

**THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS IN SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING
POLITICALLY MOTIVATED WORKPLACE CONFLICTS BY PUBLIC MANAGERS: A
CASE OF VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

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DECLARATION

I, **Fulufhelo Florence Radzilani**, (Student Number: 8900291), declare that the mini-dissertation entitled “The role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers: A case of Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo Province”, hereby submitted by me for the degree of Master of Public Management at the University of Venda has not been previously submitted for a degree in this institution or any other university, and that it is my own work, designed and executed by me, and all references material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.



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ABSTRACT

The study was intended to evaluate the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers in the Vhembe District. Workplace conflict has a detrimental impact in any public institutions' productivity and financial viability. The specific problem is that some public managers lack effective leadership traits to manage politically motivated conflicts. In addition to this, many studies indicate how leaders through their institutions have adeptly mediated workplace conflict. The study was informed by the interpretivism paradigm, and a case study research design was implemented. A qualitative research methodology was used since the study sought to solicit detailed information from the participants. The total population comprised of 60 managers and a purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 20 public managers for participation in the study. The study area was in the Vhembe District, inclusive of its two local municipalities, Collins Chabane Local Municipality and Musina Local Municipality. Thematic data analysis was used as a data analysis tool. The study's major finding revealed that causes such as power struggles and lack of transparency are the major causes of politically motivated conflict in the workplace. However, the causes have a severe effect on the productivity of institutions. The study recommends that causes of politically motivated conflict in the workplace should be addressed before it can lead to conflict, in that way it will help managers to deal with fewer conflicts.

In addressing politically motivated workplace conflict, the municipality should consider stringent measures on people who do not focus on their tasks because it slows down the progress on the institution.

Key words: conflict, leadership, politics, power, public managers

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Accomplishing the objectives of an organization needs an environment that assists in enhancing congruence between colleagues. In other words, successful organizational leaders are those who assist in establishing a good working environment. Meng, Fulk, and Yuan (2015) highlight that team performance that is successful depends on the way team members cooperate and share ideas. The responsibility of a leader is to ensure a conducive and conflict-free environment among the team members. However, Zhou and Shi (2015) highlight the existence of conflict among team members in the workplace, the implication being that despite the best efforts of team leaders and team members, conflict in the workplace is unavoidable.

Zhou and Shi (2014) further indicate that conflicts in the workplace impact negatively on the individual as well as the team. The workplace conflict among the team members can render the working environment dysfunctional and often results in unhealthy competition. Northouse (2018) also indicates that workplace conflict causes tension and performance-impending behaviour detrimental to the team performance success. To accomplish stated objectives, leaders should possess certain traits that enable the management of workplace conflict and inspire team members to cooperate in the execution of their workplace responsibilities.

In light of the foregoing, it is appropriate to explore the traits of public managers in the public sector to understand how such traits can successfully assist to navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace. The study has possible implications for positive social change, in that it has great potential in discovering, highlighting and pinpointing leadership traits that are instrumental in assisting public managers to manage workplace conflict. It is anticipated that the study will outline how the various leadership traits determine and impact the internal and external environment of public institutions. Additionally, the study will likely provide lessons that public managers can take on board to enhance their effectiveness in managing workplace conflicts.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In a study undertaken by Danielsson, Bodin, Wulff, and Theorell (2015), 50% of the respondents highlighted that they have been involved in some situation of conflict with

their colleagues. Workplace conflict might be because of opinion differences pertaining to a process or procedure and can impact the ability of an employee within an organization to establish relationships, enhance productivity, and improve job satisfaction (McKenzie, 2015).

Hopkins and Scott (2016) argue that this concept is inescapable in the workplace and has a damaging effect on individuals and the entire institution. Conflict circumstances can have negative consequences on the performance of both the job and the team as well as the public institution itself. In addition, it can improve divergent behaviours among employees within the institution. Conflict, according to Dundon and Dobbins (2015), “can operate as a regressive element in assuring team member cooperation”. As a result, Chung (2015) asserts that because employees spend a significant portion of their day at work, team members must maintain positive working relationships for the betterment of a public institution.

Hopkins and Scott (2016) contend that public managers have a task to resolve individual differences, establish an environment that facilitates co-existence, and direct individual energy towards the accomplishment of public institutions’ goals and objectives. Of specific importance in the public sector is the need to improve the quality of service delivery to the citizens. Predictably, Bai, Harms, Han, and Cheng (2015) stress the need for public managers to ensure high levels of performance by the employees. Bai *et al.*, (2015) further reiterated that politically motivated workplace conflicts are common in public institutions. Although these conflicts are unavoidable, certain leadership traits can successfully navigate and manage them and thereby create harmony in the workplace.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it important for public managers and subordinates to work together to ensure the smooth running of public institutions. Thus, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace conflict can be the last nail in the coffin. Though conflict is an unavoidable element of the workplace, it not only has a negative impact on an institution's productivity and financial well-being, but it also has a negative impact on individual members' psychological and physical well-being. Maximin, Moshiri, and Bhargava (2015) observed that while it is challenging to calculate all conflict hidden costs, workplace conflict, especially in the public sector has huge financial implications

that affect the smooth running of public institutions and quality service delivery especially in municipalities. The general problem is that workplace conflict has a detrimental impact on public institutions' productivity and financial viability. The specific business problem, compounding the situation further, is that certain public managers lack effective leadership traits to manage politically motivated conflicts. In addition, many studies indicate how leaders through their institutions have adeptly mediated workplace conflict. However, none of these studies have researched how different leaders and their traits contribute to managing workplace conflict. Hence, there is a gap and lack of research on leadership traits for managing politically motivated workplace conflict. In the case of the Vhembe District, Collins Chabane and Musina Local Municipality, the political infighting has often resulted in delays of the completion of projects, thereby compromising service delivery implementation plans.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to evaluate the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers in the Vhembe District. This was done with a view to enhancing the creation and sustaining of a workplace environment conducive to colleagues' cooperation, institutional productivity, and efficient service delivery. In that respect, the study sought to go beyond simply identifying and highlighting these traits by further developing strategies to successfully address politically motivated workplace conflicts.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives provided the impetus for the study:

- To determine the leadership traits required to successfully navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace by public managers.
- To establish the causes of politically motivated conflicts in the workplace.
- To examine the effect of politically motivated conflicts on institutional productivity.

- To provide recommendations on the politically motivated conflict management strategies that can be employed by public managers.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

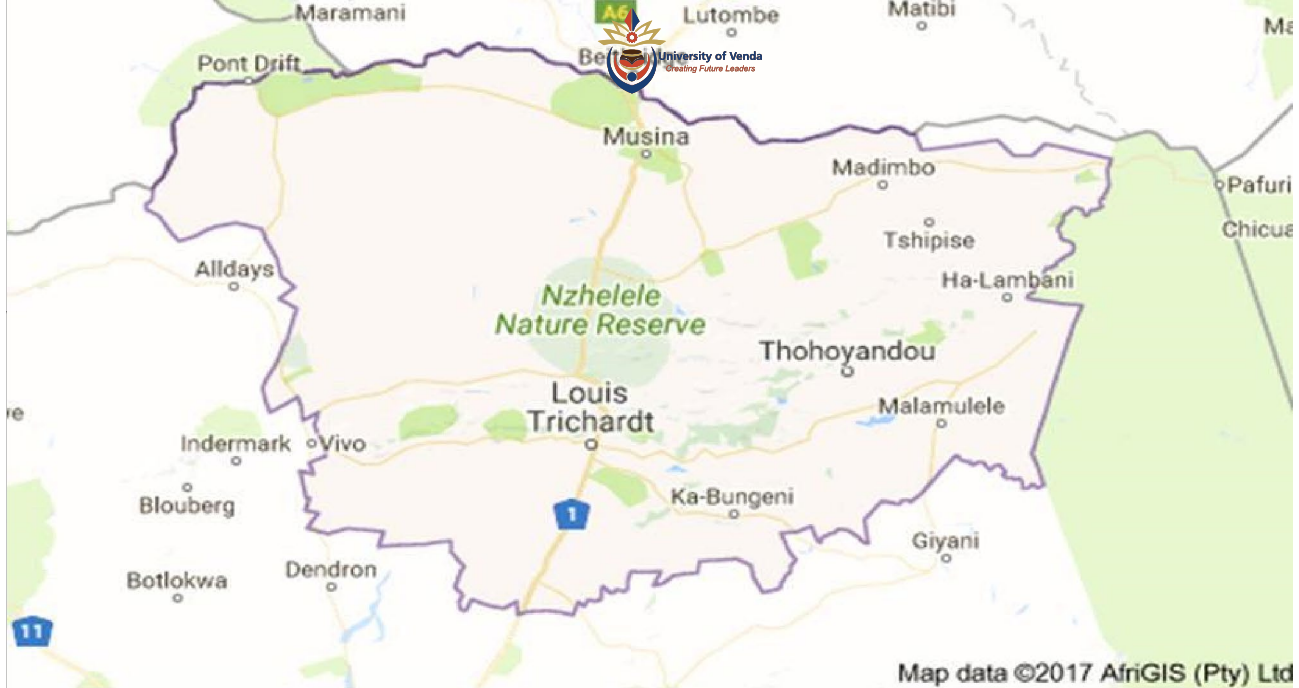
These research questions were generated to assist in achieving the study's stated objectives:

- What are the leadership traits required to successfully navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace by public managers?
- What are the causes of politically motivated conflicts in the workplace?
- How do the politically motivated conflicts affect institutional productivity?
- Which strategies can be recommended and employed by public managers in managing politically motivated workplace conflict?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will have potential benefits for scholarship of Public Administration and Management in that they can be used by both scholars and students alike as invaluable contributions to the discipline. The findings of the study may be of significance to both the public and private sectors because articulating the traits that some managers have already applied to manage politically motivated workplace conflict may serve as a learning tool for public institutions. By indicating the institutional practices that are successful, it may likely provide insight into the effect that the workplace environment can have on a public institution and its employees. For example, Chung (2015) highlighted that since employees spend more time at work, it is important for them to establish and maintain a positive work environment devoid of any conflict.

