



A Study of Employee Coping Mechanisms in Politically Charged Workplaces with Reference to Organizations in Pune Region

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Abstract – This study examines employee coping mechanisms in politically charged workplaces, with specific reference to organizations in Pune. In recent years, workplaces have increasingly reflected broader societal political divisions, leading to heightened interpersonal conflict, stress, and emotional strain among employees. The research aims to identify the coping strategies employees adopt, analyze the impact of workplace political climate on stress levels, and evaluate how these strategies influence employee well-being and job satisfaction. Grounded in organizational behaviours theories and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the study adopts a quantitative, descriptive-analytical research design. Primary data was collected from 100 employees across public and private sector organizations in Pune using a structured questionnaire. The study explores various coping mechanisms, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance strategies, and examines their effectiveness in managing workplace stress. Findings suggest that political differences are a significant source of workplace tension, with a majority of employees experiencing frequent political discussions. Adaptive coping strategies such as open communication, emotional regulation, and seeking support contribute positively to well-being and workplace relationships, whereas maladaptive strategies like avoidance and suppression may worsen stress and reduce job satisfaction. The study also highlights the influence of demographic and organizational factors on coping behavior.

Keywords – Employee Coping Mechanisms, Workplace, Politics, Employee Stress, Job Satisfaction, Emotional Well-being, Organizational Behavior, Political Climate Coping Strategies, Pune Organizations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern workplaces increasingly reflect broader societal polarization, where political ideologies, social movements, and policy debates enter organizational spaces through conversations, leadership messaging, social media, and diversity initiatives. Politically charged workplaces are characterized by frequent exposure to conflicting political opinions, perceived ideological pressure, or organizational stances on political and social issues.

Such environments can generate stress, interpersonal conflict, reduced collaboration, and emotional exhaustion among employees. To maintain well-being and performance, employees adopt various coping mechanisms both adaptive and maladaptive—to navigate these tensions. This study proposes examining the types of coping mechanisms employees use, the factors influencing their choice of strategies, and the outcomes of these coping responses on individual well-being and workplace relationships.

Understanding how employees cope with political tension at work is critical, as these coping responses have meaningful consequences for both individual well-being and organizational functioning. Adaptive coping strategies may buffer stress, preserve professional relationships, and sustain performance, whereas maladaptive strategies may exacerbate emotional strain, deepen workplace divisions, and undermine collaboration. Despite the growing visibility of political issues in organizational contexts,

empirical research examining employees' coping mechanisms in politically charged workplaces remains limited.

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the types of coping mechanisms employees employ in politically charged work environments, the factors that shape their selection of coping strategies, and the outcomes of these responses for employee well-being and workplace relationships. By shedding light on how employees navigate political tension at work, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological and relational dynamics of modern workplaces and to inform organizational practices that promote resilience, inclusivity, and healthy professional interactions amid political diversity.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Early work by Karen Jehn (1995) distinguishes between task-related conflict which revolves around work processes and decisions and relationship or value-based conflict, which stems from differences in beliefs, identities, and personal values. The latter is particularly relevant in politically charged workplaces because political opinions are often deeply tied to an individual's core identity. Studies show that such value-based conflicts tend to have more severe negative consequences, including emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and weakened organizational commitment.



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Rosen, Harris & Kacmar (2020) conducted a meta-analytic review and found that employees’ perceptions of organizational politics significantly increase job stress and emotional exhaustion. Their findings suggest that when employees perceive their workplace as politically driven where decisions are influenced by power dynamics, favoritism, or ideological alignment it creates uncertainty and psychological strain. This is especially relevant in politically sensitive environments, where employees may feel pressured to conform or remain silent.

Bedi & Schat (2021) demonstrated that politically charged workplace climates are positively associated with anxiety and negatively associated with job satisfaction. Their research indicates that frequent exposure to political disagreements or organizational stances on controversial issues can create a sense of discomfort and insecurity among employees. This not only affects their emotional well-being but can also reduce their engagement and productivity.

Khan, Abbas & Raja (2022) found that coping strategies play a moderating role in the relationship between workplace politics and employee well-being. In other words, the extent to which political stress affects an individual depends largely on how they respond to it.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The research aims to

- Identify coping mechanisms employees use in politically sensitive environments.
- Understand how workplace political climate affects stress levels.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different coping strategies on well-being and job satisfaction.
- Analyze how demographic and organizational factors influence these coping methods.
- Suggest ways organizations can manage political diversity constructively

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts convenience sampling as the sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling technique where respondents are selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This method was considered appropriate for the present research due to both practical and contextual reasons.

The sample will be 100 respondents to ensure representation across different sectors, job levels, and demographic categories. Employees from both public and private sector organizations will be included.

