

**EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON
ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES**

BY

JOYCE D. NZULWA

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Supervisor:

Dr. Martin Ogutu

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DECLARATION

This independent paper is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University.

Joyce Daudi Nzulwa

Sign.......... Date.....11/6/2009.....

This independent paper study has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor

Dr. Martin Ogutu

Department of Business Administration

Sign.......... Date.....11th/6/2009.....

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To us all I give glory to God the giver of all wisdom and good tidings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The advent and development of the 21st century continues to present the most complex and dynamic business contexts; glaring enigma of globalization, increased competition, dwindling resources, supersonic technological advances, changing stakeholders demands, and melting global economies; these call for sustained relentless search for best practices to survive, and succeed(Wan-Jing & Tung 2007). The work place similarly has become highly dynamic; workers present to the organization an overwhelming share of needs to be fulfilled, demanding to work more on their own terms, higher levels of growth, autonomy around work, ownership of resources and means to work, task variety and becoming more aggressive than ever in their quest for personal, professional and career development, (Graham & Bennet, 2007).

Realistically, the ordinary era of predictable and stable business environments is long gone; business organizations today operate in chaotic and volatile environments, being hotbeds of political intrigues that determine largely their outcomes (Porter 2007). The old age view that business and politics do not mix has been one of management's most deeply ingrained myths, (Cranfield 2007). Power and politics are inextricably mixed and in any organization there will be people who want to achieve their satisfaction by acquiring power legitimately and others illegitimately. Man has been said to be a political animal and therefore employees involve in activities that may guarantee them better place in the scheme of things of the organization (Adekanye, 2006). Heller (2007) posits that organizations are social entities that involve a struggle for scarce resources, personal conflicts, and a variety of influence tactics executed by

individuals and groups to obtain benefits and goals in different ways. Estimating the political climate of a work unit is a complex task, but it is crucial for a better understanding of organization and what goes on in the organization.

Senior managers continuously compete for resources and their own agendas; on the other hand the employees compete with each other for search of fulfillment of their individual needs and various other aspects at the work place. Ideally organizations are supposed to be rationally structured, based on reasonable division of labour, clear hierarchical communication flow, well defined lines of authority aimed at achieving goals and objectives of the organization amicably (Bhasin 2008); but realistically organizations are made up of people with personal agendas designed to win power and influence. Most of what people do in organizations is purely politics and the moment everyone realizes this and accepts that organizations are political systems/arenas , the faster they can begin to get things moving. It then follows that organizational politics is something that sits in the middle of every organizational existence and that affects/effects the outcomes of the organization as long they transact business Garry (2007).

Managers and employees who understand and learn organizational politics are not only at the advantage of winning in organizational wars, promotions and pay raises but most importantly get things done (Kreitner & Kinicki 2008). Competitive advantage is the magic word for every business organization; organizations are massively strategizing on how to achieve and maintain competitive advantage, how to invade and grab the market shares of their competitors and how to survive and succeed in business. The pursuit for competitive advantage resembles the pursuit for power, excellence and influence to call the shots in the industry of operation (Peters 2008).

These pursuits as depicted by the strategic plans and organizational structures trickle down to the actors who are the employees and line managers of the organization, thus individuals in organizations seek to play political games to gain power and influence. Organizational politics thus is an attempt to build power bases by individuals in organizations, their own competitive edges and affiliative attractiveness not only to execute organizational objectives but also individual objectives, (Gayer 2007). Organizational politics has several dysfunctional effects which may involve; weakened morale, victors and victims, immense energy and time spent on planning attacks and counter attacks, thus the caution and general orientation is that managers need to combat politics as part of their job, (Cavanaugh, Moberg and Velasquez, 2006). However this paper is inspired by the realization that politics is a ubiquitous feature for all organizations and a conviction that despite its dysfunctionality, there may be functional aspects of OP. Heller (2007) depicts Organizational politics as a dilemma for every organization, the devil that every organizational management cannot do without yet have to deal with. We must content with the fact that organizational politics by its omnipresent nature does play a key role towards organizational outcomes, its effects on organizational outcomes are real, may be positive or unnecessarily negative depending on the management practice of the organization.

1.2 Organizational Politics: The Concept

Politics is a specific quality of the organizational dynamic which impacts all aspects of business life. It is an intriguing aspect that is said to include though not limited to getting ones way by stepping on anyone and everyone, Scott (2008). Organizational politics includes but is not limited to dirty dealing. Various definitions of organizational politics surface from social scientists incorporating elements of behavior that is formal and informal, sanctioned and non-sanctioned but focused on the use of power and influence, or coalition building.

Mintzberg (1985) coupled politics with influence when he wrote that “politics may be considered to constitute one among a number of crucial systems of influence in the organization. Politics are considered a fundamental activity in organizations thus, are closely interrelated to power, authority and influence.

Mayers and Allen (1987) posit that a common theme of organizational politics is that it is one of the behaviours aimed at exerting influence. The concept of organizational politics refers to behaviours that are designed to foster self-interest and are taken without regard to or at the expense of organizational goals (Mintzberg, 1983, 1985); examples include lobbying higher-ups for promotions/better job assignments, bypassing the chain of command to gain approval, and going through improper channels to obtain special equipment. Other behaviours indicative of highly political environments include “going along to get ahead” or joining cliques to promote one’s own self-interest. Drory (1993) explains that organizational politics refers to behaviours “that occur on an informal basis within an organization and involve intentional acts of influence that are designed to protect or enhance individuals’ professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible”. Pettigrew (2003) described organizational politics, as the use of power to influence decision making. Pandey (2005) refers to organizational politics as the individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the technical sense, illegitimate, sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise. The American Institute of behavioral sciences (2007) defines organizational politics as the processes through which people represent different interests, agendas, perspectives, compete, and come in to conflict and/or collaborate in order to interpret and evaluate information and make decisions, allocate or claim scarce resources/rewards, structure or restructure the organization.