Furthermore, public sector leaders should be aware of the financial consequences of badly managed workplace conflict. Poorly managed conflict, according to Pyhältö, Pietarinen, and Soini (2018), "has a major impact on workplace bullying and can impair (Source: AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd, 2023)



The study was specifically conducted in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo province. Vhembe is comprised of four local municipalities, Makhado, Musina, Thulamela, and Collins Chabane. However, the focus of the study was on Collins Chabane Local Municipality and Musina Local Municipality. In addition, it was specific to the Vhembe District. The study was exclusive to public managers who have a proven record of good leadership. Furthermore, no data from political or other business leaders was collected, even though their input could be crucial, but such individuals might be biased and politically oriented, which might have resulted in responses not beneficial to the study. The study has focused mainly on senior managers and managers; comprising twenty from Vhembe district, thirty-one from Collins Chabane and nine from Musina Local municipality.

1.9 DEFINITIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

An operational concept in research provides a clear, detailed, and practical definition of a variable or phenomenon for the purpose of measurement or study. It translates abstract theoretical concepts into specific, observable, and measurable elements. This process ensures that the research is focused, replicable, and understandable. By precisely defining how variables will be observed and measured, an operational concept helps to eliminate ambiguity, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings.

1.9.1 Leadership

Leadership is “the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction” (Stogdill, 1974: 411). Leadership is “the relationship in which one person, the leader, influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain that which the leader desires” (Terry, 1977: 410).

In essence, leadership is the capacity of a person or group of individuals to persuade and direct subordinates or members of a group, organization, community, or team. A person's title, seniority, or position in a hierarchy are frequently indicators of their leadership ability. In the case of the three municipalities, the focus will be on the Political Heads, Senior Management and Middle Managers.

1.9.2 Workplace conflict

Conflict is when there is disagreement or difference of opinion between two or more people, or when people's beliefs, choices, or behaviours directly related to the job are at odds. Any disagreement that arises at work, among co-workers, supervisors, or both, including conflict that may occur between co-workers after hours, is considered workplace conflict. Masters and Albright (2002:14) argue that conflict arises from debates, disagreements, differing perspectives and views between two or more parties that might lead to or evolve into challenges, contests and disputes. Therefore, conflict management strategies are needed in order to manage conflict effectively in the workplace. In support of the above, O'Rourke and Collins (2005) are of the view that any disagreement between two or more parties could be detrimental and costly to an organization if not managed properly.

1.9.3 Politically motivated workplace conflict

Conflict at work that is politically motivated occurs when management or employees use covert tactics to further their agendas within the company. Workplace conflict politics is a situation in which people take unfair advantage of their positions and utilize unethical ways to obtain an advantage over their co-workers. For instance, rather than promoting someone deserving based on credentials and a good performance record, the manager promotes someone who has a good relationship with him (Dundon & Dobbins, 2015). Conversely, increased political diversity can lead to higher levels of conflict, as employees with different political views may struggle to cooperate and find common ground.

1.9.4 Political administration interface

Some work-related conflicts may result from obscurely defined administrative duties and responsibilities. This may result in instances of perceived overreaching or meddling and interference. Indeed, at the municipality level, it has the potential to complicate the relationship between councilors and administrators. For example, who directs the municipal administration? At the national level, where there is a separation of powers, it is clear that the President, together with his Cabinet, directs the administration. Parliament has an oversight role over the administration but does not issue instructions to it. The executive and legislative authority of the municipality is vested in its municipal council. It is essentially the employer of all municipal staff (Witts, 2016).

How does the political component relate to management? The proper role of public administration in the political process has remained an important question since the emergence of public administration as a field of study in the late 1880s. In his famous article, Wilson (1887) outlined what later happened to be called the politics administration dichotomy, a theoretical model that emphasizes distinct features of public administration vis-à-vis politics. If not handled properly, this has the potential to result in work-related conflict and to impact adversely on the organization.

1.10 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study will comprise of six chapters that include the following.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study – This chapter introduces the study by providing an overview of the study, problem statement, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study as well as the delimitation of the study. Furthermore, this chapter presents the definitions of key operational concepts as well as outlining the organization of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – This chapter comprises the literature review of scholarly articles and studies on leadership traits and workplace conflict, consulted to elaborate on the various definitions and concepts that inform leadership traits and workplace conflict. Both leadership traits and workplace conflict are defined within a global, continental and national context and also at a local level. Additionally, the key principles, theoretical

foundation, and previous literature are reviewed in this chapter to identify the research gap.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology – This chapter covers research design, philosophy, approach, and strategy, sampling, data collection, and analysis, as well as ethical issues. The methodology of this research is outlined in full, indicating how it operates and the research investigation tools that have been employed. This includes the research design employed as well as the data collection and analysis process.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis, and discussion – The study's findings are presented in this chapter. This includes the findings from the workplace study participants and interviews, and these are outlined systematically and thematically to reflect the perspectives of the different groups interviewed.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations – In this final chapter, the study conclusions are drawn based on the presented and analysed data, and recommendations are made based on the study findings as presented in the previous chapter.

1.11 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study by providing an overview of the study, problem statement, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study and delimitation of the study. Moreover, this chapter concluded with definitions of the key operational terms as well as the organization of the study. The next chapter features a literature review, with a particular focus on leadership traits and workplace conflict, its impact on an institution, and mechanisms to address these conflicts by management.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the introduction and background of the study. The chapter highlighted the background leadership traits and politically motivated conflict. The problem statement, objectives, and research aim were articulated. The justification, delimitation, limitation, operational terms, and structure of the study's research were explained. This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the research; this includes the literature review on leadership traits and workplace conflict, the international context and local context whilst also elaborating on how management can foster an environment conducive to productivity within an institution and efficient service delivery.

The conception of this study was built on a review of academic and professional literature on the topics of leadership, leadership theories, conflict, and workplace conflict. The study aimed to explore the leadership traits and strategies that public managers use in managing politically motivated workplace conflicts at the selected public institutions in Vhembe District. Studies on the definitions of leadership, different types of leadership tactics, and the impact of leadership on organizational performance, as well as workplace conflict, and how workplace conflict might affect organizational outcomes, abound in the literature.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework encompasses not just the theory, but also the narrative explanation of how the researcher engages in using the theory and its underlying assumption to investigate the research problem (Lenderman and Lenderman 2015). However, the theoretical framework plays a significant role as it serves as a lens which guides the study.

2.2.1 Leadership Trait Theory

The Great Man notion portrayed early thoughts about leadership as focusing on an individual's natural qualities. Leadership theory in the 1950s concentrated on the

situational interplay of qualities, whereas personality and behaviour prevailed in the 1970s (Cherry 2023). Trait theory focuses on five fundamental leadership traits: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2018). The trait theory of leadership proposes that a leader is born with certain qualities and attributes. These characteristics could include personality traits, physical traits, intelligence traits, and so forth (Goff 2003). Trait theory claims that the leader and the attributes of the leader are critical to the success of an organization including public institutions, in this context. The premise is that identifying employees with the correct characteristics will improve institutional performance. The leader is the exclusive emphasis of trait theory, whereas the follower is ignored (Dundon & Dobbins, 2015).

2.2.2 The relevance of the theory in the study

The trait theory has enabled the researcher to benchmark or assess how strong or weak leaders are in terms of leadership traits that are required to manage workplace conflict. As a result, future action plans will have more direction. Tools and instruments have been developed based on this notion to help people assess their potential and improve their performance. Most public institutions use personality tests to find the 'right' leaders with the 'right' traits that can easily manage politically motivated workplace conflicts.

2.3 LEADERSHIP

Before exploring the concept of leadership and its approaches, it is critical to emphasize the importance of leadership strategies required to manage workplace conflicts. A leader's behaviour has a major impact on his or her followers' workplace (Copeland, 2016). According to Solomon (2020), a leader's personality attributes, or traits influence his or her views about work and followers. Similarly, a leader's leadership skills and style are important in increasing the value and support that followers place on the leader's performance (Pryce, 2016). Hence leadership is crucial in this study because the eagerness and confidence that followers feel towards strategies of conflict management depend upon their leadership perception.

