# COVER PAGE AND DECLARATION

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# MBA in Information Technology & Systems Management

## MGT590: Action Research




# Unraveling the Dynamics of Office Politics and Understanding Its Impact on Employees

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## 1. Abstract

Office politics is a neglected topic in many organizations worldwide, even though the corporate office suffers from this toxic environment and behavior. Management needs to make more effort to eradicate and address the matter. This paper attempts to discover the challenges professionals face because of workplace politics in different job levels of organizations, from small and midsize to conglomerates. In addition, the model was found on the basis of survey participants' responses, leading to the conclusion that individuals practice party politics for a variety of reasons, such as power, resources, knowledge, authority and securing their position.


## 2. Introduction

Office politics refers to individuals' actions to increase their status and promote their interests in the workplace. These unofficial activities can contribute to the negative perception of workplace politics.

A study conducted by Insight Global in November 2022 found that 85% of employees prefer an absence of politics at work. Office politics varied across different work environments, depending on the culture fostered by leadership and management. It is important to address the issues and create an environment that fosters fairness and professionalism for all employees.

Success in a business greatly depends on the efforts of its employees, so it's crucial to ensure that employee satisfaction is maintained throughout the company. Workplace politics can occasionally interfere with organizational harmony.

To gain a better understanding of the influence of office policies, a study was carried out among 32 professionals from different fields. The data collection process is described in detail in Section 4, which explains the methods chosen, their rationale, data analysis techniques and interpretation of the results. In addition, the results are carefully reviewed, with key themes and patterns identified based on the participants' responses.

A scrutiny of the relevant research literature was also carried out, integrating existing research and theories to establish a good basis and theory based on facts. And the results have been eloquently elaborated in this document. If you go through the document the reader will get to understand the different phases and implications of office politics.

# 3. Literature Review

People perceive workplace politics in different ways—some may embrace their involvement with those in power, while many others find it challenging and stressful to navigate (Joan Marques, 2009). The study of power dynamics and politics within organizations is considered a relatively new field of research. Scholars like Weber and Michels have primarily focused on issues related to power and politics within and between organizations (Farrell & Peterson, 1982)

At its core, office politics revolves around individuals vying for power and influence within the workplace. While casual gossip may seem harmless, it becomes a form of office politics when the intent is to gain an advantage (HR Focus, 2007, p. 8). The article also highlights that a key indicator of problematic office politics is when significant decisions are made without input from the broader organization (HR Focus, 2007, p. 8)

As noted by Marques (2010), it is often challenging to understand the true motivations behind a colleague's actions. Sometimes colleagues look sincere and the questions is, is it really this way! We need to observe carefully as this is where you can detect those who is trying to manipulate you and act politically.

An attentive employee will eventually recognize this dynamic. On a larger scale, organizations need to understand that while political behavior may produce quick results, it doesn't foster lasting success. Over time, such actions become apparent, and can have negative long-term consequences

In the context of organizations, political behavior is often described as the "non-rational influence on decision-making" (Miles, 1980, p. 154) and as actions that occur behind the scenes (Burns, 1962, p. 260). Definitions of organizational politics tend to emphasize the use of power (Miles, 1980), the manipulation of influence (Madison et al., 1980), or the competition for resources (Burns, 1962), but these descriptions do not always clearly differentiate political behaviors from other necessary actions taken in organizational roles.

# 4. Research Design

## 4.1 **Description of Participants in the Study**

### 4.1.1 **Demographic Information**

Quantitative survey method was used to collect data in this survey. Thirty-two (32) respondents working in divers sectors and positions level ranging from junior to senior leadership roles, and each participants have more than two (2) years of work experience.

We collected data from participants in response to 25 multiple-choice questions included in the study. These questions are to gather participants' experiences of workplace policy. For reference, all survey questions can be found in the appendices.

They are all based in Mauritius and Canada and work in different sectors, such as banking, information technology, education, healthcare, food and beverages, legal and compliance, and business process outsourcing (BPO).

Because participants in different time zones were involved, good communication was necessary to respond to those who had questions on time to ensure they were being guided and getting the information needed to complete the survey. The mode of communication used was WhatsApp, as they are all people I have been working with at some point, university friends, or others from different professional organizations who used to connect online.

### 4.1.2 Sampling method

The research findings were based on a thorough review of a small sample of 32 professionals in different roles and industries. The study participants had up to two years of work experience, indicating they were likely to have encountered office politics at some point.

These are professionals that I have been working with at some point in time during my career or even have been my managers or supervisors. I know these people and am still maintaining a good relationship. That means I see the integrity of these people, and I have no doubt that they have replied to the survey to the best of their knowledge and capacity and are true to themselves.

## 4.2 Data Collection Tools

The survey was generated through Google Forms, and the participants were provided with an online link to access the study. Only individuals with a Gmail account could participate, as they were required to access the Google form using their personal Gmail account, but for confidentiality reasons and to put them in conforms their email address was not collected.