After the data was collected, all responses were carefully examined, coded, and organized in a systematic manner. The completed questionnaires were screened to ensure accuracy, consistency, and completeness before analysis.

The validated data was then entered into spreadsheets for further processing and statistical analysis.

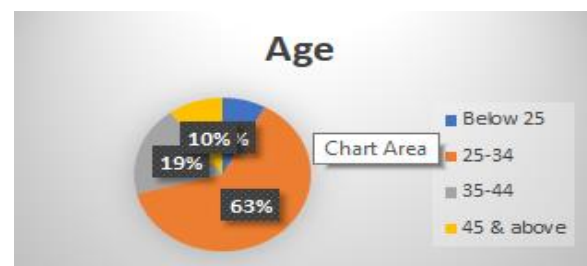
Convenience Sample techniques were employed in the analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the demographic profile of respondents and to present an overall view of employees’ perceptions of workplace political climate, commonly adopted coping strategies, and levels of stress and job satisfaction. Measures such as percentages, frequencies, and mean scores were utilized to identify prevailing trends and patterns.

Descriptive analysis was used to summarize respondents’ views on workplace political climate, the frequency and nature of political interactions, and the coping strategies commonly used by employees. Convenience analysis helped identify relationships and differences between key variables, such as the association between workplace political tension and employee stress, well-being, and job satisfaction, as well as variations in coping mechanisms across demographic groups.

V. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

1. Age group you belong to?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Below 25	8	08%
25–34	63	63%
35–44	19	19%
45 and above	10	10%
Total	100	100%



Interpretation

The age-wise distribution of respondents indicates that the majority of participants in the study fall within the 25–34 years age group (63%), followed by 35–44 years (19%), 45 years and above (10%), and a relatively small proportion below 25 years (8%).

This distribution suggests that the study is largely dominated by young working professionals, particularly those in the early to mid-stages of their careers. Individuals in the 25–34 age group are typically more active in organizational roles, more exposed to workplace interactions, and often more engaged in discussions, including those related to social and political issues. Their higher representation indicates that the findings of the

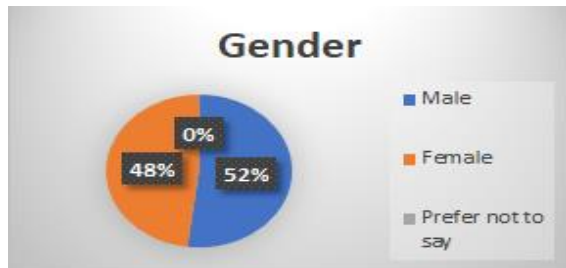


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study are likely to reflect the perceptions, experiences, and coping behaviors of this age segment more strongly.

2. What is your gender?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Male	48	48%
Female	52	52%
Prefer not to say	0	0%
Total	100	100%



Interpretation

The gender distribution of respondents shows that 52% are female and 48% are male, with no respondents selecting “prefer not to say.” This indicates a well-balanced and nearly equal representation of both genders in the study.

Such a distribution is beneficial for the research as it ensures that the findings are not heavily biased toward one gender. Instead, the study captures perspectives from both male and female employees almost equally, which enhances the reliability and inclusiveness of the results. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how different individuals experience and cope with political tension in the workplace.

The absence of responses under “prefer not to say” indicates that all participants were comfortable disclosing their gender, which reflects a certain level of trust and clarity in the questionnaire design.

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Undergraduate	12	12%
Postgraduate	69	69%
Diploma	14	14%
Doctorate	5	5%
Total	100	100%



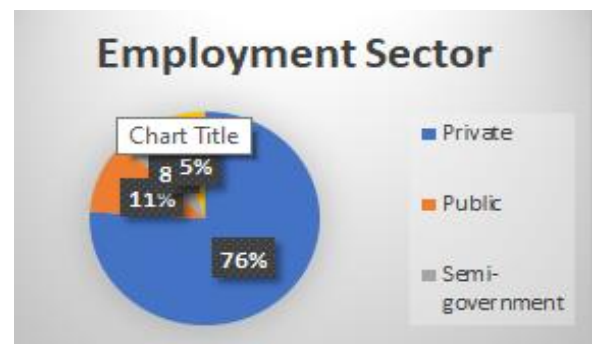
Interpretation

The distribution of respondents based on educational qualification shows that a significant majority, 69%, are postgraduate degree holders, followed by 14% with diplomas, 12% undergraduates, and a small proportion of 5% with doctorates.

This indicates that the sample is highly educated, with most participants having advanced academic qualifications. The dominance of postgraduate respondents suggests that the findings of the study are largely influenced by individuals who are likely to possess strong analytical abilities, awareness of workplace dynamics, and a better understanding of complex issues such as political differences and organizational behavior. Such individuals may also be more articulate in expressing their perceptions and more conscious in adopting coping strategies.

