

## **PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS, FRUSTRATION WITH WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT IN A SPORT AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT IN GAUTENG**

P. Radebe

Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

Email: patrick@vut.ac.za

M. Dhurup

Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

Email: royd@vut.ac.za

### **—ABSTRACT—**

The study examined the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics, frustration with work and occupational commitment among officers in the Sport and Recreation Department in Gauteng, South Africa. A structured questionnaire was administered to 152 officers in the department and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyse collected data. A non-probability convenient sampling method was used to select sample respondents. Statistical techniques utilised included factor analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. Correlation analysis results indicated statistically significant correlations between general political behaviour and going along to get ahead, pay and promotion as well as frustration with work. Negative correlation existed between frustration with work and occupational commitment. It was recommended that employees who showed sustained frustration with work be identified and appropriate interventions such as coaching and mentoring be instituted. Limitations and implications for further research were explored.

**Key Words:** *Perceptions of organisational politics, frustration with work, career commitment, political behaviour*

**JEL Classification:** L2

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Perceptions of organisational politics has gained prominence in organisational politics literature because of its potential negative repercussions that include but are not limited to interference with decision making, promotion and rewards; high turnover intentions; low job performance; low job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour (Vigoda, 2000; Huang, Chuang & Lin, 2003; Miller, Rutherford & Kolodisnky, 2008). The existing gap in organisational politics studies is the lack of examination of the linkages between organisational politics, frustration with work and organisational commitment (Rosen, Harris & Kacmar, 2009). In addition to the lack of research on frustration with work, there is also a paucity of research on occupational commitment, especially in the public sector (Cohen, 2007; Miller *et al.*, 2008; Hochwarter, Ferris, Laird, Treadway & Gallagher, 2010; Weng & McElroy, 2012). The evidence that many recreational professionals around the world are choosing to retire from the profession while those entering will not be sufficient to meet the demand triggered this study (Tang, Cunningham, Frauman, Mark & Perry, 2012).

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS, FRUSTRATION WITH WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT**

### **2.1 Perceptions of organisational politics**

Studies in organisational politics have revealed that its occurrence is as a result of individuals wishing to further their short- or long-term interests at the expense of others (Vigoda, 2000; Miller *et al.*, 2008). Implicit in the aforementioned description is that workplace politics is by its very nature self-serving behaviour associated with manipulation, defamation and subversiveness utilised to benefit one group against another (Abbas, Raja, Darr & Bouckenoghe, 2014). Huang *et al.* (2003) assert that because it is aimed narrowly at the gratification of interests of a certain group/s, organisational politics tends to erode constructive efforts to attain organisational goals; hence, formal authority does not sanction it. This study focuses on employees' perceptions of organisational politics and not the actual occurrence of politics or political behaviour. This view is congruent with Vigoda's (2000:328) assertion that organisational politics should be understood in terms of "what people think of it rather than what it actually represents".

The antecedents of perceptions of organisational politics are categorised generally into personal and situational factors. Personal factors include demographic factors, personality characteristics, attitudes, needs and values. On the other hand, organisational factors embrace job autonomy, job variety, centralisation and formalisation (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé & Johnson, 2003). Poon (2003) adds lack of minimal justice and fairness, role ambiguity, scarcity of resources and climate of trust to the list of antecedents. The discussion of these antecedents is beyond the scope of this study. In the final analysis, job stress, low job satisfaction and employee turnover, *inter alia*, are considered the manifestations of the occurrence of organisational politics in the workplace (Abbas, Shafique, Qadeer, Moin UD Din, 2015).

## **2.2 Frustration with work**

Frustration is conceptualised as a negative response displayed as a result of an obstacle on the path to the attainment of the desired goal, which elicits defensive behaviour on the part of an employee (Ogunbamila, 2013). Authors, Ceaparu, Lazar, Bessiere, Robinson and Sheiderman (2004) amplify that obstacles can be both external and internal to the goal attainment. External obstacles are exogenous to the organisation, whereas internal obstacles originate within an organisation. In this study, the focus is on endogenous factors. In essence, employees are frustrated if they are prevented from achieving expected satisfying results, hence the poor functioning of an employee.

Workplace frustration can be traced from a variety of sources such as non-participation in decision-making, job insecurity, conflict with co-workers, poor relations between employees and supervisors, incompatibility between efforts and rewards and role conflict (Reio, 2011; Van der Elst, Van den Broeck, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2012). If the sources of frustration with work are not managed effectively they have the potential to lead to employees trying to rationalise their failures, repeating efforts to attain a goal in vain and avoiding a frustrating situation through withdrawal (Heacox & Sorenson, 2007).