Peterson (2007) refers to organizational politics as that behavior occurring on an informal basis within an organization and involving intentional acts of influence that are designed to protect or enhance individuals' professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible reality of the organizational dynamics which impacts all aspects of business life. Pfeffer (2005) posits that organizational politics are those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain preferred outcomes in a situation whereby there is uncertainty (disagreement) about choices. Valle and Witt (2007) conclude that organizational politics subsumes all forms of influence in organizations, which essentially drives much of the activity in today's organizations. Pandey (2005) contends that organizational politics are those activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization but influence or attempt to influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization. Further, Buelens (2006) defines organizational politics as the intentional acts of influence to enhance self interest. All these definitions evidently refer to the existence of informal influence processes on the organizational macro or micro level. Two dimensions emanate from these definitions; the first dimension regards OP as part of a general set of social behaviours used as tools of self interest that may contribute to the basic functioning of the organization at individual level. Accordingly, OP if aligned with organizational goals and through employees' influence tactics that are aimed at mutual self-focused as well as organizational-focused may result to good results for both individual and the organization.

The second dimension defines politics as behaviour strategically designed to maximize employees' short-term or long-term self-interests, self-serving behaviour by employees to gain self-interests, advantages, and benefits at the expense of others and sometimes contrary to the interests of the entire organization or work unit.

1.2.1 The Underpinnings of Organizational Politics

Zhou & Ferris (2007) sum the antecedents of organizational politics as the uncertainty triggered by a variety of sources. Limited resources in organizations; there is a direct relationship between the amount of politics and how critical and scarce resources are. Organizational politics tend to more intense where there is an infusion of new unclaimed resources and whereby the gain by one individual is seen as a loss by another. This results to competitive behavior among members of the organization hence organizational politics for both managers and employees. The need and perception to inspect the distributive justice and equitable sharing/allocation in these resources, which in essence becomes the organizational ground upon which this game is played. When these are not seen to be relatively fair, the level of politicking is bound to increase. Unclear goals and policies; the more ambiguous and complex the goal becomes, the more politics there will be.

In general the more complex the external technology of the organization, the more politics there will be. The same is true for organizations operating in a turbulent external environment. A reorganization or planned organizational development effort or even unplanned changes brought about by external forces and that seemingly appear to wrestle power out of employees will encourage political maneuvering. Raia (2007) notes that whatever organizations attempt to change, tends to get the political sub system active, vested interests and stakes emerge and the distribution of power is threatened. Climates of ambiguity, whereby organizational decisions are not made openly and /or organizational influence is invoked, decisions on which there is lack of agreement, and uncertain, long-range strategic decisions. When this happens, individuals seek to get back to the organization by tainting the facts provided through political maneuvering to take care of self interests and goals not addressed.

1.2.2 Individual Factors

Employees come to work to fulfill different needs. However every human being has a known void to influence and control others. Konapaska (2007) posits that employees, who have access to sources of organizational power and status, are in a position to take advantage of the political game and to gain a greater share of organizational benefits than they formally deserve which is the ultimate of organizational politics. High self motivation whereby individuals with personal disposition of higher levels of social conformity (personality) and a tendency to be politically skilled thus tending to engage more often in organizational politics than not.

Individuals with a high internal locus of control, who believe and have an orientation to control their environment / manipulate it to self interest tend to seek to control/influence the environment for own interest thus a disposition to organizational politics. Machiavellian individuals tend to have a great desire and need for power attainment and control. Employees' age and experience also plays a great role. Employees tend to experience greater uncertainty and work pressure in the earlier stages of their careers where the management's expectations of the employee are still very high and largely over rated. At these stages the younger employee will tend to play politics more than the older settled employee who has seen it all and is well adjusted to the place of work.

The level of perceived investment in the organization, whereby some individuals have put lots of efforts in the organization and in turn perceive increased expectations for future benefits, tend to engage in political behavior to resist any efforts to get them off. Some individuals with conceived motives due to their expertise or likelihood of other greener

pastures may foresee a less likelihood to succeed while employing legitimate power, which may include alternatives for other options and expectations for success, Luthans (2008).

1.2.3 Organizational factors

Organizational politics is a reality in every workplace. At the heart of every organization are issues of sharing power and the authority that goes along the performance of work, duty, tasks and responsibilities. Needless to say organizations partly exist to share power in a variety of forms in order to meet both individual and group needs (which is the essence of organizational structure, policies, job specification and span of control), Paleen(2008). Scarce and declining organizational resources; increased international competition, globalization, rapid technological change and increasing business environmental pressure continue to force organizations to employ a tight balancing act in dispensing their resources to survive and make positive business results. It is a business economic truth that resources are continuously scarce and organizations no doubt have to develop functional means to mobilize and allocate appropriately. If there is decline in organizational resources, non communication about the same and the anticipated remedial measures, organizational politics steps in to provide means for survival.

Tuomi, Vanhala & Jonhonen (2006) posit that the process to allocation of organizational resources, if deemed unfair, unjust or unacceptable to all organizational parties may give rise to disquiet, jostling and other machinations, political in nature. Such a scenario points to limited opportunities and accompanying conditions. Every organization is constituted by an organizational structure. The structure creates formal positions with accompanying authority and power. It specifies the individual tasks, roles, work scope, hierarchy, and information and communication channels. However the structure can only provide as much opportunities as

within the constraints of organizational scope, such opportunities will be limited and as such will be the accompanying conditions. The structure can accommodate as much as dictated by itself hence members in the organization have to compete or confine themselves to the provisions of the structure albeit limiting hence organizational politics.

Social capital has reference to the shared trust, reciprocity, networks and collective action, occurring in the organization as developed over time. Social capital facilitates partnerships in organizations by employees. It also facilitates coalitions, cohesion, team spirit, collaborations, learning and sharing of information and general forms of social support and empowerment through conducive social process; voluntary mentorship, coaching, counsel and guidance. Flora (2007) posits that when organizations fail to harness social capital, they risk having employees who distrust and suspect the intentions of one another as well as those of the organization hence a stage political maneuvering. Every organization is ordinarily guided by its strategic orientation. From the broad strategic document emanates performance standards, goals, actions and policies. If these parameters are unclearly articulated, the trickle down effect is usually ambiguity in organizational processes, roles and lack of clarity in the direction and performance of work leading to organizational politics.