The forms were customized with various multiple-choice questions, which allows for flexibility in capturing the needed data effectively. The respondents were given the choice to select their answers easily within the multiple-choice provided. The question sample, the answer, the graph, and the number of responses are in the appendices.

## 4.3 Data Collection Procedure

The following is a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for gathering survey data. It offers a clear and detailed overview of the sequential process involved in this research and highlights essential factors to consider at each

stage of the data collection process. Information has been gathered using accepted data collection techniques to protect the credibility and reliability of data.

**Step 1:** The topic for the action research was selected based on my professional experience.

**Step 2:** Identify the purpose and opportunities for collecting data.

**Step 3:** The survey methodology was selected as the research method, and the quantitative method was used.

**Step 4:** Thought of the question's representation and the flow of questions.

**Step 5:** A list of questions in line with the research topic was created.

**Step 6:** Tested the questions with five people to ensure they were clear and understandable.

**Step 7:** Update the survey questionnaire as per the comments made by the five-person form part of the test.

**Step 8:** Set the prerequisites for the participants.

**Step 9:** The participants were identified as per step 8.

**Step 10:** The identified participants were informed that they would receive the survey.

**Step 11:** A review of the questions was conducted before finalizing the survey document.

**Step 12:** For confidentiality reasons, the settings on Google Forms for email collection were turned off.

**Step 13:** The link to the survey was sent to all the participants, with a fully described context of the survey.

**Step 14:** Participants were asked to complete the survey in less than 30 minutes.

**Step 15:** No email address of the participants was collected.

**Step 16:** The response rates were monitored throughout the survey.

**Step 17:** As no personal identifiers were collected, all responses remained anonymous, and the data was used for research purposes only.

**Step 18:** Follow up was done with the participants.

**Step 19:** Periodic check done to ensure that no participant has completed the survey more than once.

**Step 20:** Create a folder on my laptop and save all the data collected.

**Step 21:** Compiled a report with all the collected information to ensure all necessary data is present.

**Step 22:** Analyzed the survey responses.

**Step 23:** Thoughts on the manner of representing the data.

**Step 24:** Provide honest and accurate analysis.

**Step 25:** Start writing the research report based on the survey findings.

**Step 26:** Ensure that all information is included in the research conclusion.

**Step 27**: All data from the survey will be kept for a specified period (e.g., 6 months) for analysis and reporting purposes, after which it will be securely destroyed.

# 5. Data Analysis & Presentation of Results & Findings

## 5.1 **Data Analysis**

The Office of Research Integrity described **Data Analysis** as 'the process of systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data.' The data collected during the survey was collected continuously as soon as the participants responded and analyzed almost instantly. The data was easily analyzed, and the quantitative approach in the form of a survey was used.

The data analysis provides insight extracted from the raw material of the survey and answered by the participants to give the reader a comprehensive analysis of the data captured.

The data was gathered from closed-ended questions, which have a limited range of answers. However, some of the questions gave the participants a choice to add their answers from 'Others,' so structured data was collected in these instances. The data was downloaded in Excel format from Google and analyzed according to the responses.