## **2.3 Occupational commitment**

In vocational psychology literature, occupational commitment is considered to comprise three components, namely affective occupational commitment, continuance occupational commitment and normative occupational

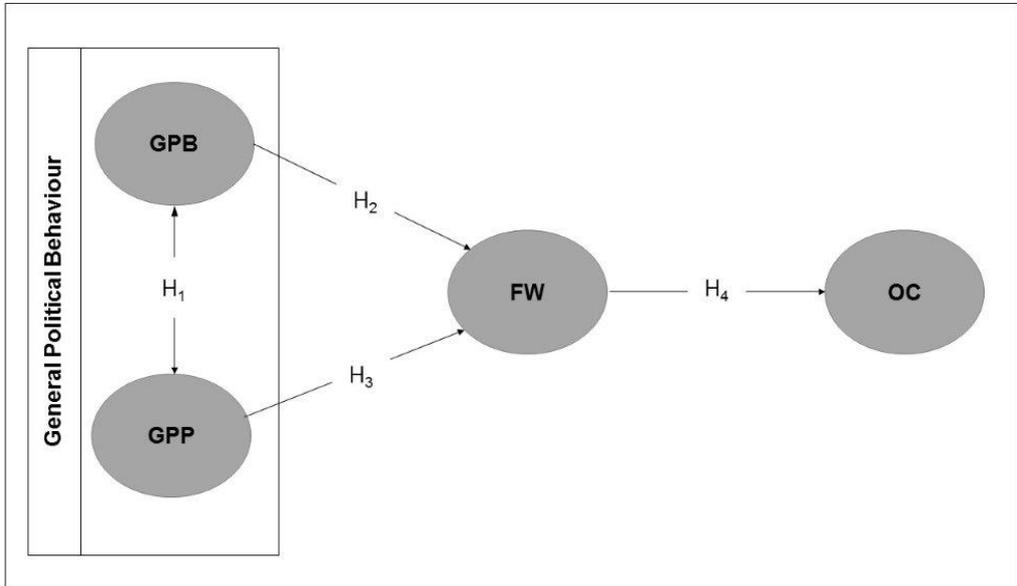
commitment (Chang, Chi & Miao, 2007; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Weng & McElroy, 2012). Affective occupational commitment denotes an employee's desire to remain in the occupational role. Affective occupational commitment develops because an employee identifies with work goals or because of his/her positive experiences with an occupation (Van der Heijden, Van Dam & Hasselhorn, 2009). Continuance occupational commitment intimates an employee's decision to stay in a particular occupation because the costs of leaving it are high. Employees who have continuance occupational commitment are likely to stay in their occupation as a result of investments made in their careers or the possibility of a loss of resources used in building their careers (Jones & McIntosh, 2010). Leaving one's occupation has led to enormous costs that include costs of additional needed training and human capital investment, disrupted work relationships and lost time and income (Kidd & Green, 2006). Normative commitment is considered an employee's feeling of obligation towards an occupation, which develops because of pressure to remain in the occupation from colleagues, friends or the family (Blau, 2007).

### **3. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Figure 1 represents a conceptual model, which proposes that a relationship exists between General Political Behaviour (GPB), Going along to get ahead, Pay and Promotion (GPP), Frustration with Work (FW) and Occupational Commitment (OC).

Based on the conceptual model in Figure 1 the following hypotheses were posited:

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between general political behaviour, going along to get ahead, and pay and promotion
- H2: There is a significant positive relationship between general political behaviour and frustration with work
- H3: There is a significant positive relationship between going along to get ahead, pay and promotion, and frustration with work
- H4: There is a significant negative relationship between frustration with work and occupational commitment

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

#### **4. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study explored the relationship between the perceptions of organisational politics (GPB and GPP), frustration with work, and occupational commitment among officers in Gauteng Sport and Recreation Department

#### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

##### **5.1 Measures**

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, A, B, C and D. Section A gathered biographical information on gender, age, level of education and length of service in the department. Section B gleaned responses on sport and recreational officers' perceptions of organisational politics. The scale that was used for this purpose was adopted from Kacmar and Ferris (1991). To glean data on frustration with work in Section C, Peters, O' Connor and Rudolf's questionnaire (1980) was utilised without modification. Lastly, Section D obtained information on occupational commitment of sport and recreation officers utilising Blau (1989)

with no adaptation. The constructs were measured using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree.