High pressure on performance arising from the tough times in the conduct of business call for increased efforts and smart performance. Organizations today are under pressure to compete, gain and sustain competitiveness. Such pressure is often traversed to the employees and in the midst of this pressure employees tend to engage politics as part of realization of goals or performance standards. Lack of clear policies and unclear organizational policies consequently cannot be translated into specific/ individual objects in which responsibilities are not clearly understood leading to role ambiguity and a tempo to fight, possess and outdo,

poorly defined decision making processes that do not involve the employee concerns or contributions and/or realization of the “hard facts” used in the process which might not be fair in the eyes of the employees such as unfair reward/recognition mechanisms, promotion, welfare services. These tend to encourage complacency and maneuvering (impression management) by employees in order to gain power or favour. The nature of top level management may encourage involvement in politics especially promoting feelings of inequity, alliance and loyalty camp building, bootlicking, pet informants, non existence of transformation, ingenuity, none coaching and mentorship all form recipe for organizational politics. Robbins (2007) affirms that weak leadership in its entire occurrence is a recipe for organizational politics. Dysfunctional political behavior may also be encompassed in self-serving policies by inept leadership.

1.3 Levels of Political Action

Political manoeuvring occurs at the individual level as well as at groups' level or collective action. At the individual level, personal self interests are pursued. People with a common interest may informally bind together and actively pursue a single issue thus forming a coalition. The nature of coalitions is such that when the issue of interest is resolved, the coalition disbands. Political coalitions tend to have fuzzy membership, generally flexible in nature, temporary in duration and fluid in nature. Coalitions are a potent political force in organizations depending on their direction, orientation and their missions. Another level of political action involves networks. Networks have longer and broad term agendas than do coalitions, more people oriented than issues as is the case in coalitions.

1.4 Organizational Politics - The Strategies

Peters (2008) depicts that “when riding horses one can move as fast as they are able to and crack the whip, yet when dealing with people it is safe and wise to tread carefully and tactfully. Newstrom (2007) affirms that managers must try to influence positive behaviour by learning to ask questions that encourage total honesty and expression of true feelings at work, reading employee body language to sense disquiet, creating organizational environments that perpetually provide a climate of free communication and working as teams. It is important for managers to go out of their way to chat with employees unreservedly, create time to actively listen to staff needs, ideas, encourage them to voice out their complaints. Discipline should be applied with equity, fairness, trust, empowerment and time relevance. Ziggler (2006) proposes that organizational politics is a political game, which requires political strategies, to manage and win.

1.4.1 Soft Strategies

One of the commonly used strategies is integration; involving giving complements or favours to superiors/support staff. Most people find it difficult to reject or resist advances of others; there is always a degree of social responsibility and obligation towards those who provide positive strokes, a feeling of expectation to return the good, entrenched in all human beings. Integration can work both towards the supervisor or support staff, especially if the supervisor decides to seek an informant. Choosing a powerful mentor within the organizational set up is also a political strategy, which also involves seeking this relationship. This is an effective strategy for acquiring power and reaching important goals. Since there are many more would be protégés than there are openings for them, competition in this regard can be intense. However, given the substantial benefits yielded by the protection and guidance of a powerful mentor, efforts to establish such a relationship are well worthwhile. Use of

coalitions/networks involves such actions as befriending “important people” within the organization whose importance is seen in the nature of the jobs they do. It may also involve forming and maintaining the right alliances by joining forces with powerful people, persons or groups who have something to contribute and who can be relied upon; for instance a secretary to the C.E.O, the management team or leaders of formal groups’ e.g. the staff union / informal groups. Use social reciprocity and the psychological application of “I owe you” is very important as a political strategy. The power seeker normally would do other people favour but would not make it clear that they owe something in return and will be expected to pay up when asked. Nevertheless, there are expectations to pay back and hold the people ransom for the expended acts/support, Zimbardo (2006).

Progress one step at a time (camels head in the tent), taking one step at a time instead of trying to push a whole major project or reorganization attempts to full implementation. This is like the old adage” scratch my back, I scratch yours. Impression management, this involves careful planning of the outward presentation of appearance and style. Most organizations have their core values, standards, corporate image and identity by which they wish their staff to exemplify. If one is keen to internalize these and strategically play them off, they would survive the jostling that goes with organizational politics. The game to survive by catching the organization’s eye with seeming naivety but well calculated move may involve demonstrating high level of competence, adopting a cooperative attitude, conformity to rules/good behaviour, calculated excuses and apologies, accepting responsibility for wrong doing and pure flattery. In fact, the old adage “nothing succeeds like success” is very applicable to organizational politics, Kinicki (2007).

Information gathering and careful management/ dispense:-acquiring information ahead of others within the organization through whatever means and dispensing it right at the appropriate moment is also an effective political tactic/tool. For instance; letting people know that a bonus will be paid a week before the actual payment, this gives one the position of “knowledge, truth, always right, thus a pack from the others, Certo (2007). Other tactics involve; promoting the opposition by way of aiding political rivals to become very powerful or recommending them for a powerful position with a view of keeping them too busy or subdued for the energies required for organizational politics. Pursuing line responsibility with an emphasis on the core business may also work well. The core business managers most of the times call the shots and it is smarter to position oneself in the line responsibility perspective than in the staff business perspective to survive or wield power.

1.4.2 Devious Strategies

This refers to strategies that most people view as deceitful, underhanded and dishonest. Some of these violate the ethical principles of work and human interrelations. The old age tactic of divide and rule comes through handy, Robbins (2007). It involves infiltrating the rival to cause disquiet and disharmony e.g. at the place of work a manger may promote a leader of a group that is threatening to cause feelings of betrayal to the group members. The assumption is that those who divide would not be part of and/or form any alliance themselves;(for instance the finance department may engineer a conflict between the production and marketing departments with the hope to getting a bigger share of the companies budget). Alternatively, deliberate exclusion of the opposition in matters that are crucial, has also been employed as a political strategy. One can withhold parts and bits of important instructions to an assignment to staff, a message to the boss with the intention to have them look careless, indifferent, and mean, thus gaining mileage (power).