Witts (2016) defines leadership as the result of a series of encounters that end in a group of people working together to achieve a common goal. According to Chung (2015),

“leadership entails building an environment that promotes employee happiness and, as a result, champions collective goals”. In articulating the great man theory, Chung (2015) observed that leadership was aligned with masculinity, those effective leaders are born, and, in that regard, they ask for obedience from their followers. Such theories that are trait-based include an assumption that distinctive individual tendencies are the preamble for establishing who is a leader (Pryce, 2016). As explained by Pryce (2016), further research on behavioral explanations for leadership has led to the establishment of leadership style theories which described leadership as a function of the response of an individual to the situational stimuli.

Despite the numerous advantages of leadership behaviour for organizational performance and success, it is important to note that leaders' self-disruptive activities have a detrimental impact on their organizations including public institutions. According to Hoption (2016), “while leaders' use of humour can serve to relieve stress, create a pleasant work atmosphere, boost cohesion, improve communication, and enhance good outcomes, aggressive humor can lead to self-deprecating leadership behaviour that can negatively impact the workplace”.

2.4 LEADERSHIP TRAITS

The leadership traits that are discussed in this section include intelligence, self-confidence, determination and personal integrity.

2.4.1 Intelligence

Intelligence, also known as intellectual or cognitive ability, refers to the ability to understand, reason, and perceive information, as well as the ability to grasp facts and their relationships. “Leaders have higher intellect than non-leaders”, according to Bai *et al.*, (2015) and intelligence traits appear to make them better leaders in general. However, research suggests that leadership may be hindered if the intellectual ability of a leader is substantially different from that of the subjects (McKenzie, 2015). Good leaders should be able to articulate complicated phenomena in a way that is understood by their followers (Northouse, 2018).

2.4.2 Self-Confidence and Determination

Self-confident leaders have reasonable assurances in their judgment, ideas, abilities, power, decision-making, and skills. Without conceit or pride, such leaders know and trust themselves (Knowles & Cole, 2016). Self-confident leaders have a positive attitude about themselves and can push forward in the knowledge that any setback can be overcome when they make a bad decision. Effective leaders have self-assurance and self-esteem. Leaders understand that their leadership can and will make a difference to their organizations and that the influence they have on others is right and appropriate (Chung, 2015).

Determination is the drive that motivates a leader to decide, and it encompasses traits like energy, initiative, perseverance, and tenacity (Knowles & Cole, 2016). Determined leaders have the perseverance required to see a project through to completion and to persevere in the face of adversity (Dundon & Dobbins, 2015).

2.4.3 Self Integrity

Self-integrity is all about doing what you have told yourself you are going to do. It is about commitment and holding yourself accountable (Gabrielle Taylor, 2021). Integrity is how we decide to live and lead our lives without harming others' interests. People with self-integrity follow moral and ethical principles in aspects of life. Integrity also extends to professional areas of work such as decision-making.

2.4.4 Sociability

This refers to different forms of social interaction and human association. The concept, in both descriptive and normative senses, can be found in many branches of study. For instance, a study by Smith and colleagues (2018) found that administrators with high level of sociability were more successful in forging alliances and achieving policy goals.

2.5 LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Leadership skills are abilities and knowledge possessed by a leader that he or she uses to accomplish the goals and objectives of the institution. Hopkins and Scott (2016) established that good leadership relies on three types of personal skills namely, technical

skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. While traits define who a leader is, skills define what they can do.

2.5.1 Technical skills

Technical skills involve knowledge about the work, structure, and proficiency in specialized activities with a public institution. Technical skills may be gained through several means such as formal education, job training and experience. Bird and Barbara (2018) note that technical skills are vital for leaders in positions such as supervisory and middle management but may be less critical for top management positions.

2.5.2 Interpersonal or human skills

Interpersonal or human skills are all about dealing with people, whereas technical skills are all about working with objects. Leaders should comprehend human behaviour and group processes and they should be able to detect their followers' feelings, attitudes, and motivations (Liebowitz, 2018). Interpersonal skills enable public managers to collaborate with their employees, colleagues, and superiors. One important interpersonal skill set element is empathy which is the ability to comprehend the values, motives, and emotions of other people (Chung, 2015).

Empathy also entails having the social awareness to know what acts are appropriate in certain settings (Knowles & Cole, 2016). The capacity to choose a proper influence tactic as a leader depends on understanding the needs and wants of subordinates and how they view a certain setting (Pryce, 2016). Leaders who constantly evaluate themselves better comprehend their behaviour and the way it affects their followers. Such leaders can align their behaviour with the prevailing situations. Oral communication ability and persuasiveness are two further interpersonal qualities helpful in the leadership influence process (Hopkins & Scott, 2016).

2.5.3 Conceptual Skills

Conceptual skills are like technical skills in that they include working with objects and interpersonal skills in that they involve interacting with people. Conceptual skills include judgment, intuition, inventiveness, and foresight, among other qualities (Bird and Barbara 2018). Aptitude tests can be used to assess some conceptual talents, such as inductive

or deductive reasoning, logical thinking, analytical ability, and concept generation (Chung, 2015).

To comprehend how their institutions operate and where they should be going, public managers must have considerable conceptual skills. Effective strategic planning, which is critical for molding an organization's future, especially in challenging economic circumstances, necessitates leaders' capacity to forecast the future based on present patterns (Hopkins & Scott, 2016).

Public managers must be able to work with a wide range of stakeholders and connections. They must comprehend how various institutional components interact and how changes in one area may affect aspects in other areas (Chung, 2015). Intuition is also crucial, and it grows in the leader's repertory as he or she encounters different types of challenges. Depending on the situation, effective leaders frequently combine conscious reasoning with intuition (Danielsson, *et al.*, 2015). The most significant skill set for public managers is conceptual skills. Senior leaders who lack strong conceptual skills put the entire institution at risk. For supervisory-level leaders, conceptual skills are less important (Dundon & Dobbins, 2015).

2.6 CONFLICT

Conflict is a consequence of social interaction. Chung (2015) posits that conflict is a result of the collaboration between two or more parties that highlights poor compatibility in goals and interests. Kemp (2020) added his voice and averred that not only are the goals and interests of conflicting parties incompatible, but their attitude also corresponds to those discrepancies. Hopkins and Scott (2015) added that the parties involved in a conflict are interdependent and view each other as meddlesome in the quest to accomplish their goals. In other words, conflict is the behavioral exhibition of the discovered differences that conflicting parties have about each other. It happens when one party views the behaviour of the other to be an impediment.

2.7 CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

The workplace is one of the most important places in the work life of an employee. Chang (2015) observed that due to the significance of the workplace to the employees, it is imperative for leaders to guarantee a positive work relationship to enhance a positive attitude and behaviour at work. Harmony is also a fundamental condition for institutional performance (Liebowitz, 2018). However, Semanya (2019) articulates that workplace conflict is unavoidable since there are team members' interactions. Dundon and Dobbins (2015) highlight that though conflict is unavoidable, the way conflict situations are addressed by team members determines the impact that conflict can have on teams and the entire institution. Therefore, various scholars have revealed the negative impact that open conflict can have on teams and members.

Conflict can be detrimental to an organization if left unchecked or insufficiently addressed. There are financial costs associated with workplace conflict. Hopkins and Scott (2016) reiterated that unresolved conflict results in job dissatisfaction and consequently increases the high staff turnover rate. However, when conflict is constructive, employees improve their innovative behaviour due to their exposure to various concepts and phenomena.

Chan (2019) advocated for cognitive conflict as the idea quality is low whenever team members think the same, hence suppressing innovation. Chung (2015) thus observed that by positively managing conflict, not only does that promote and encourage innovative individual behaviour but it also fortifies the empowerment, commitment, and individual teamwork levels. As a result, how leaders handle workplace conflict has a direct bearing on the impact of conflict.

2.8 POLITICALLY MOTIVATED WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Office politics refers to when people use their positions to their unfair advantage and use unethical tactics to gain an advantage over their co-workers.

Public organizations are typically associated with a bureaucratic, politicized structure, start-ups, and small enterprises are not exempt from this issue. According to Frankel,

“when founders, investors, and employees cannot come to an agreement on a company goal, politics can infect the firm”.

Perhaps some workers believe they are not receiving enough praise, payment, or career opportunities for their excellent work. Without effective leadership, these problems may persist, and employees may begin to prioritize their interests over those of the workplace.

Office politics can separate co-workers, managers, and employees, which could lead to a hostile and unpleasant work atmosphere (Chan 2019). Furthermore, it reduces the performance of employees and ultimately productivity and overall organizational morale. If politically motivated workplace conflicts are not addressed, employee turnover is likely to rise which in turn may be detrimental to the reputation of the organization (Chung 2015). The political behaviour may potentially have legal and financial repercussions, depending on how bad it is. It is critical to swiftly recognize political behaviour and fairly apply disciplinary measures, when necessary, in order to avoid these potential effects.

2.9 CAUSES OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CONFLICTS IN A WORKPLACE

Politically motivated conflict in the workplace can stem from various sources, including:

2.9.1 Difference in beliefs and values

Often differences in a workplace between individuals or groups trigger conflict and lead to conflict (Netemeyer et al., 2005). It may also emerge when employees hold divergent political beliefs, ideologies or values that clash with those of their colleagues or the organization as a whole. These differences can lead to tension and friction in the workplace. Uwa (2014) indicates that conflict is inevitable in human activities due to divergent views and aspirations. Organizations comprise of people with various backgrounds, beliefs, skills, and personalities, which makes conflict unavoidable.