| 2. What age range do you fall into? | 3. What is your current field of expertise? | 4. What is your current position level? | 5. Have you ever been a victim of office politics? | 6. Have you ever practiced office politics? | 7. Do you think office politics creates a toxic environment in the workplace? | 8. Why do you believe colleagues practice office politics? | 9.Do you believe that office politics has some benefits, such as the person who gossips getting promoted over someone who does not engage in the same behavior? | 10. Should employers punish employees who practice office politics severely? | 11. Do you think that victims of office politics speak up to make their voices heard? | 12. Is office politics a subject that companies openly discuss? | 13. How often do leaders or managers in your organization address the effects of toxic work environments on employees? | 14. Are you able to remain neutral in your workplace when there is gossip, even when it's complicated? | 15.Do you agree that office politics can impact someone's performance? | 16. Do you think that office politics is something normal and has its place within an organization as part of the culture? | 17. Is staying professional and friendly with everyone in your organization crucial? | 18. Is it normal for humans to be naturally political and do whatever it takes to protect their interests? | 19. Do you think your responsibility as a leader is to avoid and overcome negative political behavior in your workplace? | 20. Is it problematic when personal motivations are not aligned with those of the company? | 21. Do you think your organization can suffer when negative office politics begin to rot in the workplace? | 22. Do you agree that office politics can divide colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates, creating a tense and disruptive work environment? | 23. If workplace politics are left unresolved, do you think they will likely increase employee turnover and damage the organization's reputation? | 24. Can disciplinary action be a solution to address the office politics issues quickly? | 25. Out of the list of hostile political behavior below, which one have you been a victim of? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 41-50 | Healthcare | Supervisor | Yes | No | Yes | To further their interest | No | Yes | No | No | Occasional | No | Strongly agree | No | Strongly agree | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Disagree | Strongly Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 31-40 | Information technology | Leadership | Maybe | No | Yes | Unprofessional and unwilling to | Maybe | Yes | No | No | Occasional | Yes | Strongly agree | Maybe | Agree | Yes | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Strongly Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 41-50 | Information technology | Management | Yes | Yes | Maybe | Unprofessional and unwilling to | Maybe | Yes | Yes | No | Occasional | Yes | Disagree | No | Strongly agree | No | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Neutral | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 20 - 30 | Marketing | Management | Maybe | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Maybe | Maybe | No | Occasional | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Intentionally withholding important information |
| 41-50 | Police department | Supervisor | Maybe | No | Maybe | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | Maybe | No | Frequently | Yes | Agree | Maybe | Strongly agree | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Disagree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 20 - 30 | Call center | Agent | Yes | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | Maybe | No | Never | Yes | Strongly agree | No | Strongly agree | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Agree | Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 41-50 | Information technology | Consultant | No | No | Maybe | Psychological issue | Maybe | Maybe | Maybe | Maybe | Frequently | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | None |
| 31-40 | customer service | customer service agent | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Maybe | Maybe | No | Frequently | Maybe | Agree | No | Neutral | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 20 - 30 | Call Center | Agent | Yes | Maybe | Yes | To further their interest | No | No | Yes | No | Frequently | Yes | Neutral | Yes | Disagree | Yes | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 31-40 | Information technology | Leadership | Maybe | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | No | No | Occasional | Maybe | Agree | No | Agree | No | Yes | Neutral | Yes | Strongly agree | Agree | Agree | Intentionally withholding important information |
| 31-40 | Banking/Finance | Business Process Engineer | Maybe | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | No | No | Never | No | Strongly agree | No | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Strongly Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 41-50 | Information technology | Supervisor | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | No | Maybe | Yes | Yes | Occasional | Yes | Agree | No | Agree | Yes | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Neutral | Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 41-50 | Cars | Management | Yes | No | Yes | Unprofessional and unwilling to | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Frequently | Yes | Strongly disagree | Yes | Agree | Yes | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Strongly Agree | Intentionally withholding important information |
| 20 - 30 | Information technology | Leadership | No | No | Yes | To create a toxic environment | Yes | Maybe | Yes | Yes | Occasional | Yes | Neutral | Yes | Agree | Yes | Yes | Neutral | Yes | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | A group forming malicious alliances against y |
| 20 - 30 | Banking/Finance | Management | Maybe | No | Yes | Psychological issue | Maybe | Yes | Yes | No | Never | Yes | Strongly agree | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 41-50 | Banking/Finance | financial adviser | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | No | Yes | No | No | Never | No | Strongly agree | No | Agree | No | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Strongly Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 31-40 | Banking/Finance | Supervisor | Maybe | No | Maybe | To further their interest | Maybe | No | Maybe | No | Never | Yes | Strongly agree | No | Neutral | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Agree | A group forming malicious alliances against y |
| 41-50 | Marketing | Leadership | Maybe | No | Yes | Unprofessional and unwilling to | Yes | Maybe | No | No | Never | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Agree | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Neutral | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 41-50 | Banking/Finance | Management | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | Maybe | Yes | No | No | Occasional | No | Agree | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 41-50 | Human Resources | Management | Maybe | No | Yes | To further their interest | Maybe | Maybe | No | No | Occasional | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Neutral | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |
| 31-40 | Education | Leadership | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | Maybe | Yes | No | No | Never | Maybe | Agree | No | Strongly agree | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Agree | Agree | Intentionally withholding important information |
| 20 - 30 | Compliance (Legal) | Administrator | No | No | Yes | To further their interest | No | Maybe | No | No | Never | Yes | Strongly agree | No | Agree | No | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Agree | None of these, or I don't know of it. |
| 41-50 | Information technology | Supervisor | Yes | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | No | No | Occasional | Yes | Agree | No | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 31-40 | Education | Leadership | No | No | No | To further their interest | Maybe | No | No | Maybe | Occasional | Yes | Agree | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Maybe | Neutral | Maybe | Neutral | Neutral | Agree | Intentionally withholding important information |
| 20 - 30 | Information technology | First Line | Yes | No | Yes | To further their interest | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Never | No | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | No | Yes | Strongly agree | Maybe | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Strongly Agree | Blackmailing by a colleague |
| 31-40 | Information technology | Management | Yes | Yes | Yes | To further their interest | No | Yes | Yes | No | Never | Maybe | Strongly agree | No | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Strongly agree | Yes | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 31-40 | Food and beverages | Supervisor | Maybe | No | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Never | Yes | Neutral | Maybe | Agree | Maybe | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Agree | Back stabbing by a colleague |
| 31-40 | Information technology | Management | Yes | Yes | Yes | To further their interest | Yes | Maybe | No | No | Occasional | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Yes | Yes | Agree | Yes | Agree | Agree | Neutral | Gossiping or spreading rumors about you |

**Figure 1: Survey Data (Document in Appendices)**

Figure 1 is the data survey Excel extraction format from Google. For more visibility, the form is attached to the appendices. These are the data that have been contextualized to reflect the survey responses, and the analysis was based on these collected data.