Demolishing/Taking no prisoners has reference to total or near total elimination of all adversaries through uncompromising interventions such as sacking, demotion, transfers with a view to ensuring that further threat to power is halted. One may also blame others or falsely attribute blame for negative outcomes on others and/or hold them responsible for events they did not partake in. Blame can also be appropriated through misrepresentation of information about others and scapegoating especially where power is delegated, Kanka (2007). One may also seek to assume authority and set those responsible for the failure, malign their names/characters or mud sling. Lethal attacks may also be engaged involving a variety of organized crime tactics such as poisoning, assault, planned execution of perceived enemies, depersonalization and other harmful practices. Announcing one agenda for meetings, but then following a totally different hidden one thus preventing opponents from being adequately prepared and making them look bad or disorganized is also a political strategy. The essence of this strategy would be to embarrass others via set up.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Organizational Politics and Organizational Outcomes:

Managers are endlessly challenged to achieve a workable balance between employees self interests and organizational interests; when and if a balance is struck, the pursuit of self interest should intertwine with that of organizational interest essentially making organizational politics a functional process for organizations. Several questions arise from this presupposition, for instance, what are the real effects of organizational politics as a method of influence on organizational outcomes? How can management professionals adapt and adjust their behavior to work with and use organizational politics for the common good of the organization? While it is probable that workplace policies and processes may have broad impacts outside of work, this paper will focus primarily on organizational outcomes.

As conceptualized by Lobel and Faught (2006), there are four basic approaches to measuring organizational outcomes; the human cost approach as adopted by Konrad and Mangel (2006) focuses on the savings associated with reduced labor wastages arising from absenteeism, turnover and default performance. The second approach was outlined by Cohen (2005); the human investment approach attempts to document the financial benefits that are associated with employer support interventions such as motivation, morale building, servant leadership, retention strategies and growth. Thirdly; the stakeholders approach as described by authors Irvin & Lindsey (2006); considers the different benefits that are gained by employee, employer, shareholders, the publics and customers as indicated by attitudes, perception, reputation, stakeholders' satisfaction and organizational image. Lastly there is the strategy approach which assesses the extend to which work/life initiatives facilitates the firm to make progress on key business strategies.

2.2 Organizational Politics and Organizational Culture

Tichy (2002) defined culture as the “glue that holds an organization together”. Jones, Phelps, and Bigley (2007) proposed a more elaborate definition of organizational culture. These authors described organizational culture as follows; culture is a property of the organization constituted by; its members’ taken-for-granted beliefs regarding the nature of reality, called assumptions; a set of normative, moral, and functional guidelines or criteria for making decisions, called values; and the practices or ways of working together that follow from the aforementioned assumptions and values, called artifacts. Organizational culture reflects a sort of negotiated order that arises and evolves as members work together, expressing preferences, exhibiting more-or-less effective problem-solving styles, and managing, at least satisfactorily, external demands and internal needs for coordination and integration Schein (2005).

In effect, culture represents an aspect of the organizational environment that helps members make sense of their own and others’ behaviour. Culture therefore is patterns of beliefs, values, norms and attitudes that a particular organization espouses and which govern organizational behaviour. It is simply the way of life for the people of that organization (Armstrong 2007). Organizational culture represents the social glue that generates a “we” feeling thus counteracting processes of differentiations which are an unavoidable part of organizational life. Gunter and Furnham (2007) posit that if organizational culture offers a shared system of meanings which is the basis for communications and mutual perception/understanding, significantly increase efficiency of the organization. Strong rich cultures are known to give modern organizations a competitive edge in adoption of change, imparting and building strong values, attitudes and commands towards work and performance. Rokeach (2007) describes good culture as one being able to guide employees to

live comfortable lives, develop a sense of accomplishment, self security, honesty, helpfulness, moderate ambition and wisdom. Rozazi (2006) studied the impact of OP on culture and his results construe a negative correlation; organizations with intense politics tend to have a divided sense of purpose, distorted value sets, non solid artifacts and bad norms (rules of the game) that are self serving. The essence of organizational culture; as a social glue and oneness of purpose may not prevail under intense political environs where self interests are the overriding principle as it is in organizational politics. Too intense organizational politics tend to result to non functional organizational culture that derails positive organizational outcomes; learning, commitment, self confidence, teamwork, work effectiveness and unity of purpose, Deal, Ouchi & Kennedy (2006).

2.3 Organizational Politics and Organizational Climate

Organizational climate has traditionally been described as a set of shared perceptions of policies, practices, and procedures that an organization rewards and supports, James, Joyce, Schneider & Reichers, (2005). As such policies and practices are considered to be objective properties of organizations; climate indicates what goals are important to the organization and how such goals are to be accomplished Schneider, Brief, & Guzzo, (2006). Dennison (2006) defines organizational climate as those aspects of the environment that are consciously perceived by organizational members. An easier definition of organizational climate was offered by Rousseau (2005); the relatively consistent set of perceptions held by organization members about the characteristics and quality of the organizational culture and processes. Organizational climate is thus more of the prevailing and current status in respect to employee feelings and the meaning they make of organizational culture. O'Connor and Morrison (2007) in their study of the relationship between organizational climate and politics found that a great aspect of the organizational climate; procedural justice (whereby similar

rules and procedures are applied) was inversely affected by OP. Alternatively, teamwork which is also highly a result of consensus among workgroups suffered devoid of procedural justice and as enhanced by intense politicking, Naumann & Bennet (2007). Valle and Witt (2006) in their analysis of the correlation of organizational politics and teamwork found that the properties of an organization have the effect of creating similar organizational experiences for employees of the organization. In other words, employees who are subject to the same policies, goal, unity of purpose and procedures in organizations may have shared interpretations of such practices. Consequently, consistent perceptions and meanings manifest themselves as climates in organizations.