2.9.2 Power struggle

When individuals or groups vie for control or influence within the organization, conflict can arise. This can involve competition for leadership positions, decision-making authority, or access to resources. According to Greer and Chu (2019), possessing power is undeniably a desirable experience for individuals. Power, defined as the control over valued

resources, can offer individuals nefarious effects when there is competition increasing power struggles, and conflicts. However, when power becomes salient in group interaction, this in turn leads people to conflict.

2.9.3 Group dynamics

Cliques or factions may form within the organization, each with its agenda or interests. These groups may compete for influence and resources, leading to political conflicts as they seek to advance their goals and agendas. Groups may feel certain groups receive preferential treatment or advantages, leading to feelings of resentment and conflict. This can be related to promotions or opportunities for career advancement (Uwa 2014). Many senior administrative officials in the municipality may be factionalized along party political factions. Some may support a mayor whilst others support a speaker. The same may occur with councillors within the municipality. However, the Municipal Systems Amendment Act 3 of 2022 sought to address these very matters but the challenges continue to persist.

2.9.4 Communication breakdowns

Conflicts in Municipalities can occur for various reasons, for example, communication that does not go well, unclear structure or work, and problems related to the personality of each individual or different group. Poor communication practices, such as withholding information, spreading rumours, or engaging in gossip, can fuel political conflicts by creating misunderstandings, mistrust, and resentment among municipal employees.

2.9.5 Lack of transparency

According to Bernad and Kristn 2001, a lack of transparency can lead to a conflict of interest. Especially when decision-making processes are opaque or perceived as arbitrary, employees may suspect favoritism or hidden agendas, leading to political maneuvering and conflicts as individuals or groups seek to influence outcomes.

2.10 EFFECTS OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CONFLICTS IN A WORKPLACE

A decrease in productivity is one of the major effects of politically motivated conflict in a workplace. When an organization spends much of its time dealing with conflicts, members take time away from focusing on the core goals they are tasked with achieving. Conflict causes members to focus less on the project at hand and more on gossiping about the conflict or venting about frustrations (Slothuus and De Vreese 2010). As a result, organizations can lose money, donors, and access to essential resources.

When conflicts escalate without mediation, intense situations may arise between organization members. It's unfortunate, but organizational conflicts may cause violence among members, resulting in legal problems for members and possibly the organization (Brookins 2019).

2.11 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITIES

Scholars of conflict management have stressed the fact that conflict is an unavoidable part of human life. According to McKnight (2019), "conflict reflects the existence of disagreements between team members, and thus need the utilization of appropriate strategies of conflict management to curb the negative impact of conflict". Semanya, (2019) defined conflict management strategies as the set of procedures required to address conflict, establish peace, and channel all the efforts towards the accomplishment of objectives. The strategies of conflict management that are discussed in this section include accommodating, avoiding, and collaborating.

2.11.1 Accommodating

This is the practice through which the concern to address a conflict is quite high on satisfying others more than oneself. The principal concept underscoring this strategy is the safeguarding of current relationships by illustrating more concern for others. According to Liebowitz (2018) this strategy is significant when the relationship between the parties involved in a conflict is that of a supervisor and a subordinate". Additionally, McKnight (2019) emphasized that when it comes to gender roles, women are more likely to use this strategy because they are more cooperative. Furthermore, Hopkins and Scott

(2016) highlight that older workers are likely to use this strategy because they are more likely to engage in passive responses to conflict.

As highlighted elsewhere, this is behaviour in which the priority for resolving a problem is to satisfy others rather than oneself. The main idea behind this method is to protect existing relationships by demonstrating greater concern for others. This method is important, according to Zhou and Shi (2014), “when the parties involved in a conflict have a supervisor-subordinate relationship”. Furthermore, according to Meng, *et al.*, (2015) “when it comes to gender roles, women are more likely to utilize this method since they are more cooperative”. Furthermore, according to Chung (2015), “older workers are more likely to utilize this method since they are more prone to engage in passive conflict resolution”.

Accommodation is the opposite of competition. It is the lose/ win approach. With this method, you are willing to yield your position to the other person or the other "side." Again, while this approach is usually not successful in dealing with conflict, there are some occasions when it might be appropriate: For example, when it is more important to preserve a collegial relationship than argue the specific issue in conflict; or when the issue is more important to the other person than it is to you; or, perhaps, when you want the other person to learn from his or her choices or actions. Sometimes accommodation is the only intelligent approach. An honest acknowledgment of the facts of the matter might lead to the frank and inescapable conclusion that the clear advantage rests with the other side, and the better part of valor is a unilateral withdrawal.

2.11.2 Avoiding

Avoiding is a dispute resolution approach in which the manager or person managing the conflict has no regard for either of the disputants (Chung, 2015). Avoidance leads to everyone being a winner as indicated by Afsar, Badir, and Saeed (2017) who stressed that managers avoid addressing the situation by either withdrawing or sidestepping.

According to Bird and Barbara (2018), “this method is useful when it is necessary to reduce the prominence of distinct persons”. The importance of the avoidance method to conflict management is that it prevents escalation of conflict by avoiding confrontation (Bang, 2016). This method is beneficial when a manager sees the need to handle other important concerns rather than wasting time trying to fix a conflict scenario (McKnight, 2019). To put it in another way, this method reflects how important conflict is to an

organization including public institutions. When a leader wants to avoid settling a problem that has a low chance of negatively impacting goal achievement, avoidance is a good strategy.

2.11.3 Collaborating

The conflict management strategy that is synonymous with teamwork and cooperation on the part of all disputing parties has been identified. Collaboration is a win-win situation for all parties involved, and it is up to them to iron out any disagreements. According to Bang (2016), “as opposing parties work through their disagreements to discover mutually beneficial solutions to their challenges, they increase their creative potential”.

Using this method to resolve conflict not only improves conflicting parties' creative potential, but it also improves their learning social change capacities. Collaboration between opposing parties leads to parties achieving an effective solution to their difficulties since this technique facilitates open communication, information exchange, and, eventually, problem-solving (McKnight, 2019). However, Northouse (2018) indicated that for this strategy to be effective, both conflicting parties need to trust each other and be ready to work together. Hence, the keywords are trust and willingness. Collaboration is usually considered the best method of coping with conflict. It is called the win/ win approach. But be aware that collaboration is the most difficult approach. Collaboration differs from compromise in that collaboration does not require either side to give up a valued position. Rather, both sides honestly seek new and common and, ideally, “Higher Ground”. This kind of problem-solving requires an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, the surfacing of hidden agendas, and a genuine willingness on the part of both sides to resolve the conflict. Any hidden agendas or failure to trust or to be honest and open will not lead to the win/win result. In the collaborative approach to problem-solving, or conflict resolution, the parties must be willing to go to the root of the problem, must be willing and be able to empathize and understand each other's feelings and points of view even though they might not agree with each other. In collaboration, agreement is not the issue. The goal is to resolve the conflict on mutually acceptable terms.

2.11.4 Compromising

Compromising is a technique that involves both competing parties sharing a common concern (Chan, 2019). It refers to a situation in which all disputing parties must find common ground in order to maintain a calm environment (Vollmer, 2015). This

technique is assertive as well as cooperative, according to Kemp (2020), and “it is the middle ground between competing and accommodating”.

Wu, Zhang, Imran, Lu, and Hu (2018) contended that employing this technique allows all parties involved to understand and examine the source of conflict before developing solutions that benefit everyone. Instead of trying to force a solution on one party, a compromising strategy allows all parties to generate their solution by making concessions (Choi, 2020). This technique also stimulates discussion because conflicting parties are forced to talk about the issue, make trade-offs, and eventually make concessions on their ideals to reach an agreement (Wu, Zhao, & Zuo, 2017). Chan (2019) indicates that parties are reluctant to use this strategy when the issue hinges on their core values. The reluctance is that people find it difficult to give up on characteristics, attitudes, and attributes central to their identity (Wu *et al.*, 2018). The compromise approach to conflict resolution involves negotiation, trade-offs, swapping, and a high degree of flexibility. It is referred to as the win/lose-win/lose position because both parties in the conflict will get some of what they want, while also giving up something in the process. It is important to decide in advance how much you are willing to give away before the negotiations begin. Certainly, there are some issues on which compromise simply should not even be an option. But these are occasions when compromise offers a positive and healthy method of resolving conflict: For example, to reach an agreement when both sides have equal power; to find common ground when the parties have competing goals; to attain a temporary settlement of a complex issue; or to reach a solution under difficult circumstances or time constraints.

2.11.5 Reducing distance from company decisions

Management teams must be aware that politics can creep into even the most prosperous businesses because of this separation from daily operations (Bird & Barbara, 2018). Holding frequent meetings, town halls, and group meals will help teams communicate and cooperate. It is important to ensure that everyone is aware of the company’s goals and discuss the difficulties it is experiencing openly and sincerely. Make all employees (not just CEOs and managers) stakeholders in the company’s success by giving them access to information (Semenya, 2019). The team can actively participate in overcoming obstacles when leaders have faith in them and provide them with information about such challenges (Northouse, 2018).

2.11.6 Cutting off political behaviour

No matter who is involved or at what level inside the business, advancing personal objectives should not be rewarded (Choi, 2020). The moment leadership endorses political or bureaucratic behaviour, it opens the door for it to proliferate throughout the workplace culture (Semenya, 2019).