## 5.2 Results & Findings

The results below show the participants' responses to the survey. The data was collected from the online survey tool Google Forms, which is highlighted above. Below is a representation of the different data gathered. An explanation of the data has been provided with as many details as possible to give a better understanding of the relevant information.

The participants' fields of expertise varied, but most (40.6%), represented a total of 13 participants working in the information technology sector. The chart shows the different industries the participants work for. It was a composition of almost all sectors, and this is an indication of the outcome that we will see as we progress in the discussion and facts and figures of the various survey questions.

When conducting the **workplace politics** survey, it is essential to understand the position level of participants, as people in different positions may have distinct experiences, perceptions and concerns regarding office dynamics, power structures, and political behavior. Given that most of the survey participants are from **management (28.1%)**, followed by **supervisory (25%)** and **leadership (21.9%)**, here are some key factors to consider regarding position level when analyzing workplace politics:

- **Perceptions of Power and Influence**
- **Impact of organizational hierarchies**
- **Professional distortions**

The three (3) key factors mentioned above were carefully considered before selecting participants, to ensure that the survey was both concrete and impactful, mitigating the risk of bias or gaps in representation.

An important aspect of this survey was added by the participants' top three occupational levels. Different organizations have different workplace policies, and this diversity brings valuable perspectives to the responses. By selecting participants in different roles, the survey captures a range of backgrounds and viewpoints. This allows

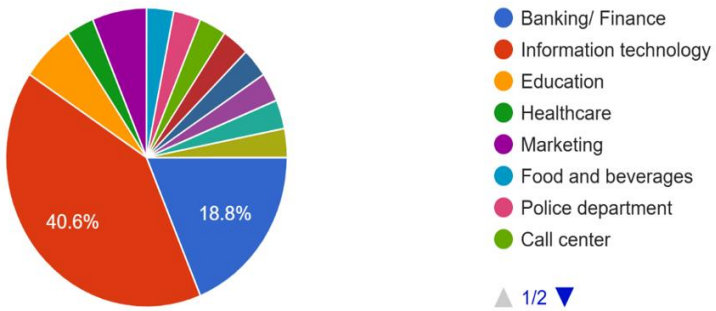
readers to understand the participants' thoughts, approaches, and personal experiences with workplace politics—whether they have been affected by it or not, for instance.

- **Management** might have questions about navigating office alliances and managing power dynamics.
- **Supervisors** could respond to questions about handling conflicts, favoritism, or employee complaints.
- **Leadership** could be asked about how politics affects long-term vision, corporate culture, or executive decision-making.

The value lies in the range of questions that can be addressed for each of the three job roles mentioned above. Each role comes with different responsibilities, and individuals in these roles approach office politics differently, depending on the level of power and authority granted to them by their respective organizations, for example.

- **Management-Level**: May be focused on how politics impacts their leadership effectiveness, relationships with peers, and ability to manage change. They might deal with internal politics around promotions, resource allocation, and decision-making.
- **Supervisory-Level**: Likely to report on employee-related political behavior, including favoritism, gossip, or informal networks. They may also experience politics in team dynamics, with individuals trying to influence their decisions or gain favor.
- **Leadership-Level**: Leadership will likely focus on the effects of politics on organizational alignment, vision execution, and long-term strategic goals. They may be more concerned with corporate politics at the executive level or the need to maintain a balance between different factions within the company.

## Industries




## Position Level

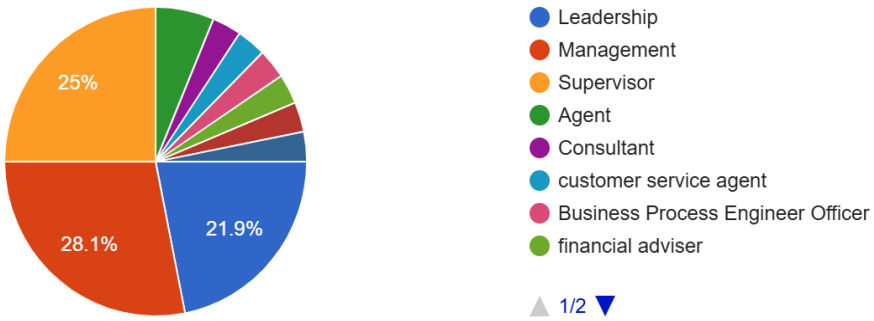



**Figure 2: Industries and position level**

The participants have enough experience and fulfill the criteria of more than two (2) years of working experience to respond to the survey. The setup question ensures that every participant can choose one option that fits their experience level without confusion or gaps. This is important because the range of meaningful experiences to the questions indicates the participants' maturity and work experience.