## **5.2 Data collection**

The research setting was the Sport and Recreation Department in Gauteng, which consisted of 600 sport and recreation officers. Structured questionnaires were distributed to sport and recreation officers who have been employed in a permanent capacity or contract basis for more than a year. An employee working in the Sport and Recreation Department collected the data during January and June 2016 in order to reach the majority of sport and recreation officers in the region and to maximise the sample collection. . A non-probability convenience sample method was utilised to select sample participants. Participation in the study was voluntary. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, a total of 152 questionnaires were completed and used for data analysis. .

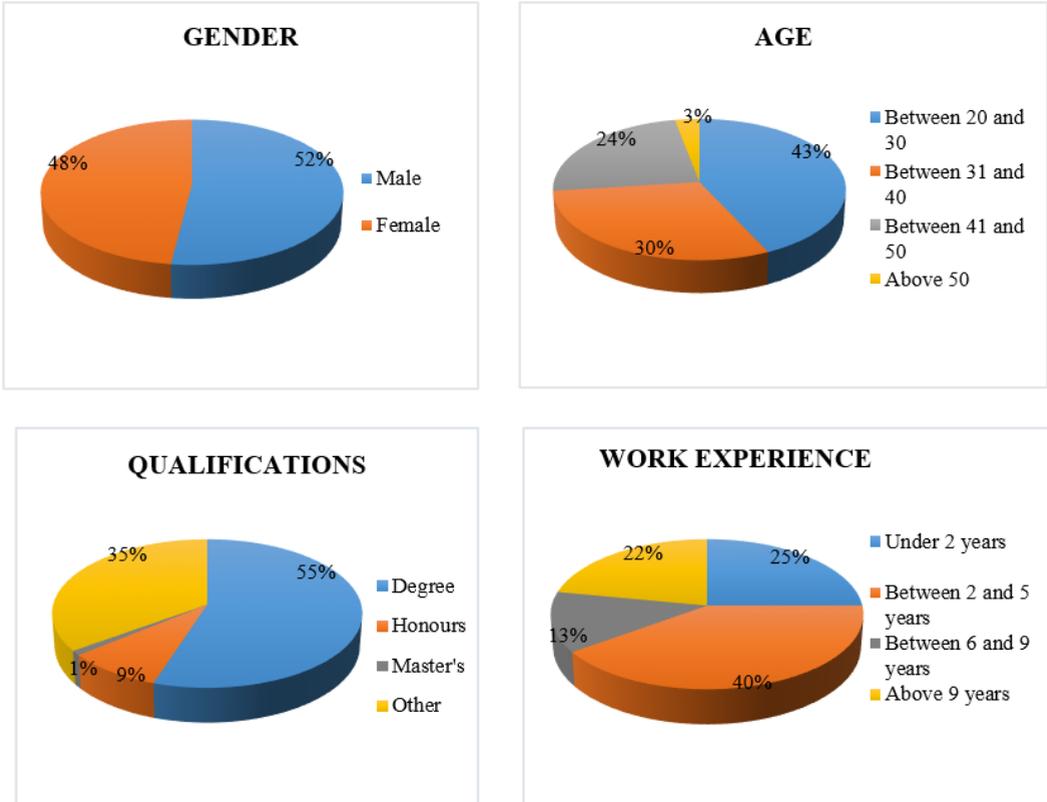
## **6. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

Reliabilities relating to the measurement instruments are shown in Table 1. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the scales were as follows: General Political Behaviour ( $\alpha=0.807$ ), Going along to get ahead, Pay and Promotion ( $\alpha=0.710$ ), Frustration with Work ( $\alpha=0.745$ ), and Occupational Commitment ( $\alpha=0.745$ ). The scales exhibited acceptable value of reliabilities (0.70) (Pietersen & Maree, 2008). With respect to validity, factor analysis resulted in items loading on the two sub-constructs of the organisational politics scale. Any noticeable low loadings and cross-loadings were discarded to ensure construct validity. Additionally, the correlation analysis indicated sufficient evidence of convergence of the constructs used in the study, thus affirming convergent validity in the study.

## **7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **7.1 Demographics**

The descriptive data in Figure 2 indicate that the majority of 152 sampled respondents were male (52%;  $n=79$ ) and the remainder (48%;  $n=73$ ) were female. The majority (43%;  $n=65$ ) of these respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30, followed by those in the age category of between 31 and 40 years (30%;  $n=45$ ). The other age categories were represented as follows: between 41 – 50 years (24%;  $n=37$ ) and over 50 years (3%;  $n=5$ ).