Schneider & Reichers (2003) reminisce that rather than focusing on individual psychological representations of work situations, organizational climates signify collective meanings that people attach to particular characteristics of the organization. Consequently, organizations tend to have climates for specific elements of the work setting, for example, climate for service or climate for justice and climate for safety, (Schneider, Parkington, & Buxton, 2006). As climates are, by definition, characterized by shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, it is therefore possible that organizations may have good, powerful and/or enabling climates. Mostly in a highly political organization, people are mainly engaged in petty gossips, ill feeling, power jostling, uncertainty, and wicked schemes which derail teamwork, good values, trust, need to affiliate, partnership and cohesion. Highly political environments therefore have been correlated negatively to good organizational climate.

2.4 Organizational Politics and Empowerment

Peter (2007) defines empowerment as a human resource technique that increases employee involvement in (and responsibility for) decision making and quality management while encouraging employees to learn a wide range of skills to ensure their capacity to make effective contribution to organizational performance and wellbeing. The thinking behind employee empowerment is that it gives power to the individual and makes employees more stable, committed and develops feelings of great worth, Certo (2007). One way to develop empower employees is through creation of learning organizations. These are places where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire as well as desired by the organization, where they are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. Learning as a tool of empowerment in organizations thus requires shared vision and teamship.

The Harvard business review (2006) defines empowerment as a process of continuous improvement through learning how to learn, knowledge acquisition, allowing space for initiative, delegation, transfer of acquired knowledge quickly to others, and adopting new insights analytically to better organizational processes. Employee empowerment requires a change in behaviour, selflessness and enabling environments. Robert (2006) posits that OP is a deterrent component to employee empowerment, whereby highly political organizations have proved infertile places for empowerment. This is due to the fact that OP in itself is viewed as self promoting and conniving hence in contrast to the driving philosophy of empowerment; everyone can be trusted to take action to enhance his /her work either in personal or organizational terms. However it may be argued that some moderate level of OP may encourage employee empowerment. Schant (2007) argues that certain pursuits of

political behaviour such as impression management, self enhancement, line responsibility, positioning and social reciprocity do actually promote employee empowerment.

2.5 Organizational Politics and Commitment

Harris (2007) in his work; consequences of organizational politics, posits that the worst hit kind of organizational outcomes by OP is organizational commitment. This is the relative strength of the individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization, of which such could be emotional or intellectual engagement with the organization (Armstrong 2007). Commitment comprises of three major aspects; desire to remain in a particular organization, strong belief and acceptance of the values and goal and readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. Committed employees go an extra mile, are loyal and proud of the organization. The experience of loyalty and a desire to stay with the company are generally considered to be a definitional element of the affective organizational commitment constructs, Mowday, Steers, & Porter, (2006).

Commitment to the organization is generally conceived to also include identification with the organization and willingness to expend extra effort on its behalf. It is reasonable to expect that such levels of caring stimulates a desire to remain with the company, in part because a committed employee may have a dedicated interest in helping the organization to succeed. Organizations that get people to commit to are attractive with strong corporate identity and commitment to the employees. Harris (2006) found that highly political environment lack these attributes. Political gamesmanship like any other game has victors and victims. In essence, committed employees do their jobs better and show willingness to exceed the boundaries of their jobs. Likewise, norms of commitment should be associated with shared

goals, expectations and aspirations beyond formal job definitions and of high personal job performance which may be derailed by organizational politics, Morrison (2007).

2.6 Organizational Politics and Job Satisfaction

Khanka (2008) defines job satisfaction as the individual employee pleasurable or positive emotional state towards his or her job. Research on job satisfaction has related it to a number of several aspects of the job itself; the work itself, working conditions, promotion opportunities, supervision, pay, and co-workers, Johnson (2007). Rosenbluth (2007) studied the effects of organizational politics on job satisfaction and posits that if unchecked by organizational processes of management, politics tends to create job dissatisfaction. Most employees who are unable to cope with political machination tend to; quit, fight back leading to conflicts, absent themselves, neglect duty or lie low as they await things to change, some learn to be helpless and watch the game in despair Luthans, (2007).

2.7 Organizational Politics and Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior is described as non-obligatory, voluntary behavior by an employee, which exceeds the employee's normal work duties and is not associated with any type of organizational reward system Organ, (2005). Research has shown that organizational citizenship behavior has a positive effect on employee performance Mackenzie, (2000) and produces positive benefits for organizations and organizational personnel Leonard, (2005). Organizational citizenship behavior is by its very nature an extremely positive and desirable behavioral phenomenon. It is behavior that the organization would want to promote and encourage, Engelbrecht (2006). Moreover, organizational citizenship behavior is positive, selfless behavior for organizations because it involves employees giving help to each other without the expectation that those receiving the help will have to give anything back in

return. Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, (2006) in a study on the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational politics, negatively correlated the two. Intense politics were presented as being too eccentric for selfless support and help for others, Goldberg (2006).

2.8 Organizational Politics and Social Capital

Social capital is a desirable outcome in every organization. Bowles (2006) defines social capital as the existence of informal rules or norms shared among members of a group that permits cooperation among them. However the sharing of values and norms does not in itself result to social capital. Putnam (2004) posits that since values and norms may be wrong, those that produce social capital are substantively the ones including virtues such as truth telling, honesty, respect, integrity, meeting obligations, reciprocity, open sharing and selflessness. The North American Central Regional Center for Rural Development associates (NACRRD) (2007) contents that social capital can indeed enhance other forms of capital within the organizations and that social capital can be created and destroyed. Social capital is based on the idea that people access valuable resources through their connections with others. From the perspective of individuals, social capital is access to resources gained by virtue of membership in social networks. *

To capture the benefits of social capital, a person must interact frequently with others; such interaction should be based on trust, reciprocity, respect, concern, sharing and genuity. Kacmar and Andrews (2006) studied the relationship of OP and social capital and identified key interlinkages. Social capital is known to promote friendly work climates for employee if it is cultivated. Conflicts are amicably solved if people trust and value each other. Interpersonal relationships thrive and people actively listen to one another. There is a tendency to move

forward together as teams, dialogue to one another voluntarily teach and learn from one another, offer social support and welfare in times of hardships, and the quality of life for employees improves with well built social capital. However social capital has been inversely correlated with OP. Highly political organizations tend to score low on social capital. Political machinations never seem to favour growth or maintenance of social capital, often derailing trust, support, sharing, respect, mutual concern for others and genuine reciprocity (Mark 2007).