The question structure was easily created with logic that ensured clarity and simplicity for respondents. Ten (10) respondents have between 15 to 20 years of experience, which represents 31.3%, and ten (10) respondents with a range of 5 to 10 years of working experience which aggregates to 31.3% and the others vary. See below a representation of the % for the different number of years of working experience.

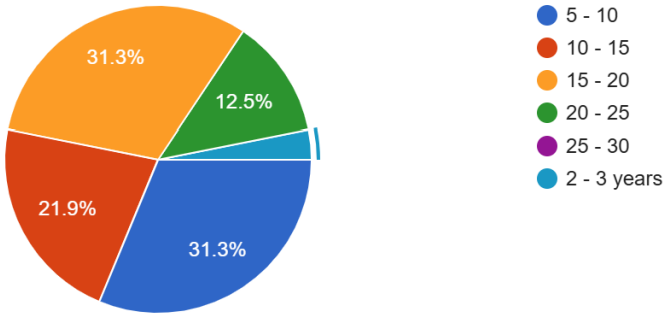



**Figure 3: Work experience of participants**

The age range is crucial as it reflects a person's job knowledge, skills, and experience. The age question was included to identify the demographic distribution of participants. According to Formplus (By Busy. Longe, July 2024), "age influences market preferences, alongside other demographic factors such might include behavior and education." In

this context, the age group provides insight into the participants' work experience. The dominant age group in this survey is 31 to 40, comprising 43.8%, with 34.3% of participants aged 41 to 50.

In many organizations age means the amount of work experience, for example an employee who came from the university will probably be 21 years old, thus the reflection people can it is the employee don't have enough experience or even doesn't have straightforward experience. But what is the most important is that people do not experience is people who bring a good quality of work, bring positive vibes and energy in the workplace and those who are keen to work without gossiping and spreading bad behavior. This is just to say that age matter yes, but not all the time even though it reflects experience, as people behavior who is the most critical factor for the prospect of the company.

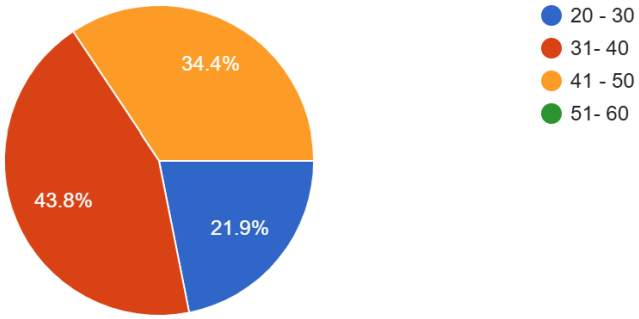



**Figure 4: Participants' age range**

It's interesting to note the percentage of participants who have been involved in office politics. However, 34.4% were unsure whether they had been victims of workplace politics, possibly due to not clearly recalling or fully understanding what office politics entails. More telling is that 34.4% of participants confirmed they had not been victims of workplace politics. Meanwhile, 31.3% reported having been victims of workplace politics at some point. These three percentages highlight the different experiences of participants with office politics.

This clearly indicates that office politics exist and are a part of office culture, whether we like it or not—this is a fact. From this perspective, what is more concerning is the "Maybe" response, which represents 34.4%. This suggests that these participants may have unknowingly been victims of office politics and might believe this is simply how a work environment operates without understanding what a positive and respectful work environment should truly look like.

On the other hand, 87.5% of the participants confirmed that they have never practiced office politics, while the remaining 12.5% had the courage to admit that they have engaged in office politics at their workplace. As mentioned

in an article by the "Kevin Eikenberry Group," paying attention to office politics is crucial for understanding how to position yourself effectively in a complex and competitive work environment.

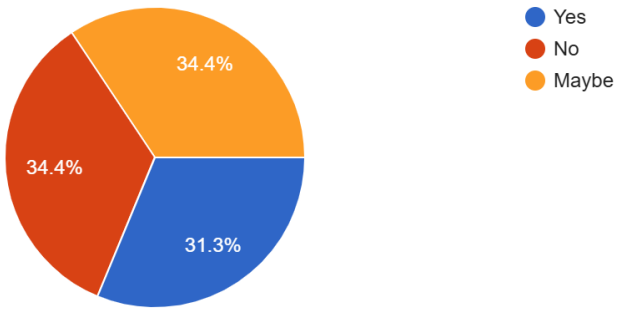



**Figure 5: victim of office politics**

As mentioned earlier, if someone doesn't fully understand office politics, it becomes nearly impossible for that person to recognize when colleagues are using it against them. This lack of awareness makes it difficult to answer key questions, such as the one included in the survey: "Do you think office politics creates a toxic environment in the workplace?" Although answering this question can be challenging, 81.3% of participants believe that office politics contributes to a toxic work environment. Meanwhile, 15.6% of participants, representing five individuals, are unsure and think that it "may" create a toxic environment, but they are not certain.

