understand the many factors to career progression in order to ensure that politics is an enabler and not an inhibitor to career progression.

7.4   Limitations

It has been mentioned earlier that a qualitative research is subjected to various limitations and biases (Arsel, 2017; Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Latif, Abideen & Nazar, 2011; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003; Brink, 1993).

There were biases and limitations in terms of selecting the samples and getting the true representation of the population. Confining to one mode of data collection that is interviews with a selected number of participants had its limitations in this research. In terms of the diversity, practically it was difficult to cover all the sectors or industries, however, a number of different sectors were covered in this research. The most prevalent limitation in getting the overall sample was on the gender, where males dominated the interview list.

While undergoing the interview process, one thing that was difficult to avoid was any impact of the state of the individual's mind while responding to the interview questions. The interviewee' state of the mind at that point in time could have some effect in terms of the precise outcome through their answers. At the same time, the individuals' strong views and biases could not be avoided.

The typical human behaviour and tendency of humans of not wanting to be perceived in a negative way by the interviewer or researcher might have led to managers not divulging the political tactics that they use in their career to progress or to drive any of their hidden or

personal agendas. This behaviour made this research in organisational politics to be more difficult (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Although efforts were made to provide as much comfort as possible to the participants, the hidden aspects and political tactics played by the mangers could not come out well from them. Thus, the efforts were made to know from the other side of the participants' story, just as how others played the tactic against the participant, so that these aspects can be shared by participants without them getting worried about how they are being perceived by the interviewer. Still in the face to face interviews, it is quite possible that interviewees responded in a socially desirable manner.

This research may have limitations that may occur due to the researchers' own biases and the researcher's limited experience in conducting such interviews and qualitative analysis. Moreover, the environment where this research was conducted was not a controlled environment and therefore other factors existent in the environment may have affected this research.

7.5   Future Research

One area for future studies can be the exploration of success of dark personalities with malicious political tactics in organisations. It is difficult for the leaders of the organisations to know when and where the dark personalities are present in the system, that is whether they are in the middle or lower levels in the hierarchy, and it takes time to discover such individuals in the system. if it is too late to detect such individuals, such individuals rise up the ladder and it becomes difficult to control or influence them in the organisation (Templer, 2017). Use of strong political skills to progress well in the career is an option; however, if the ethical aspect is not taken care of by the individuals, it may lead to the emergence of some dark personalities at the work place that may not help the organisations in a positive way. Thus moral aspects play a significant role to identify the leaders in organisations.

The ability of leaders or managers to detect such dark personalities and understanding the morality of the individuals to have an effective politics for the organisations can be an extremely interesting area to explore in future research.

Another area of future research could the intelligence factor that influences an individual's ability to understand, play or neutralise politics. What kinds of traits make individuals

different in handling the same political situation differently and successfully or unsuccessfully?

Although technology has been briefly touched upon in this research in relation to organisational politics, this can be a topic in itself to explore how technology has influenced various facets of politics and political behaviour negatively as well as positively.

The application of different political behaviours in the contexts of varying political perceptions can be an interesting area for future research in order to aid the recommended model and provide support and learning to managers in managing politics better.

7.6   Conclusion

In the concluding remarks, this research has been able to successfully demonstrate some work in this interesting and controversial field of organisational politics. A total number of 15 senior executives from diverse fields have contributed to this research in arriving to this conclusion. The model that emerged out of this research may prove to be beneficial and may contribute to the academic fields and businesses. Through an empirical study, this research contributes to the academic field by integrating various political elements as presented in the recommended model and providing some insights into this complex political phenomenon. Future researches may be focused on this recommended model and phenomenon in order to develop this study and model to the next level.

This model brings an opportunity to businesses and senior leadership in training the young professionals in understanding the various political elements and acquiring an ability of handling politics.

Managers who are growing in their career and are keen to understand politics may understand the facets of politics with the help of this research and they may work towards developing those skills that may be helpful in managing politics in a given context. Thus, in short, this research may be utilised by managers, institutions as well as organisations to provide larger value in addition to the field of business management, organisational politics and career progression.

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APPENDEX 1: Snapshot of the ethical clearance letter from GIBS

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

12 July 2018

Nagar Shantanu

Dear Shantanu

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 MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

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telephone (+27) 11 771 4000
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APPENDIX 2: Form for information of participants

Participant No. -

Please provide the following information about yourself:

Gender:

Age:

Nationality:

Country/Countries of Residence & Work:

Total years of Experience & Number of years held at senior position:

Industry/Industries:

Highest position held in life so far:

APPENDIX 3: Consent and interview schedule

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Thank you for considering this request for an interview. This research is a part of my Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme from Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research on Role of Organisational Politics in Career Progression of Functional and Executive level Managers. I am trying to find out more about the Political skills and behaviour and its role in career progression of senior executives in organisations. Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help us to understand how organisational politics can be made effective and managed well to achieve the goals of the organisations and the individuals and how upcoming professionals can learn to handle organisational politics in the twenty first century to perform better in their career.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

Details will be kept confidential and results will be reported without Identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Mr Shantanu Nagar

Email: 17367388@mygibs.co.za

Mobile No. +27 837178696

Research Supervisor: Dr Charlene Lew

Email: Lewc@gibs.co.za

Phone No. +27 11 771 4000

Signature of the Researcher:

Date:

Signature of the Participant:

Date:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Topic: Role of Organisational Politics in Career Progression of Functional and Executive level Managers

Protocol will be followed by the researcher containing the themes of the research.