2.9 Organizational Politics and Creativity

Luthans (2008) defines creativity as an act of liberation- the defeat of habit by originality and the ability to make new combinations of social worth. The need for one to be creative may be motivated by a number of reasons; creative personality, entrepreneurial motivation, innovation, self actualization and distinction, insight, internal need for admiration from others or sometimes the need to express oneself. Regardless of the motivation, it is agreeable that creativity tends to occur within the constraints of complementary environment. Organizations today are under immense pressure to transform themselves into creative spaces that provide strategic advantage to the stakeholders. Creativity is deemed to exist in both individual and organizations if they exhibit useful behavioral response to a problem or a situation. Creativity as a process may be enhanced through shared tasks, teamwork, brainstorming, recognition, mentorship and generally nurturing work environments where people are free, Dougnam (2006). Curie (2007) found out that an organization shrouded in intense political intrigues kills the subsets of creativity which include vibrancy, quiet time and rest, independence in judgment, freedom, and capability to channel individual needs to socially acceptable activities.

Morrison (2007) tended to think that OP may have a two fold effect on creativity. On a more positive outlook, certain engagements of political behavior such as impression management call for the exercise of creativity and if practiced in moderation, they may provide good results for the organization. Nevertheless, fear and animosity created by political machination may kill the spirit of creativity; encourage poor cultures that curtail the spirit of experimentation and self expression in organizations.

2.10 Organizational Politics and Customer Satisfaction

Johnson (2007) posits that employees, who are stable and content with the organization, treat external customers well. It is important to understand that there is a strong correlation between satisfying internal customers and meeting external customers' needs. This can be achieved through participative management, decentralization, autonomy for employees to work and relate and development of effective work groups. Employees will be satisfied if they perceive the management to be fair, trust the management to meet their interests, communicate honestly about their needs, are engaged in decision making, talk and consult each other, do not feel pressured to seek power in informal means most of the times and are clear about the organizational expectations of quality and are themselves quality, Salloway (2007).

2.11 Organizational Politics and Organizational Conflict

Conflict refer to the struggle that results from incompatible or opposing needs, feelings, thoughts, or demands within a person or between two or more people (Certo 2006) .Conflicts in organizations are common; because organizations are means to adjustments, competition and compromises among scarce resources. Organizational politics by nature is perpetuated by conflict. Jackson (2007), contents that while individuals are in organizations to ostensibly

achieve a common purpose, at the same time they are driven by their own needs and interests thus end up engaging in political behavior. Ghoshal and Bartlett (2007) in a study of the relationship between organizational politics and conflict found that the two are positively correlated. Organizational politics tend to contribute to the level of conflict in organizations and make the conflict resolution a nightmare for managers.

2.12 Organizational Politics and Turn Over

Turn over has been described as the rate at which employees leave an organization, Certo (2007). Employees may leave an organization for varied reasons. Turn over tends to provide a direction of the level of turbulence within an organization. Within the environment of organizational politics, a lot of energy and time may be spend on attacks, counter attacks and strategies to play and win the game at the expense of honest hard working individual employees, managers and organizations. These may be naïve and unable to craft winning formulas for themselves thus eventually leave resulting to high turn over, Torrington (2007). These could be good employees hence loss of talent, skills and human capital. Some of those who remain and are not good at the game remain with low morale towards work and an attitude to exit at the next available opportunity hence less commitment. employee turnover and that this impact is mediated by turnover intentions. Employees' commitment to the organization may also be expected to affect employees' service behavior.

2.13 Organizational Politics and Stress

Different scholars define stress differently; Selye (1974) defines stress as the physiological response of the body to any demand made upon it. A more work related definition was offered by McShane, Von Glinow and Sharma (2008); presenting stress as an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to a person's wellbeing.

Robbins and Judge (2007) suggest that stress emanates from a misfit of environmental demands and personal inadequacies to meet their demands. Stressors can be viewed as antecedent conditions in the person and in the environment that lead to the appraisal of different types of stress states Lazarus, (2003). Moreover, stressors act as stimuli that evoke an adverse behavioral, psychological, or physiological response Kahn and Byosiere, (2003). Workplace stressors however are antecedent conditions within the employee's job or the organization that require adaptive responses from the employee. The work stress literature identifies a number of workplace stressors that can relate to a greater or lesser degree of stress, most importantly increased organizational politics, Cropanzano (2007). Cheryl and Lyle (2008) studied the relationship between OP and stress levels in organizations and posit that stress levels increased in highly political environments that remain unchecked; The employees who lack political tact or are unable to keep up with dirty political tactics either retreat to stress or leave the organization because political gamesmanship is both a physical as well as a psychological process that places demands on the actors and their surroundings, only the ones cut out for it may sustain.

2.14 Organizational Politics and Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness may occur and be measured at individual, group or organizational levels. Organizational effectiveness measures are closely related to stakeholders and include such aspects as employee satisfaction, commitment, quality and social responsibility. All of organizational efforts towards effectiveness would be futile if their final destiny is not good performance; that is essentially why organizations come into being (Ziglar 2008). Different scholars provide different definitions of the concept of performance; Porter (2008) posits that performance has reference to organizations being able to meet their strategic objectives, missions, goals, and purpose as stated. Heller (2008)

explains performance as the ability of an organization to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and harmony within itself in respect to profitability and most importantly maintain a competitive space in what it does. Bigham (2008) seeks to present good performance as the ability of an organization to excel in what it does and meet the expectations of its stakeholders in respect to profitability, quality, value, corporate image and reputation, customer care and service, social corporate responsibility and meeting its expectations as stated in its strategic disposition. However there is one dimension of the various definitions offered that is relevant to the relationship between politics and performance. Internal harmony and health systems are facets of performance.