See the chart below, showing the percentage mentioned above.

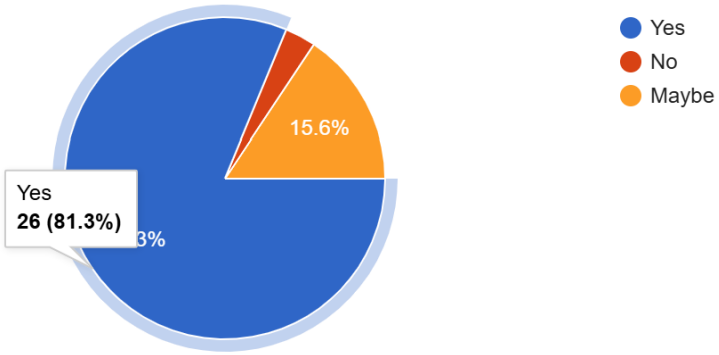



**Figure 6: Workplace toxic environment**

Do the colleagues practice office politics, this is one of the great questions which I think needs to be elaborated well. From this perspective, see below the responses which provide valuable insights into the different reasons employees may engage in office politics, ranging from self-interest and professional ambition to psychological factors and unprofessional conduct. This choice was made based on four proposals proposed to the participants. Also, the chart graphically represents the percentage of respondents.

- **To Further Their Interest** - 71.9%
  Most respondents (71.9%) believe that colleagues engage in office politics primarily to further their own personal or professional interests. This could involve advancing in their careers, gaining promotions, or securing favorable outcomes for themselves within the organization.
- **To Create a Toxic Environment** - 3.1%
  A small percentage of respondents (3.1%) show that people practice office politics with intention to create a negative work place. And it makes sense to say that those individuals may engage in manipulative behaviors to disrupt or destabilize the workplace culture, potentially for personal gain or out of malice.
- **Psychological Issues** - 6.3%
  6.3% of participants believe that office politics may arise from psychological issues or deeper emotional factors. This view suggests that some individuals may engage in office politics to address their own emotional needs or cope with workplace stress.
- **Unprofessional and Unwilling to Collaborate** - 18.8%
  18.8% of respondents pointed out that office politics may arise due to unprofessional behavior or a lack of willingness to collaborate. This could indicate that some individuals resort to political tactics rather than engaging in open communication or teamwork to achieve their goals.

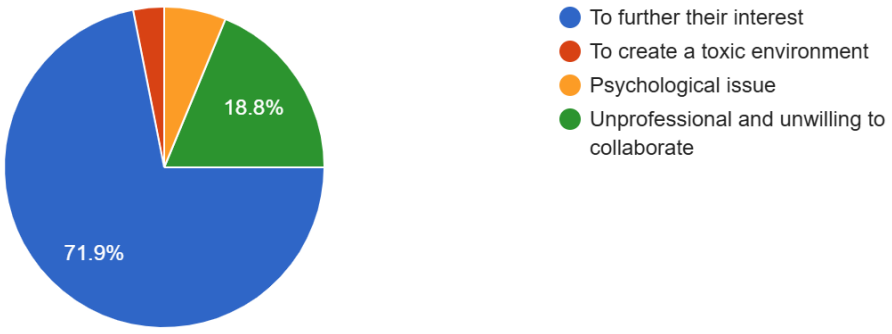



**Figure 7: Why colleagues practice office politics**

As Figure 8 below reveals some interesting information about the perceived benefits of office politics, particularly about the belief that people who engage in gossip or manipulative behavior can be promoted over those who refrain from such practices.

Most participants (43.8%) believe that individuals who practice office politics tend to benefit in various ways within their organizations. These benefits include promotion among others. This suggests that office politics may be seen as a tool for gaining personal advantages, regardless of the ethical implications.

21.9 percent of the respondents does not agree, as they do not believe there are benefits when practicing office politics.

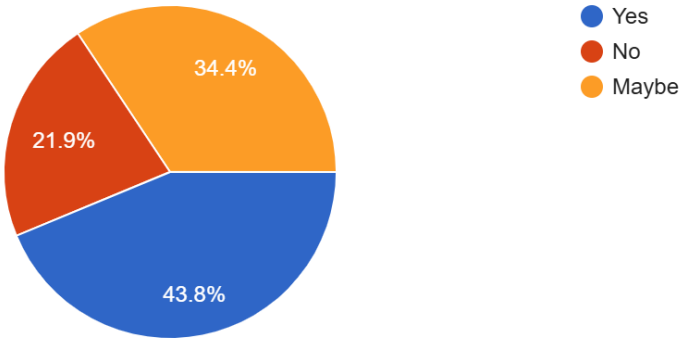



**Figure 8: Why colleagues practice office politics**

As noted in the Harvard Business Review on January 19, 2022, authors Lisa Zigarmi, Julie Diamond, and Lesli Mones define office politics as "the ability to successfully navigate the unwritten rules of 'how things get done and through whom.'" They emphasize that office politics involves understanding the motivations of others in the workplace and using this to influence decisions in ways that benefit both personal interests and organizational objectives (Zigarmi, Diamond, & Mones, 2022).