2.12 SUMMARY

In summary, the focus of this chapter was to review the literature concerning leadership traits and workplace conflict management. The main aspects discussed include leadership, leadership traits, leadership skills, conflict in the workplace, conflict management strategies, and the theoretical framework. The next section outlines in detail the research methodology and design that was adopted in the current study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the literature review encompassing the focus questions and the gaps in the literature. This section discusses the methodology that will be followed in the study. The research paradigm adopted in the study is interpretive with a positivist research design. A discussion on sampling techniques and procedures is also undertaken, including the procedures for data analysis and how ethical considerations were adhered to. The chapter further includes the study setting, population, data collection procedure, methods, measures to ensure validity and reliability, and the measures to ensure trustworthiness.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research paradigm serves as the framework within which the theories and methods of the field of study can be incorporated to develop a research strategy (Aspers, 2019). The goal of the study, the research question, the tools, or measurements employed, and the analysis techniques are all based on this fundamental idea (Klenke, 2018). Most research paradigms are based on one of two models namely positivism or interpretivism. These serve as a guide for the study project's theories and methodologies. In general, positivist and interpretivist research paradigms produce quantitative and qualitative studies, respectively.

3.2.1 Positivism paradigm

Positivists contend that there is a single reality that can be quantified and comprehended. As a result, these researchers will likely use quantitative techniques in their research (Abernethy, 2019). In the research process for positivist paradigm studies, an empirical hypothesis is often put out and then confirmed or disproved through the gathering and analysis of data (Alles, 2019).

3.2.2 Interpretivism paradigm

Instead of only one reality, interpretivists think there are many realities. Most qualitative research projects in the social sciences employ this research paradigm (Aspers, 2019).

According to interpretivism, “because human behaviour is so complicated, it cannot be researched using positivist paradigms' statistical models”. Understanding the meanings that people assign to behaviours and events is the only way to produce knowledge (Yin, 2018).

In this study, it is the interpretivism paradigm that was preferred and the reason was that detailed data need to be obtained. An interpretivism paradigm enabled data collection methods such as interviews to be conducted which allowed perspectives, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours of participants to be recorded thus enabling in-depth data to be collected.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the plan and procedure used by researchers to identify, select, and analyze data of the specific researched topic in order to answer proposed research questions set out in line with research objectives. This chapter outlines and discusses in detail the research approach adopted in the study, research design, research setting, target population, sampling process, as well as research instrument. Moreover, the chapter details the data collection and data analysis procedures, as well as ethical considerations.

The research design to be chosen is determined by the study's goal and research topic (Yin, 2018). The case study approach was employed in this study. Case studies come from an interpretative paradigm that is interested in understanding the why and how of real-life concepts over which the researcher has no influence. When studying real-world and current situations, the case study method is appropriate (Anderson, 2016).

According to Yin (2018), “case study design is more suitable in situations when there is a lack of coherence between a concept and its content”. Case studies are important when trying to understand an idea and its processes completely (Anderson, 2016). Data can be gathered through interviews, observations, and document reviews, to mention a few methods, when conducting a case study. Evaluation of data that is classified outside of the overall framework of history enhances the quality of a study by depending on data collection methods like interviews and observations (Mooney, 2016).

In contrast to designs like phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography, the case study approach has been preferred in the study. Phenomenology studies give

researchers the chance to investigate ideas and practices by focusing on the prior and present experiences of a group of people. The formation of a theory in grounded theory, on the other hand, entails direct participant interaction. The final aspect of ethnography is the analysis of a culture over time. Phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography are not appropriate methods for the study because their purpose was not to describe the actual experiences of the participants, develop a theory, or investigate a previously unknown culture.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The qualitative research method was used in this study since the objective was to explore the leadership traits required by public managers to navigate and manage politically motivated workplace conflict. As highlighted by Abernethy (2019), a study that employs the interpretivist paradigm aligns very well with the qualitative research method. In applying the qualitative technique, the context-bound knowledge analysis was used, thus, the participants' content-based knowledge becomes a preamble for acquiring a comprehension of the concept (Alles, 2019). Additionally, a qualitative method was appropriate for this study because, as observed by Abernethy (2019), researchers enjoy the benefit of using context-specific knowledge instead of contextindependent knowledge in the process of data analysis. A qualitative research method enables the exploration of a concept by concentrating on the target population's experiences. In this study, a research method was required to indicate the target population's experiences. For this reason, a qualitative method was preferred over quantitative or mixed-method research.

Qualitative methods enhance descriptive analysis whilst quantitative methods focus on the numerical and data quantification thus not aligned with the comprehension of human experiences (Klenke, 2018). In addition, quantitative research is about building a relationship between variables or involving subjects on experimentation. Mixed-methods research was also considered which enables the application of both the quantitative and qualitative methods (Yin, 2018). However, the quantitative characteristics found in the mixed- method makes it impossible to be applied in the study. The qualitative method was the most appropriate for this study's purpose and key research topic. The qualitative research approach fits the study because as per the illustration of Dawson (2002),

qualitative research aims to explore attitudes, behaviours and experiences through interviews and focus groups.

3.5 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted at selected public institutions in Vhembe District. Vhembe District is one of the districts of Limpopo province in South Africa, and it comprises of four local Municipalities namely; Makhado, Musina, Thulamela, Collins Chabane. The selected public institutions for the study were Vhembe District, Collins Chabane, and Musina Local Municipality.

3.6 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

In uncertain circumstances, leaders must show attributes and behavioral potentials that improve the creative potential of followers (Yin, 2018). Likewise, the demonstration of suitable leaders' traits can be a motivating factor to the followers (Alles, 2019). Therefore, in a study of leadership traits required to manage conflict, the population needed to represent a group of public managers with a proven record of good leadership (Aspers, 2019). As a result, the participants in this study will be public managers with at least three years of established leadership experience and will comprise a total of 60 public managers.

3.7 SAMPLING

Sampling is the process of choosing a portion of the target population for a research project. A smaller group is used for data collecting in the great majority of research projects because it is impossible to recruit or involve the full population of interest. There are two commonly used sampling techniques namely probability and nonprobability (Adelaide, 2015).

3.7.1 Sampling method

The non-probability purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Purposive sampling is an appropriate strategy for achieving representativeness in a specific population by selecting individuals possessing the necessary information (Alles, 2019). Researchers can overcome the drawbacks of probability sampling by utilizing deliberate sampling to ensure that all relevant individuals of the population are represented in the sample (Abernethy, 2019). Purposive sampling ensures that all corresponding population segments are represented in the study. A researcher has the luxury of guaranteeing that all corresponding portions of a population are represented in his or her study by using deliberate sampling.

3.7.2 Sample size

The term sample size describes the number of subjects or observations that make up a study (Alles, 2019). In this case, the sample size consisted of 20 participants, 10 females, and 10 males; this sample size was anticipated to achieve data saturation.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data collection methods refer to the researcher's methods and techniques to gather participant information. These methods include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc. (De Vos, 2011). It is essential to explore all the possibilities of primary and secondary data sources before proceeding with the remaining steps of the research process. For this qualitative study, the researcher collected data through a semistructured interview. The research instrument consisted of questions from senior municipal officials. A pilot study was conducted to test the research instrument on whether it could efficiently collect the data required for the study.

3.9 PILOT STUDY

A small-scale pilot study was carried out to see whether the larger study that had been proposed was feasible. Using a pilot study, a researcher can, among other things, define or revise a research issue, decide which approaches are most effective for pursuing it, and calculate how much time and money will be required to finish the larger version

(Alles, 2019). In this study, six public managers from the selected public institutions in Vhembe District were selected to take part in the pilot study. This study aimed to test the effectiveness of the interview guide. The responses of these participants were to determine if the interview guide needed to be refined or adjusted. In line with *BMC Dermatol* (2015), these participants were not part of the main study.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Data analysis involves gathering, modelling, and analyzing data using a range of statistical and logical techniques (Aspers, 2019). Since this study followed a qualitative methodology, a thematic data analysis technique was considered appropriate. Thematic analysis is a technique for analyzing qualitative data in which a set of data is read through, and themes are discovered by looking for patterns in the meaning of the data (Aspers, 2019). Making sense of the data is an active reflexive process where the researcher's personal experience is crucial. There are six steps involved in thematic data analysis and these are described below (Psychother Res. 2011).

Step 1: Familiarity with data

Reading and rereading the transcripts is always the initial step in any qualitative study.

Making notes and noting down initial impressions is helpful.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

This stage involves the methodical and purposeful organization of data. Coding breaks down large amounts of data into manageable meaning units. There are various coding techniques, and the approach chosen will depend on the researcher's viewpoint and research objectives.

Step 3: Searching for themes

A theme is a pattern that highlights a key aspect of the data or an intriguing aspect of the study issue. In this instance, codes will be looked at, and some of them will be clearly integrated into a theme.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

At this phase, information that is pertinent to each theme is compiled. Themes are examined by copying and pasting in any word processing program, using Microsoft Excel, or by cutting the transcripts with scissors.

Step 5: Defining themes

Identifying the "essence" of what each theme is about is the goal of this final iteration of the themes.

Step 6: Writing up

The analysis of the findings shall be demonstrated in a way that convinces the reader of its significance and reliability.