Harmony and health exist if people in the organization trust each other, have a sense of oneness in purpose, are creative and innovative, talk to each other freely, share and learn together, are committed to organizational goals, have shared culture and same potent to work and feel collectively responsible for the results of the organization. However if people are allowed to focus their attention to non functional politics, politics may derail good performance.

Forrester (2008) researching on the relationship of politics and effectiveness notes that politics is not essentially a bad thing for effectiveness. Nottingham (2008) affirms that "political behavior has earned a bad name because it is associated with politicians. On its own the use of power and other sources of influence to obtain one's objectives within the organization are not inherently unethical. It is crucial for effectiveness. The American Academy of Business Caucus (2009) reckons that the modern executive must rise to a level where business results can be aggressively delivered through use of both legitimate and illegitimate sources of power, thereby positioning OP as a strong tool towards effectiveness.

The relationship between OP and effectiveness thus may be positive or negative. Highly political environments may derail effective people where else non political or highly political are considered poor team players. The moderate person in political gamesmanship is viewed as innovative, creative, an asset and a crucial tool to effectiveness Braberry, Carlos & Hueller (2007).

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Organizational Politics and Manager - Leader Role

Blake & Mouton (2007), posit that an excellent candidate for moderating between the effects of organizational politics and organizational outcomes is certainly the quality of management/leadership paradigm orientation. The basic role of a manager is to see that an organization meets its goals and its outcomes are desirable as designed within the organizational mandate and purpose. Manager's skills have been categorized to include technical skills; specialized knowledge and experience, human relations skills; ability to work effectively through and with others, conceptual skills; ability to see the relation of the parts to whole and to one another, decision making skills; ability to analyze information and reach good decisions and knowledge skills; ability to utilize and manage continuous streams of data, Huges (2006). The general managerial functions traditionally include; planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling.

The terms leader and manager have been used interchangeably in the business environment, though the two may have distinct and overlapping meanings, Pearce (2007). The challenge, however for business organizations today, is to chat out the unique and integrated components that the dichotomous roles of both management and leadership, for therein lies the magic of cohesive synergy and vision of the two, Roberts & Hamm, (2007). It has been postulated that managers provide leadership and leaders perform management roles. This assertion though debatable, presents a hybrid juncture where management and leadership are said to be a subset of one another, intertwined and not mutually exclusive. For purposes of this text, an assumption will be made to assume a high level of overlap between managers and leaders roles and characteristics. Although different definitions have been given ascribed

to the phenomenon of manager/leader, the most visible commonality is the roles that influence play. Besides influence, the two processes have been defined in terms of group processes, personality, compliance, particular behaviour, persuasion, power, goal achievement, interaction, role differentiation, initiation of structures, and a combination of two or more of these, which boils down, to aligning people towards common goals and empowering them to take the actions needed to reach them, being able to create the meaningful prospects and achievement for people, the values that make sense to them, enough trust in the system, sense of responsibility for self and others.

Modern managers /leaders do not start with “what do I want” but rather start with “what needs to be done” Then they ask “what can and should I do to make a difference” Management/Leadership is done with others. Mobilizing people through out the organization to do adaptive work; regardless of the level one is at, whatever the job they do, they can bring new insight, new leadership, to their team or to their group. Leadership is in part; the art of inspiring followers to perform their duties willingly, competently, and enthusiastically, a social influence process in which the leader seeks voluntary participation of the followers in order to achieve organizational objectives, both process and property whereby as a process, it involves the use of non coercive influence to direct and coordinate the activities of the members of an organized group towards the achievement of group objectives; as a property, leadership is a set of qualities or characteristics attributed to those who are perceived to successfully employ such influence. Such qualities include: ability to inspire the other, ability to understand human behavior, ability of verbal assertiveness and willingness to take risks. Quality of management depends in part on manager’s leadership philosophy, management values and beliefs (management philosophy or ideology) are a determinant of organizational

behavior which then would regulate the effect of organizational politics on organizational outcomes.

Green (2007) describes the necessary competencies of this consultative management/leadership role as follows; being expected to be problem-solvers, conflict resolvers, coaches, mentors, reconciliators, and liaisons with lots of political game plan savvy. This expectation is a huge shift in what organizations have traditionally expected from managers/leaders and requires a great deal of competence and a variety of management balancing schemes. Most importantly, it is required that the modern management/leadership orientation be established on credibility, servant hood, transformation, negotiation and/or character traits which elicit trust, respect, integrity, genuine concern, reliability, good moral and ethical standards. Gilley and Gilley (2007) take this critical competence to yet a higher level of expectation; managers/leaders must be political gurus in order to survive and manage people in today's organization. Every manager should strategically position themselves and strive to strike a balance between regulating OP and achieving organizational goals. The balancing act may involve combating extreme practice of OP by use of authoritarianism to moderate acts that are beneficial to the organization, leading by example through participatory/consultative approach, setting highly ethical and authentic climates that are intolerant of dirty tricks in respect to OP, encouraging creativity and innovation through intrapreneurial and transformative mindset, developing clear job assignments via transactional approach since politics are more prevalent where the purpose is unclear, it is also hard to assess employee performance when jobs and standards are not clear and there could also emerge issues of inequity and injustice in organizational practices and application of the same hence politicking. There is need to eliminate unhealthy coalitions, cliques and groupings through; dismissals, transfers, job rotation, team work and partnerships, confront

game players and let them know that the organization is aware of their activities and ulterior motives, lay a level playing field by way of clear, fair policy, entrench equity and justice resource allocation/practice, culture and value system of the organization to alley fears, anxieties and feelings of inadequacies in regard to power and authority and if the worst seems visible, use manipulation or pure force may be employed.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Organizational Structure