4. Which is your sector of employment?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Private	76	76%
Public	11	11%
Semi-Government	8	08%
NGO/ Other	5	5%
Total	100	100%



Interpretation

The distribution of respondents based on employment sector shows that a dominant majority, 76%, are employed in the private sector, followed by 11% in the public sector, 8% in semi-government organizations, and a smaller proportion of 5% in NGOs and other sectors.

This indicates that the study is heavily influenced by the perspectives of private sector employees. Since private organizations often have more dynamic, competitive, and fast-paced work environments, employees in this sector may experience workplace interactions including political discussions and conflicts more frequently or intensely.

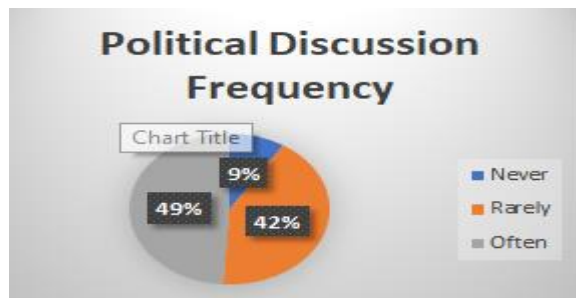
As a result, the coping mechanisms identified in the study are likely to reflect how individuals in private organizations manage such situations



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5. How frequently do political discussions occur in your workplace?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Never	09	09%
Rarely	42	42%
Often	49	49%
Total	100	100%



Interpretation

The responses regarding the frequency of political discussions in the workplace indicate that 49% of respondents experience such discussions often, while 42% report that they occur rarely, and a small proportion of 9% also indicate low frequency (rare occurrence). This distribution suggests that political discussions are fairly common in many workplaces, with nearly half of the respondents encountering them frequently.

This supports the core assumption of the study that modern workplaces are becoming increasingly influenced by political and ideological conversations. For these employees, regular exposure to such discussions may contribute to higher chances of disagreement, tension, or the need to consciously manage interactions. At the same time, the presence of a significant proportion of respondents (around 42% and 9%) who report rare occurrences indicates that not all organizations experience the same level of political engagement.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Bringing together all the findings, the study clearly reveals that politically charged workplaces are a significant reality for many employees and have a noticeable impact on their experiences, behavior, and well-being. From the workplace environment perspective, the findings indicate that political discussions are fairly common, and a majority of employees believe that political differences create tension and influence workplace relationships.

While nearly half of the employees feel comfortable expressing their views, a significant portion still feels uncomfortable, highlighting a mixed climate where openness exists but is not fully supported by psychological safety. The divided opinion on management’s handling of political issues further suggests that organizations are inconsistent in addressing such challenges, leaving

employees to navigate these situations largely on their own.

In terms of coping mechanisms, the study presents a relatively positive picture, where most employees adopt constructive and adaptive strategies such as open discussion, seeking clarification, finding common ground, staying calm, and positively reframing situations. A large number also engage in constructive dialogue during disagreements, indicating a willingness to maintain professionalism and resolve conflicts.

However, there is also a notable presence of avoidance behaviors, such as ignoring issues, withdrawing, or remaining silent, especially when employees feel uncomfortable or uncertain. The fact that many employees believe avoiding conflict helps them function better shows that short-term harmony is often prioritized over direct resolution.

Overall, the study concludes that while employees are making efforts to cope with political tension through constructive strategies, the workplace environment and organizational support systems are not sufficiently strong to fully mitigate its negative effects. Political differences continue to create stress, influence relationships, and reduce job satisfaction, ultimately leading to higher turnover intentions.

Therefore, it becomes essential for organizations to develop clear policies, promote respectful communication, ensure neutrality, and create psychologically safe environments. Strengthening leadership practices and providing support mechanisms can help employees manage political diversity more effectively, thereby improving well-being, collaboration, and overall organizational performance.

VII. CONCLUSION

Overall, the study concludes that politically charged workplaces are common and significantly impact employees’ well-being, relationships, and job satisfaction. Most respondents, who are young, educated, and from the private sector, report frequent political discussions that often create tension and influence workplace interactions.

Employees generally adopt constructive coping strategies such as discussion, staying calm, and finding common ground. However, many also rely on avoidance, indicating discomfort and lack of complete psychological safety. Support is mostly sought outside the workplace, showing a gap in organizational support systems.

Despite these coping efforts, political conflict negatively affects well-being, causes emotional exhaustion, and results in only moderately effective stress management. Job satisfaction is relatively low, and a large number of



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employees have considered leaving their organization due to political tension, highlighting its serious impact.

In conclusion, while employees try to manage political differences, organizations need to improve policies, communication, and support systems to create a healthier and more balanced work environment.

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