Thematic data analysis was chosen because it makes it straightforward to work with large amounts of interview material by organizing ideas into major themes. In that regard, a note taker was present during the interview procedure to verify that the results were accurately recorded. Excel was utilized for data administration, evaluation, and coding. Furthermore, the transcripts of the interview procedure were examined to find recurring trends in the data and earlier studies.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered to the following ethical issues:

3.11.1 Permission to conduct the study

Permission was obtained from the selected public institutions in Vhembe District, and a permission letter was provided together with the results to demonstrate approval.

3.11.2 Informed consent

Participants were able to voluntarily engage in the study after obtaining thorough information about what it comprised and giving their consent prior to doing so. A consent

form was handed to the participants to fill out. A consent letter was issued to each participant.

3.11.3 Voluntary participation

Participation was voluntary and if any participant felt that he or she wanted to withdraw from the study at any time, he or she could do so without any consequences.

3.11.4 Protection from harm

The interview process was conducted at a secure and safe place where there were no falling objects or risk of tripping hazards to ensure no physical harm to participants. In addition, the participants were not pressured to answer any questions, and no sensitive language was used, this was done to protect participants from any psychological harm.

3.11.5 Right to privacy

The direct revelation of research participants to the researcher, which will not be disclosed to anybody, is referred to as privacy. The researcher's safeguarding of the participant's personal information is referred to as confidentiality. Maintaining participant privacy and confidentiality protects individuals from potential harm such as embarrassment or discomfort, as well as social and financial harms such as job loss.

3.11.6 Honesty with professional colleagues

The data were presented honestly and communicated to the best understanding of the researcher's work in writing and verbally.

3.12 SUMMARY

This section described the research methodology that was followed in the proposed study. Some of the key aspects covered include research design, research paradigm, and research methods. It further highlighted the study area, research population, sampling method and sampling size, data collection method, pilot study, data analysis and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the study respondents' views as articulated during the face-to-face interviews.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher has justified the aim and purpose of the study by outlining its goal and objectives. It was highlighted that evaluating the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated conflict in a workplace by public managers would enable the establishment of improved measures to deal with conflict.

This study was intended to evaluate the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers, to determine the leadership traits required to successfully navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace by public managers, to establish the causes of politically motivated conflicts in the workplace, examine the effects of politically motivated conflicts on institutional productivity, and recommended conflict management strategies in selected public institutions in Vhembe district.

In Chapter 2, the literature was reviewed, and in Chapter 3, the research methodology was outlined in an endeavour to investigate the phenomenon under study. The empirical findings for this dualitative study, emanating from the study participants' responses to questions posed during interviews are presented, analyzed, and discussed in this chapter. The researcher begins by presenting demographic information of the study respondents, followed by a presentation and analysis of variables related to the research topic. The reporting is based on the responses received about each variable, i.e., observable cases. Data and findings are presented according to themes specified in the interviewing schedule.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

This section presents the demographic information of the respondents who voluntarily participated in the interview process. The information is presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 4.2.1: Biographical information of the respondents

Pseudo name	Age	Gender	Years experience	of	Level of qualification
P1	55	Male	1-5 years		Post graduate
P2	52	Male	6-10 years		Diploma
P3	35	Male	1-5 years		Degree
P4	44	Male	6-10 years		Diploma
P5	47	Male	11-15 years		Diploma
P6	52	Female	16 years +		Postgraduate
P 7	45	Female	6-10 years		Postgraduate
P8	46	Female	6-10 years		Postgraduate
P9	53	Male	11-15 years		Degree
P10	55	Male	6-10 years		Postgraduate
P11	51	Male	1-5 years		Postgraduate
P12	51	Male	6-10 years		Postgraduate

Table 4.2.2: Summary of the demographic characteristics of interview respondents' variables frequency

Gender		
Female	3	25%
Male	9	75%
Age range		
18-29	0	0%
30-39	1	8%
40-49	4	33%
50+	7	59%
Educational Qualifications		
Certificate	0	0%
Diploma	3	25%
Degree	2	17%
Postgraduate	7	58%
Years of experience:		
1-5 years	3	25%
6-10 years	6	50%
11-15 years	2	17%
16+	1	8%

4.2.3 Gender division Gender division is described as different genders in society. In this study, the 12 interview respondents, most were males, 75 %, and 25% were females. The following figure shows the gender composition of the study respondents:

4.2.4 Age range

On the age range of the respondents of the study, 65 % of them were 50+ of age, 35 % were between 40-49 years, and 16% were between 30-39 years. However, all of these respondents are from Limpopo province, Vhembe district. The respondents' age, and prolonged years of service are indicative of their vast experience of leadership dynamics and conflict resolution mechanisms in the various selected municipalities, which lends their views on the subject an element of reliability.

4.2.5 Educational qualifications

The other important characteristic of this study was the respondents' education level. In this case, 0% have a certificate, 25% have a Diploma, 17% have a degree and 58% have a Postgraduate qualification. The educational level of the respondents may point to their potential to understand the interview questions clearly and respond appropriately, unlike if the researcher is interviewing semi-illiterate respondents.

4.2.6 Work experience of respondents

The respondents' duration of service in the Municipality was an average of 16 years. In this regard, the majority of the respondents (50 %) were employed for a period of 6 to 10 years in the Municipality, followed by 30 % who indicated to have been working in the Municipality for 1-5 years, followed by 20% who said that they have 11-15 years of service and 10 % who indicated that they have 16 years and above of service in the selected Municipality. In this view, most participants of the study working in the Municipality have been working for over five years, which made them familiar with the operations of the Municipality, including the politically motivated conflict, while the minority of 30 percent have been working at the Municipality for over six years.

4.3 Themes

In presenting the qualitative findings, the researcher first presents a descriptive profile of the interview respondents, followed by a summary of empirical findings on each identified theme. In doing that, not all variables were analyzed; the focus was only on key measures useful in answering the research questions. The qualitative findings are presented in line with the following identified themes that were based on the research objectives and questions of the study:

4.3.1 Theme 1: Self-integrity

The respondents in this study were asked to give leadership traits in successfully navigating motivated workplace conflicts by public managers at the selected local Municipality in the Limpopo province, South Africa. For the first research question, the researcher intended to determine the leadership traits required to successfully navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace by public managers in selected Local Municipalities. Most respondents indicated that one of the leadership traits needed is self-integrity to successfully navigate the politically motivated conflict by managers in selected Local Municipalities. Below are what some of the respondents had to say:

P7 "The leadership traits that public managers possess within the organization, includes among others self-integrity, accountability, and those who are hard workers. Some practice professionalism."

P9 "the leadership trait that is applicable in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict is integrity because our managers know what they are doing and they do it in time. Other thing is that they adhere to ethics."

P6 "integrity and professionalism are the most significant traits that our managers possess in our institution."

Also supporting this traits, other respondents in this study stated that:

P4 "The leadership traits that public managers possess which are key firstly, are communication and transparency. These traits automatically lead to good quality work service, where the employee becomes professional knowing what their duties are and fulfill them with respect and honesty."

This participant further mentioned that *"the majority of our managers have empathy and they are intelligent, which is very important as a public servant. They also possess traits such as adaptability and they have leadership skills"*

The above assertions indicate a consensus among the respondents that leadership traits play an important role in successfully navigating politically motivated conflict in a workplace by managers. They indicated that there is a great level of self-integrity, which is linked to being accountable and good communication when navigating workplace conflicts.

This is also supported by Tylor (2021) who indicated that it is how we decide to live and lead our lives without harming other's interest. It is also about doing what you told yourself you are going to do which is about commitment and holding yourself accountable. This indicated that despite having traits to successfully navigate politically motivated conflict, there are causes of politically motivated conflicts in the workplace.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Power struggle

On this theme, the researcher sought to establish the causes and effects of power struggles within the municipality, and how this contributes to politically motivated workplace conflicts.

Some of the respondents in this study indicated that power struggle causes politically motivated conflict in the workplace. This is where politically motivated workplace conflicts start. Following are the assertions by some of the respondents:

P1 "The cause of politically motivated conflict are the issues of politics sometimes employees being highly ambitious to the extent that they contest among themselves because everyone wants to lead and that itself generates conflict within a workplace."

P3 "External interference, people from outside and they want to use people from the organization politically so. Most of the time is because they want to occupy certain positions."

P5 "The causes of politically motivated conflict at the workplace are different political ideologies, fictions and competition over power"

Respondents in this study attested that politically motivated workplace conflict is caused by power struggle, this means that there is a need to have strategies to solve these kinds of conflicts.

According to Greer and Chu (2019), when power becomes salient in group interaction, this in turn leads people to conflict. The struggle over power in the group detracts from the quality of group relationships and harms task performance. This is in line with the assertions by the respondents that power struggle is one of the causes influencing politically motivated workplace conflict in government institutions.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Slow progress

When asked for their opinion on the impact of politically motivated workplace conflict in the functioning of the municipality, some of the respondents in this study indicated that the effect of politically motivated workplace conflict is slow progress in day-to-day work. This does not only affect the effectiveness of the work; it also affects service delivery to the communities. The following are the assertions made by the respondents in this study:

P7 "politically motivated conflict affects the progress of the organization, where employees will focus on the conflict and not focus on the day-to-day tasks. In that way, it becomes difficult for the organization to achieve its objectives."