This interview will involve a series of open-ended questions about you as an executive's background, context, experience, and industry. The interview will comprise of a few probing questions that will be used to expand, clarify and understand your responses and to explore the nature of this study for deeper insights into the political skills and behaviour and its role in career progression in the organisations, and also to understand how organisational politics can be made effective and managed well to achieve the goals of the organisations and the individuals and how upcoming professionals can learn to handle organisational politics in the twenty first century to perform better in their career.

In this interview, the questions that may be asked from you are as follows:

1. What are your views on organisational politics and political behaviour in organisations?
2. What enables Political behaviour and organisational politics?
3. Please share your experience on organisational politics and political behaviour encountered during your work life?
4. Please share your experience and any situations where politics adversely affected your career or position at a certain career stage. Please think of situations and experiences when organisational politics was a deterrent/inhibitor to your success
5. During your career has there been any time when you felt that organisational politics has helped you in progressing in the organisation? Please elaborate.
6. How do you view career progression and success in your life?
7. What skills do you believe are necessary for successful organisational politics?
8. Have political skills played any role in your career progression and success? Please explain.
9. Do you think that politics, political behaviour and political skills have shifted or changed in line with today's world of innovation, technology and modernisation?
10. How would you advise your juniors or mentees on the use of political skills and behaviour to progress their careers?
11. What ethical considerations do you believe are important in organisational politics?

Researcher name: Mr Shantanu Nagar
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Research Supervisor: Dr Charlene Lew
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Appendix 4: Code list

Research Question 1 themes and codes: *How do the functional and executive level managers perceive political behaviour?*

Research Question	Theme
RQ1 How do the functional and executive level managers perceive political behaviour?	1 Perceived as Bad
	1 Perceived as Good and Bad
	2 Perceived as Good

Research Question 2 themes and codes: *What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?*

Research question	Theme	Code
RQ2 What are some of the political behaviours, skills or situations that have enabled or hampered the career advancement of senior executives?	1 Astuteness and Strategic skills	1 Socially astute
		2 Strategic Skill
		4 Interpersonal Influence
		5 Confidence
		5 Professionalism
		6 Skill Adapting to change
		7 Astute- ability to learn
		7 Creativity
	2 Networking	1 Networking

Research question	Theme	Code
	3 Goal Aligning Behaviour	1 Competitive behaviour
		2 Goal Oriented
	4 Sabotage	1 Coercion
		1 Sabotage junior progression
		2 Sabotaging behaviours
		3 Conniving to sabotage-compliance
		3 Cronyism
		3 Like attracts like
		3 Sabotage- language barrier
		3 Wrongly appointed
	4 Uniform treatment	1 Behaviour- Uniform treatment
	5 Apparent Sincerity; complain to supervisor	1 Sincere- Truth backfiring
		2 Sincere- Speak out
		2 Sincere- Truthful
		3 Sincere- Ethical

Research Question 3 themes and codes: *What enables political behaviour in organisations?*

Research question	Theme	Code
RQ3 What enables political behaviour in organisations?	1 Human nature, behaviour and culture	1 Human nature and behaviour
		2 Human behaviour and culture
		3 Ego, (human behaviour and nature)
		3 Leadership behaviour and expectations
	2 Personal Ambition & Rewards	1 Ambition; goals
		2 (ambitious greed); rewards
		2 Aim to achieve /ambition to achieve
	2 Career Progression	1 Career Progression
		2 Career Progression; Recognition
		2 Demand and supply gap
		2 Need to progress
	3 Company Culture	1 Company Culture
		1 Company ignorance
	3 Diversity	1 Diverse background
		1 Lack of diverse thinking
		1 Lack of diverse thinking and hate to be challenged
	Insecurity	

	4 Set mind-set/ Resistance to being challenged	1 Resistance to being challenged
		1 Set mind set
	5 Hidden agendas	
	5 Technology	

Research Question 4 themes and codes: *How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work and considering upcoming new technologies, innovation as well as new developments?*

Research question	Theme	Code	Code
RQ4 How has the role of political behaviour changed given the changes in the world of work, considering upcoming new technologies, innovation and new developments?	1 No change with Technology, modernization and innovation – based on human nature	1 Driven by human behaviour	
		2 Nature of politics changes; political skills remain	
		3 People are not machines	
		3 Human factors behind it	
		3 with size, politics will remain	
	2 Political Behaviour Changed with Technology, modernization and innovation	2 Anonymousness	1 Complain against subordinate
		1 Awareness; availability of knowledge	
		3 Increase lack of conscience	

Research question	Theme	Code	Code
		3 Increased transparency; lobbying	
		2 Respect for others	

Research Question 5 themes and codes: *If the senior executives must mentor somebody, what would they advise on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?*

Research question	Theme	Code	Code
RQ5 If the senior executives must mentor somebody, what would they advise on the right political behaviour and skills that enable career progression?	1 Integrity and being ethical	1 Ethics	1 Ethical
			1 Inherent ethics
		2 High Integrity	
	2 Social Astuteness	1 Perseverance	
		2 Be Aware	
		2 Focus on skill-sets	
	3 Concern for others.	1 Concern- value others	
		1 Concern for others	
		2 Communication	
		2 Concern- make people feel good	
	4 Authenticity	1 Authentic- willing to let go	
		1 Being Straight forward	
		1 High Authenticity	