As it becomes increasingly evident from various sources, numerous studies emphasize the importance of navigating office politics effectively. A study by Dr. Takuma Kimura, published on June 9, 2014, highlights the importance of political skills for career advancement. Kimura suggests that the ability to navigate social and power dynamics in the workplace, such as building relationships, understanding power structures, and leveraging influence, can greatly affect a person's career. Individuals who are skilled in these areas are more likely to earn promotions, gain visibility, and reach their professional goals compared to those who lack these skills. This insight reinforces the notion that

office politics, often viewed negatively, can be an essential tool for achieving success in the workplace when used effectively.

The question of whether victims of office politics speak up to make their voices heard is crucial, as it sheds light on the impact of toxic behaviors in the workplace. The responses to this question were varied, reflecting different perspectives on the matter, see below figure 9 for the graphical representation of the %.

Firty-one percent of respondents believe that victims of office politics do, in fact, speak up and report to those responsible for such behavior. These individuals are often seen as brave, as it can be extremely difficult to address such issues openly. In many cases, victims may hesitate to approach their supervisor, manager, or organizational leaders because they fear retaliation or believe that the person practicing office politics may have a stronger relationship with those in positions of power. If the perpetrator is well-connected or even protected by others within the organization, the victim might feel that speaking out would not only be ineffective but could also lead to further suppression or retribution.

The fact that 31.3% of respondents believe that victims do speak up highlights the courage of those who choose to challenge the status quo and address toxic behaviors. However, it also underscores the need for organizations to create a safe environment where employees can voice their concerns without fear of retaliation, ensuring that all workers are treated fairly and with respect. This kind of openness is crucial for fostering a healthy and supportive workplace culture where office politics do not undermine the well-being and success of individuals and teams.

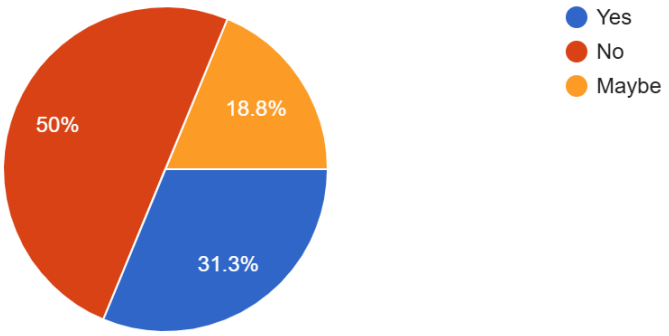



**Figure 9: Victims of office politics voice out**

When it comes to professional performance, companies have the tendency to focus on deliverables of the employees to make sure they meet the company objectives set as per their yearly goals and objectives.

However, what happens when office politics are present in the workplace? This is a crucial issue that needs attention and understanding.

According to the survey, 43.8% of participants (14 individuals) agree that office politics has a negative impact on employee performance. Furthermore, 31.3% (10 participants) strongly agree that office politics can be a significant performance killer, undermining productivity and creating barriers to success.

The remaining participants were unsure and unable to form an opinion, indicating a lack of clarity on how office politics affect work performance. This highlights the need for further discussion and a clearer understanding of how office politics influence workplace dynamics and employee outcomes.

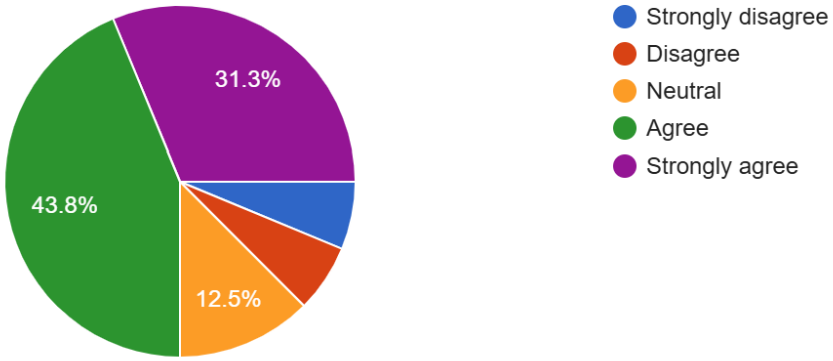



**Figure 10: Performance issue of workplace politics**

We have covered all the questions and summarized the various responses throughout this survey. However, it is important to address the specific hostile political behaviors that participants have been victims of, as these are crucial to understanding the full impact of office politics. The behaviors listed below are not exhaustive but encompass the most reported forms of office politics as experienced by participants.