P8 "it affects day-to-day work progress which leads not to achieving the mission of the organization. These kinds of conflicts may cause the organization not to deliver good service to the community. As such, it may cause unnecessary strikes and other conflict within the community."

P3 "The effect of politically motivated conflict on the organizational outcomes, is that it can make the institution to not progress very well. If there is political interference on administrative intervention and administrators are influenced by the other political officials because both of these things will make one to lose direction as to what is your role as an administrator or as a political official. There must be a proper synergy between the two as to where do we meet so that we can know what is it that is supposed to be done."

The assertions by the respondents indicated that politically motivated workplace conflicts at the selected institution have severe impacts on the effectiveness of the institutions and service delivery to the communities. Unfortunately, sometimes politically motivated conflict leads to violence. Brookins (2019) indicated that when conflicts escalate without mediation, intense situations may arise between organization members. It is unfortunate, but organizational conflicts may cause violence among members, resulting in legal problems for members and possibly the organization.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Collaboration

Under this theme, the researcher sought to get the respondents' views on what strategies or measures can be adopted by public managers in addressing politically motivated workplace conflict. Some respondents indicated that one of the strategies that organizations can use to minimize the impact of politically motivated conflict is collaboration. This is what some of the respondents had to say:

P2 "a strategy used to address the politically motivated conflict is collaboration, in which all parties involved win. There should be open mediation and neutral overseers who would not take sides politically."

P10 "open mediation among the staff members in order to solve every conflict. And to also have a neutral overseer who will not be influenced by any political party."

P12 "... might happen between the process – Conflict management strategies that can be employed by public managers, firstly there must be planning, coordination, staffing and there must be also control and evaluation in order to redress the causes which is one of the strategies."

According to the assertions made by the respondents in this study, selected institutions should use the collaboration strategy to resolve politically motivated workplace conflict. The significance of this collaboration strategy will solve conflict in a way that both parties are satisfied. During this process, the mediator will ensure that conflict is resolved without being biased according to political affiliation. Some respondents also shared similar sentiments when they alluded that "*successful strategy is like a problem tree analysis where in you will see the tree and one of the branches start to dry, in order to intervene you should check the cause of the conflict before resolving the issue.*" This depicts the significance of adopting collaboration strategy, especially in the environment where there are different political ideologies. This addresses what is described by Bang (2016), "as opposing parties work through their disagreements to discover mutually beneficial solutions to their challenges, they increase their creative potential".

Using this method to resolve conflict not only improves conflicting parties' creative potential, but also improves their learning social change capacities.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the perceptions of the study respondents as they unfolded during the interview process. Most views expressed indicated that leadership traits are indeed instrumental when it comes to resolving workplace conflicts. The respondents also provided useful suggestions on how managers can address conflicts that occur within the workplace, including collaboration, accommodation, and mediation by people not aligned to any sides involved in the conflicts. The next chapter features a summary of the study findings, conclusions as well as study recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises empirical findings and makes significant conclusions based on the literature review and empirical evidence. The conclusions are geared towards ascertaining the achievement of the research goal of this study. Evaluating the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict by public managers in selected Institutions in Vhembe District Municipality of Limpopo Province, the study intended to establish the causes of politically motivated conflict in the workplace, examine the effects of politically motivated conflicts on institution productivity and provide recommendations on the politically motivated conflict management strategies that public managers in the selected institutions can employ.

The researcher conducted a qualitative study to achieve this goal and gain more insight into the problem. The aim was to explore and describe the research problem by obtaining information on the ideas, perceptions, feelings, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences that the research respondents have on the research topic. The background of the study was done through a comprehensive review of the literature on leadership traits and politically motivated workplace conflict. The research approach used in this study was qualitative. The research population comprised purposefully sampled public managers from public institutions, in relation to specifically selected local municipalities in the Vhembe district. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The study findings were systematically presented and discussed in chapter 4 by making use of specific themes.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The opening chapter outlined the scope of the study, the problem statement, the objectives, and the methodology adopted in the study. In a nutshell, the study was intended to explore

the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict by public managers in selected Institutions in Vhembe District Municipality of Limpopo Province.

In essence, the role of leadership in modern organizations has changed. Effective leaders who possess political skills can moderate and minimize the negative effects of perceptions of organizational politics. In a perfect world, according to Hanft (2006, as cited in Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008:327), individuals and cooperative interests would be closely aligned and everyone would move forward as one. Instead, a rather messy situation is typically found in which self-interest often overrides the collective mission. Personal hidden agendas are pursued, political coalitions are formed, false impressions are made, and, predictably, people end up working at cross-purposes. Hanft (2006) further contends that leaders need to be able to guide diverse individuals, who are often powerfully motivated to put their self-interests first, refocusing them to pursue common objectives. No less than the ultimate survival of the organization is at stake, in this tug-of-war between individuals and collective interests (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008). Politics in an organization can be seen as the conceptualized exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one's interests in certain organizational issues.

The second chapter reviewed the literature about office and organizational politics, the implications for managers, as well as strategies and tactics, to help equip managers for appropriate handling of political behaviour. In that regard, DuBrin (2010:210) defines organizational politics as an informal approach of gaining power through means other than merit or luck. DuBrin (2010:210) remarks further that in this sense, the meaning of politics in an organization is conceptualized as the exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one's interests in certain organizational issues. Vidoga (2002:572) describes organizational politics as the complex mixture of power, influence, and interest-seeking behaviour that dominate individuals' activity in the workplace. Additionally, Vigoda (2002:572) notes that the positive outcomes of politics are career advancement, recognition and status, enhanced power and position, accomplishment of personal goals, getting the job done, feeling achievement, enhanced sense of control, and success. However, according to DuBrin (2010:222), when organizational politics is carried to excess,

politics can hurt an organization and its members. Too much politicking can result in wasted time and effort, thereby lowering productivity. The human consequences of excessive negative and unethical politics can also be substantial. DuBrin (2010:222) claims that examples of these excesses include, lowered morale and loss of people who intensely dislike office politics. To avoid these negative consequences, he observes that leaders are advised to combat political behaviour when it is excessive and dysfunctional. Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge and Werner (2005:157) contend that mustering the forces required to navigate power and politics within an organization takes respect, patience and determination, hence these are among the leadership traits needed in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict by public managers.

Chapter three outlined the research methodology, which includes the research paradigm, sampling, and measuring instruments. This section described the research methodology that was followed in the study. A paradigm is a framework that guides how research should be constructed, based on people's philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge (Collis and Hussey 2009:11). There are two types of paradigms, namely Positivist and Interpretivism paradigms. According to the theories of Collis and Hussey (2009:56), Positivism provides the framework for the way research was conducted in the natural sciences. They assert that positivism rests on the assumption that social reality is objective and singular. This theory is not affected by the act of investigating it, and the research involves a deductive process with a view to providing explanatory theories to understand social phenomena. It can therefore be assumed that social phenomena may be measured, and because of this, Positivism is associated with quantitative methods of analysis. Words such as quantitative, objective, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist are often used to describe this theory (Collis and Hussey, 2009:56).

The penultimate chapter presented the perceptions of the study participants as they unfolded during the interview process. Effective presentation of data involves several key principles and techniques to ensure clarity, and engagement. Most views expressed by the respondents indicated that leadership traits are indeed crucial in managers' quest to address workplace conflicts. The respondents also provided useful suggestions on how managers can resolve conflicts that occur within the workplace, including measures such as accommodation,

collaboration, and mediation by impartial people or parties not aligned to any sides involved in the conflicts.

The current chapter is the final chapter of the study. The results of the research findings were presented in the previous chapter (4). The findings were integrated with the findings of the interviews, which examined leadership and the factors leading to perceptions of organizational politics. In this final chapter, the main findings will be summarized and conclusions will be drawn. Additionally, this chapter makes recommendations on the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict by public managers in selected Institutions in Vhembe District Municipality of Limpopo Province.

5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical leadership traits that enable public managers in the Vhembe district, Collins Chabane and Musina municipality to successfully navigate politically motivated workplace conflicts. The findings underscore the importance of several key traits and strategies that contribute to effective conflict management and organizational stability. Here are the main takeaways:

1. *Emotional Intelligence*: Managers with high emotional intelligence can navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, understand the underlying emotions driving conflicts, and respond with empathy and composure. This trait is pivotal in de-escalating tensions and fostering a collaborative environment.

2. *Effective Communication*: Transparent, consistent, and open communication is essential. Managers who articulate their vision clearly and keep lines of communication open are better

able to build trust and prevent misunderstandings that could exacerbate conflicts.

3. *Decisiveness*: The ability to make timely and firm decisions helps managers to steer through conflicts decisively. This trait ensures that conflicts are addressed promptly, preventing them from escalating further.

4. *Adaptability*: In a politically charged environment, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and unexpected challenges is crucial. Managers who are flexible and can adjust their strategies as needed are more successful in managing conflicts.

5. *Integrity and Ethical Leadership*: Upholding integrity and strong ethical standards garners respect and trust from both staff and political stakeholders. Managers who are perceived as fair and principled are better able to lead and resolve conflicts impartially.