**Figure 2: Demographic properties**

The majority (55%; n=84) of the respondents were in possession of a degree followed by those who had an honours degree (9%; n=14) and a master's degree (1%; n=2). Other respondents (35%; n=52) indicated to have educational qualification other than the mentioned such as a management, administrative or coaching certificate. A larger (40%; n=61) number of participants had work experience of between two and five years in the department. The figures for other categories of length of service were below 2 years (25%; n=38); between 6 – 9 years (13%; n=20) and over 9 years (22%; n=33).

## 7.2 Exploratory factor analysis

Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests of sphericity were utilised to test the suitability of the factor analysis for the data set. The chi-square value for

measuring of sampling adequacy was 0.772 at the significance level of  $p < 0.001$  indicating the appropriateness of factor analysis for the data set (Lombaard, Van der Merwe, Kele & Mouton, 2011)

Following the determination of the suitability of factor analysis for the data set, factor extraction using the eigenvalues and percentage of variance criterion was undertaken. From the 12-item perceptions of organisational politics scale, two factors were extracted with a cumulative variance of 59.3 percent. In Table 1 it can be observed that the two factors were named as follows: factor 1 (General Political Behaviour) and factor 2 (Going along to get ahead, Pay and Promotion). Factor analysis was performed on perceptions of organisational politics because it was a multi-dimensional construct.

**Table 1: Reliability and accuracy statistics**

Model constructs and sub-constructs		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item-total	$\alpha$ Value	
General political behaviour (GPB)	GPB-1	2.877	1.089	.738	0.807	.850
	GPB-2			.750		.758
	GPB-3			.721		.794
	GPB-4			.764		.718
Going along to get ahead, pay and promotion (GPP)	GPP-1	3.418	1.112	.764	0.710	.620
	GPP-2			.756		.670
	GPP-3			.744		.827
	GPP-4			.775		.754
Frustration with work (FW)	FW-1	3.086	1.074	.442	0.745	Factor analysis not applicable for the construct as the construct was unidimensional
	FW-2			.858		
	FW-3			.565		
Occupational Commitment (OC)	OC-1	3.146	0.971	.769	0.745	Factor analysis not applicable for the construct as the construct was unidimensional
	OC-2			.605		
	OC-3			.741		
	OC-4			.717		
	OC-5			.662		

Other constructs such as frustration with work and occupational commitment were not factor analysed because they were unidimensional. GPB refers to a behaviour by which people build themselves up by tearing others down. Going along to get ahead indicates propensity to tell others what they want to hear rather than to tell

the truth, whereas pay and promotion connotes policies that have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined (Miller *et al.*, 2008).

The factor loadings for each item can be observed in Table 1. The loadings were above the recommended threshold of 0.50. Loadings below the benchmark value of 0.50 and cross-loadings were discarded. To ensure effective maximisation of variance loadings, Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation was utilised.

### 7.3 Correlations

Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between general political behaviour, going along to get ahead, pay and promotion, frustration with work and occupational commitment. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2: Correlation among constructs**

Constructs	GPB	GPP	FW	OC
General Political Behaviour (GPB)	1.000			
Going along to get ahead, Pay and Promotion (GPP)	.294**	1.000		
Frustration with Work (FW)	.181*	.015	1.000	
Occupational Commitment (OC)			-.308**	1.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 2 indicate that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between general political behaviour and going along to get ahead, pay and promotion ( $r=0.294^{**}$ ;  $p<0.01$ .); thus the hypothesis, *there is a significant positive relationship between general political behaviour and getting along to get ahead, pay and promotion* (H1), was accepted. The finding implied that pay and promotion was not based on fairness or policy in the Sport and Recreation Department. In fact, it suggests that political behaviour determined the pay and promotion sport and recreation employees ultimately received. The extent of political behaviour in the department engendered sheer compliance for the sake of receiving pay raises and promotion. These results resonate with the finding of Salimaki and Jamsen (2010) who found that political motives influenced the performance appraisal ratings and pay allocations. The authors contend that politically motivated performance assessments result in inaccurate ratings, which ultimately lead to receiving pay raises and promotions that do not comply with

policy procedures. This self-serving behaviour leads to favouritism by protecting and promoting the interests of certain group or individuals.