Organizations are socially constructed entities that come together having identified a mandate within which to operate and serve, Edstrom (2007). Within this configuration and mandates sprouts power to activate visions and strategic roles. Amorphous Power can be meaningless, near still. The process of coming up with a structure involves apportioning power to positions and designing the flow of power and consequently influence, Certo, (2007). Structure has been also referred to as the enduring allocation of work roles and administrative mechanisms that allow organizations to conduct, coordinate and control work activities, Morgan (2007). Most of the fundamental and far reaching organizational decisions circumvent around the structure. The structure of an organization importantly influences the flow of information and the context and nature of human interactions. It channels collaboration, specifies modes of coordination, allocates power and responsibility, shows logical reporting lines and relationships, authority and responsibility. Within the demands of modern organizations, organizational structures may be based on global, functional, customers, network, product and area/geographical space. However the structure becomes the basis upon which managers organize and manage the organization; setting up the group, allocating resources, and assigning work to achieve goals. It also provides authority; the right to perform or direct others.

Structure provides the ability to get others to act in a certain way or influence; the playing or display of power and responsibility. Obligation to perform assigned activities too is derived from the structure. The structure also charts out the parity of employees, gives unity of command, chain of command, and span of control. Bensaou & Earl,

(2007), posits that a well designed organizational structure should be; formalized, whereby systems, policies and decision making, communication and controlling systems are clear. Luthans (2008) posits that the other characteristics of a good structure are specialization; assigning specific individuals to well defined tasks, decentralization, giving autonomy to employees to perform their duties, distinctively sharing power in a formal way clear to all and allowing all employees to exploit, reach and secure their potentials. Good structures reduce structural conflicts as well as individual conflict. Communication, the lifeblood of organizations is a good if there is good understanding between the sender and the receiver, therein lies in the basis for effective communication, The most critical factor in ensuring that communication is free and effective, is shared purpose and goals as authenticated by the structure; OP most often than not are about self interest and not shared purpose, Carrington (2007).

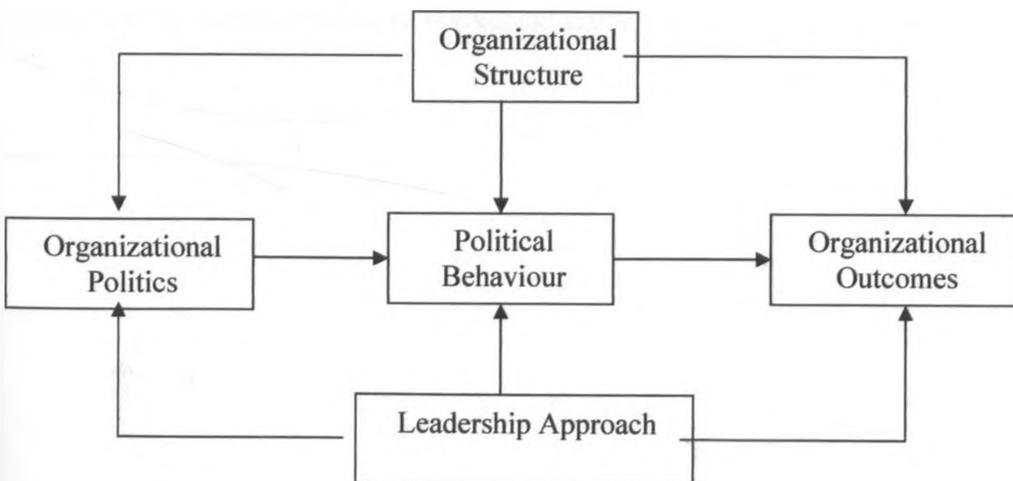
Certo (2008) posits that the moderating effect of structure between organizational politics and organizational outcomes can never be disputed; .if the structure is unclear on communication lines, relationships and roles, organizational outcomes will be adversely affected. Some of the political tactics employed in organizations include withholding information for self perpetuated interests or using it to settle scores, gossip, rumors, maligning others/ mad slugging, self enhancement and impression management, an overly inflated grapevine that overshadows functional structure rendering performance of work untenable.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conceptual Model

This paper reviewed literature on organizational politics and its effects on organizational outcomes. Scholars in this area are clear on the position that organizational politics cannot be eliminated and that it would be naive for any manager to expect completely wipe out organizational politics, Zanezlik, (2008). Although tactics may work and deliver desired results to individual self interests, it is important to note that others may be costly to both individuals and organizations. Political gamesmanship has been presented as dysfunctional in relationship to its effect on most of the organizational outcomes. However the moderating joint effects of manager/leader paradigm approach and organizational structure on the relationship between organizational politics and organizational outcomes has not been studied. There is a possibility that this distinct organizational feature may present desired powerful outcomes for the organization, depending on the manager/leader approach and a well defined organizational structure. The gap identified is presented in the conceptual model below;

Fig. 1. A Conceptual Model on the Relationship between Organizational Politics, Organisational Structure, Leadership and Organizational Outcomes.



Source: Author 2009

CONCLUSION

What are the implications of organizational politics to the current and future management of people in organizations, should it be eliminated, controlled or nurtured? Political manoeuvring can and should be regulated to keep it constructive and within productive bounds. It is imperative that managers accept that the Organizational politics is a fact of life in every organization and represents the diversity of individuals and groups with different values, goals and interests. This sets up the potential conflict of resources; budget allocations, project responsibilities, promotions, space allocation, work realignment, recognition from the boss are just but a few of the things that may draw members attention resulting to conflict and disagreement or need for political manoeuvring (Robbins 2007). Inarguably one of the causes is scarce resources, Putman (2006). While it is not practical to mobilize hundred percent sufficient resources, it is possible for the manager/leader to ensure that there is sufficient supply of critical resources and to configure a structure that introduces clear rules and regulations to specify the use of these resources in fairness and equity. It is possible that robust and fair competition may arise out of OP to freely possess power, authority and influence for purposes of achievement, excellence and goal attainment. The ability to navigate the political waters of an organization is the highest hurdle that organizational management must vault in order to be considered viable.

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