Among the most prevalent behaviors are backstabbing by colleagues and gossiping or spreading rumors. These manipulative tactics are frequently employed by individuals practicing office politics to undermine others, gain favor, or achieve personal goals at the expense of their colleagues. Such behaviors contribute to a toxic work environment and can have a significant negative impact on employee morale, trust, and overall performance.

See the recommendation section for some best practices employers can put in place to reduce and avoid office politics. These factors are quick win, and they are not that difficult to implement. It aims to foster a more positive and transparent work culture.

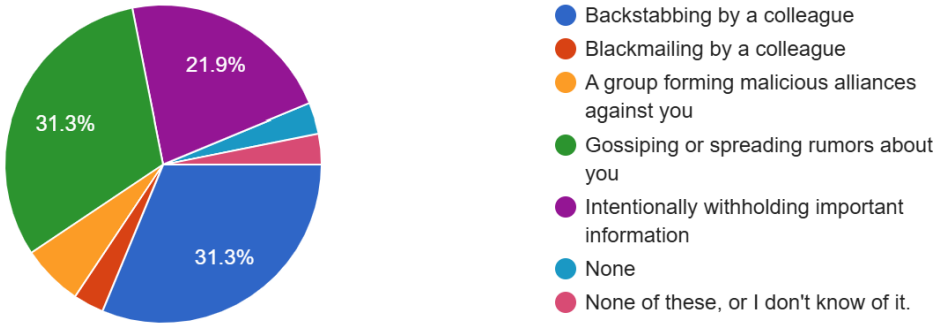



**Figure 10: Performance issue of workplace politics**

### 5.3 Observation Results

The result is not static as it varied depending on the participants' own experience of the different questions asked in the survey question. It reflects personal experience with the subject. The confidentiality of the survey has been a detrimental factor for the participants to provide an honest answer. This is why the confidential factor has been mentioned at the top of the survey questionnaire to make sure the participants are comfortable and understand that the survey will be confidential as no personal information will be collected (email address, name, address etc..).

In the digital world where people are aiming to protect themselves and their identity it is crucial to make sure no such data privacy matters happen, and their personal data are being processed and protected.

The participants responded to the questions as soon as they received the survey, I haven't had any challenges with anyone or questions about the questionnaire itself. Meaning that they were so collaborative and helpful.

## 6. Conclusion

The responses of 31.3%, which represent 10 participants, in total 32, revealed that they have been victims of office politics at some point in time in their career. Which means that small, medium and conglomerate enterprises are all concerned about this issue as these participants worked in different companies and roles are different as well, thus the level if their position also doesn't matter as office politics can impact them all, from floor workers to leadership level.

Organizations must focus on these issues and take proactive steps to address the matter, to bring a positive and pleasant work environment to the benefit of all. There should be a focus on the employees' metal well-being as it is an important factor. If the employees are not well mentally, who will do the job?

### 6.1 Recommendation

Based on the survey responses and data collected, the following recommendations aim to address the issue of office politics and promote a more transparent and collaborative workplace. These suggestions are non-exhaustive, but provide a solid basis for tackling the problem and improving the working environment.

- **Foster a Culture of Collaboration**
  A collaborative work environment can minimize the competitive and divisive nature of office politics. By encouraging teamwork, joint problem-solving, and mutual support, organizations can help employees feel valued for their contributions rather than for their ability to navigate political dynamics. Recognizing and rewarding collaboration over individual competition can also shift the focus from personal advancement to collective success.
- **Offer Training on Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution**
  Employees should be equipped with the skills to navigate interpersonal dynamics in a healthy manner. Providing training on emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict resolution can help staff recognize and manage their own emotions and understand others' perspectives. This can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings or manipulative behaviors that often fuel office politics.
- **Encourage Whistleblowing and Provide Protection for Victims**
  Victims of office politics often feel reluctant to speak up due to fear of retaliation or further exclusion. To address this, organizations should establish confidential channels for employees to report unethical behavior or political manipulation without fear of retribution.
- **Provide Support for Mental Health and Stress Management**
  Given the toll that office politics can take on mental health, organizations should prioritize employee well-being by offering support for mental health and stress management. Providing access to counseling services, promoting work-life balance, and encouraging regular breaks can help employees cope with the stress of navigating a politically charged work environment.

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# 8. Appendices

1. A survey email template was sent to the participants, and questions https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oeP0I6zuYZ_50LsHwp2OP1YN176hNqid/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=116402682713154207451&rtpof=true&sd=true

2. Link to the survey https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Kfh8SUt65OvCBFFjEUDc406mSOwmneWdJtTl7Sw63v8/edit

3. The survey's raw data https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PRQ0qrcXLywFeRvUHJLReUdDZX4n2ajf/view?usp=drive_link

4. Link to the survey responses https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Kfh8SUt65OvCBFFjEUDc406mSOwmneWdJtTl7Sw63v8/edit#responses