Moderate positive correlations were noted between general political behaviour and frustration with work ( $r=0.181^*$ ,  $p<0.05$ ); hence the hypothesis, *there is a significant positive relationship between general political behaviour and frustration with work* (H2), was supported. This empirical evidence confirmed that the existence of political behaviour in the Sport and Recreation Department led to the negative emotional response in the form of frustration with work among the employees. Empirical research has provided evidence that organisational politics is conceived a threatening variable of the work environment and consequently elicits frustration with work from employees (Rosen *et al.*, 2009). Previous studies confirmed that the presence of political behaviour in the workplace leads to frustration with work as employees are frustrated by favouritism and manipulation of human resource processes to achieve biased personal, social and political ends (Li, Galtsch & Siegrist, 2011; Van der Elst *et al.*, 2012). The negative emotional response has a potential to lead to other severe ramifications such as low job satisfaction and decreased organisational citizenship behaviour (Van der Elst *et al.*, 2012).

The relationship between going along to get ahead, pay and promotion, and frustration with work was positive but not strong ( $r=0.015$ ). This led to the rejection of the hypothesis *there is a significant positive relationship between going along to get ahead, pay and promotion, and frustration with work* (H3). The finding indicated that the sport and recreation officers' frustration with work was not strongly associated with going along to get ahead, pay and promotion. Empirical evidence suggests that the existence of political behaviour breeds frustration with work; the same goes for pay and promotion that are not guided by policy and are based on favouritism (Morris, Yaacob & Wood, 2009). In this respect, Kidd and Green (2006) proffer that employees can only feel a sense of relief or satisfaction if they play an instrumental role in the design and implementation of the pay system and promotional policy and if these are followed in the execution of pay and promotion.

Frustration with work showed negative correlations with occupational commitment ( $r=-0.308^{**}$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The finding affirmed the hypothesis *there is a significant negative relationship between frustration with work and occupational commitment* (H4). Increased frustration with work led to decreased levels of

occupational commitment among officers in the Sport and Recreation Department. When employees cannot achieve personal and organisational goals due to individual and situational factors in the work environment, they may consider changing their careers to those that are perceived as less frustrating (McHugh, Kutney-Lee, Cimiotti, Sloane & Alken, 2011). The view advanced is that frustration with work creeps in as employees have a feeling that their job environmental factors are inimical to the actualisation of their career goals; hence, the desire to pursue other career prospects (Blau, 2009). Moreover, a political organisational climate may trigger unfair and unjust activities that are observed easily by employees. When an employee feels deprived and unfairly treated because of political considerations, he/she will be inclined to react initially by reducing voluntary obligation and attachment to the organisation and occupation (Vigoda, 2000).

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In cases where the level of frustration with work is high, it behooves managers to identify frustrated employees who tend to display continued frustration with work with the purpose of offering coaching and mentoring in order to deal with the sources of frustration. On the other hand, should employees engage consistently in self-serving behaviours that are detrimental to the department, more deliberate and robust measures should be invoked to assist them to exit the system. To deal effectively with political behaviour and its ramifications, fairness should form the basis of human resource processes and decisions. All these issues, if well considered, could go a long way to enhance occupational commitment of officers in the sport and recreational department. The organisation should also consider how employees fit within their work environments. Thus, to mitigate the possibility of employees feeling frustrated in work environments, the organisation should carefully consider matching employees, whether newly recruited or currently employed, with the demands of the job.

## **9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

As with all studies of a similar nature, a smaller sample yields results that could have been different had a larger sample been used. Hence, there is a need for future studies to use larger sample sizes. The diversity of respondent education levels offers evidence that the findings limit generalisation beyond the Sport and Recreation Provincial Department. The use of a non-probability sampling method

in the study limited the chances of generalising the findings to the entire target population. Future research could replicate the model utilising longitudinal designs to show the effects of perceptions of organisational politics over time. This study relied upon a single method of self-report data gathering. Although self-reports may not produce completely objective data due to employee moods or other biases, this method is generally the proper choice for measuring perceptions and other internal states (Spector, 2006). The study explored the associations between perceptions of organisational politics, frustration with work and occupational commitment. Future studies might expand the framework to include other dependent variables, including performance variables such as task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour and absenteeism. Such research would advance our understanding of how perceptions of organisational politics and frustration with work together influence the effectiveness of employees and organisations.

## 10. CONCLUSION

This study provided evidence of the linkages between perceptions of organisational politics, frustration with work and occupational commitment. A relationship was found between frustration with work and occupational commitment. The findings revealed that higher perceptions of organisational politics are associated with increased levels of frustration with work. The findings also implicate, from an applied perspective, that the expected benefits of greater occupational commitment are tempered when employees feel frustrated with work and when their job environment is highly political. The research may thus serve as a springboard for studies into other work outcomes of perceived organisational politics.

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