6. *Stakeholder Engagement*: Actively involving all relevant parties in the conflict resolution process ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that solutions are more likely to be accepted and implemented. This inclusive approach minimizes resistance and promotes a sense of shared responsibility.

7. *Mediation and Negotiation Skills*: Proficiency in mediation and negotiation allows managers to facilitate constructive dialogue between conflicting parties, helping to find common ground and mutually beneficial solutions.

8. *Building Alliances*: Forming strategic alliances with key political figures and other stakeholders creates a supportive network that can help diffuse tensions and support conflict resolution efforts.

9. *Continuous Development*: Ongoing training and professional development in conflict resolution and leadership skills are essential. Investment in these areas ensures that managers are well-equipped to handle the dynamic and often volatile political landscape.

5.4 FINAL THOUGHTS

The study's findings underscore the multifaceted nature of effective leadership in politically charged environments. Public managers who embody these traits and strategies are not only more successful in resolving conflicts but also in fostering a positive organizational culture that can withstand political pressures.

The Vhembe district municipalities, and similar contexts, can benefit significantly from prioritizing the development of these leadership traits among their public managers. Implementing targeted training programs and fostering a culture that values ethical leadership and open communication will be instrumental in achieving long-term organizational stability and effectiveness.

Ultimately, strong and adaptive leadership is the cornerstone of successful conflict management in politically motivated environments. By cultivating these traits, public managers can navigate conflicts more effectively, leading to improved governance and better outcomes for the community.

5.5 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.5.1 The managers' leadership traits for successfully navigating politically motivated conflicts in the workplace

In answering the first research question, the researcher provided the background of leadership traits and politically motivated conflict. This contributed to the achievement of the first objective of this study, namely evaluating the role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers. This objective was

addressed by revising the literature on the history of leadership traits and also on the politically motivated conflicts in the national, regional, and global contexts. The empirical investigation further focused on providing evidence for all the objectives. It can be concluded that self-integrity is a very important trait to successfully navigate political conflicts. However, what must be stated as findings, is that leadership traits play a significant role in successfully navigating the politically motivated workplace conflict.

5.5.2 The causes of politically motivated conflicts in the workplace

The evidence gathered on the causes of politically motivated conflict in the workplace of the selected institutions was addressed, focusing on the views of public managers at the selected institutions. This evidence refutes what has been mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study, that there are causes of politically motivated workplace conflict. This occurred as an administrative problem on the institutions' side due to causes of politically motivated conflict.

Politically motivated conflict in local municipalities can arise from a variety of factors. Here are some key causes:

1. Resource Allocation

Budget Distribution: Disagreements over how funds are allocated for different projects or services tend to give rise to workplace conflict.

Access to Resources: Competition for limited resources like funding, facilities, and infrastructure may lead to workplace conflict.

For example, in a management meeting in Collins Chabane Local Municipality, a dispute arose during budget allocation meetings, two managers within community services had quarrels over the allocation of the municipal budget

2. Power Struggles

Leadership Battles: Conflicts may occur between elected officials, such as mayors and council members, vying for control or influence.

Factionalism: Formation of rival groups or factions within the municipality often leads to workplace conflict.

For instance, Makhado Local Municipality in Limpopo, has experienced a significant power struggle among local government officials. These conflicts are often fueled by political ambitions, competition for control over municipal resources, and differing vision for the municipality's development.

3. Policy Disagreements

Differing Priorities: Conflicts over policy decisions, such as urban development vs. conservation efforts.

Ideological Differences: Variances in political ideologies leading to opposing views on municipal governance.

4. Corruption and Mismanagement

Misuse of Funds: Allegations of corruption or financial mismanagement can create significant discord.

Lack of Transparency: Perceived or actual lack of transparency in decision-making processes often leads to workplace conflict.

5. Public Pressure and Community Interests

Community Groups: Pressure from various community groups with differing interests and priorities breeds workplace conflict.

Public Opinion: Elected officials may not respond in unison to public opinion, which may be divided on key issues.

6. Inequity and Social Justice

Social Inequities: Conflicts may arise from perceived or actual inequities in service delivery or resource distribution.

Discrimination: Issues related to race, gender, or other forms of discrimination can lead to workplace conflict.

7. Economic Challenges

Unemployment: High unemployment rates may lead to dissatisfaction and conflict.

Economic Development: Disputes over economic development projects and their impact on local communities can result in workplace conflict.

8. Legislative and Regulatory Changes

New Laws: Introduction of new laws or regulations that are contentious may result in workplace conflict.

Policy Reforms: Reforms that impact existing power structures or resource distribution can result in increased tension and workplace conflict.

9. Personal Ambitions

Career Advancement: Conflicts often arises from individuals seeking to advance their careers or personal agendas.

Personal Vendettas: Personal grudges or vendettas influencing political decisions are likely to cause workplace conflict.

10. External Influences

Political Parties: Influence of national or regional political parties on local governance may result in workplace conflict.

Interest Groups: Pressure from business interests, lobbyists, or other external entities tend to be a source of workplace conflict.

In summing up this section, understanding the causes of politically motivated conflict in local municipalities is crucial for developing strategies to address and manage these conflicts effectively. By addressing the underlying issues such as resource allocation, power struggles, policy disagreements, and social inequities, municipal leaders can work towards creating a more stable and harmonious environment.

5.5.3 The effects of politically motivated conflicts on institutional productivity

The third question examined the effects of politically motivated conflicts on institutional productivity at selected institutions. This question aimed to attain the third objective of the study. In this regard, there was overwhelming qualitative evidence that slow progress in daily work was the main effect of politically motivated conflict on institutional productivity. These findings imply that these unethical practices affect the quality of services rendered by the hired candidates to the productivity of the selected institutions or service delivery to the communities. Therefore, the evidence produced in this study on explicit redefinition of the assessment of politically motivated workplace conflict is crucial for improved productivity and service delivery at the selected institutions.

Politically motivated conflicts can significantly impact institutional productivity in municipalities, including those in Limpopo, South Africa. Here are specific examples and potential impacts:

1. Disruption of Municipal Services

Political conflicts can disrupt essential municipal services like water supply, waste management, and public safety. In Limpopo, protests and political clashes often lead to the halting of services. For example, during protests related to service delivery and political disputes in the Vuwani area, schools were closed, and municipal services were disrupted. This affected the productivity of the municipality by diverting resources to manage the conflict instead of maintaining regular services.

2. Administrative Paralysis

Political conflicts can paralyze local government operations. In some Limpopo municipalities, internal conflicts within municipal councils have led to administrative standstills. For instance, disputes over mayoral positions or council decisions have resulted in the inability to pass budgets or implement policies, stalling development projects and routine administration, thereby lowering productivity.

3. Financial Strain

Conflicts often force municipalities to allocate funds towards managing unrest and repairing damage, straining budgets. For example, in Limpopo, funds intended for infrastructure development or social services might be diverted to address the aftermath of politically motivated violence, such as repairing damaged buildings or increasing security measures. This financial strain hampers long-term planning and reduces the overall efficiency of municipal operations.

4. Deterioration of Infrastructure

Political conflicts can lead to the destruction of local infrastructure. During politically motivated protests in Limpopo, there have been instances where public buildings, schools, and roads

were damaged. This destruction affects the municipality's ability to provide services and requires significant resources for rebuilding, thereby reducing institutional productivity.

5. Loss of Human Capital

Political conflicts can lead to the departure of skilled workers from the municipality. In Limpopo, political instability has caused experienced municipal employees to seek employment in more stable environments. This loss of human capital has resulted in a skills gap, affecting the municipality's ability to efficiently manage projects and provide services.

6. Increased Corruption and Mismanagement

Political conflicts often exacerbate corruption and mismanagement within municipalities. In Limpopo, political rivalries and conflicts have led to patronage systems where resources are misallocated to reward political supporters. This corruption undermines the efficiency of municipal institutions, leading to poor service delivery and reduced productivity.

From a Case Study: The Impact of Political Conflict on Vuwani Municipality, Limpopo Vuwani, a municipality in Limpopo, it emerged that the municipality experienced significant political conflict over municipal demarcation decisions in 2016 and subsequent years. The protests against the incorporation of Vuwani into a new municipality led to widespread violence and the destruction of more than 20 schools. This conflict severely disrupted education, public services, and local governance. The need to manage the conflict and repair the damage strained municipal resources, diverted attention from development initiatives, and significantly reduced institutional productivity.

In summary, politically motivated conflicts in Limpopo municipalities like Vuwani can lead to the disruption of services, administrative paralysis, financial strain, infrastructure deterioration, loss of human capital, and increased corruption. These effects collectively reduce the productivity and effectiveness of municipal institutions, hindering their ability to serve their communities and promote local development.

5.5.4 Recommendations on the politically motivated conflict management strategies

The fourth question checked the recommendations on the politically motivated conflict management strategies that can be employed by public managers in the selected institutions. This question contributed towards attaining objective three since it examined the effects of the causes of politically motivated workplace conflict. The researcher channeled the respondents towards focusing on these options.

To effectively manage politically motivated conflicts in Limpopo municipalities, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. Here are some strategic recommendations:

1. Strengthen Governance and Accountability

- *Transparent Decision-Making*: Ensure that all municipal decisions, especially those regarding resource allocation and service delivery, are made transparently and involve community participation. This can reduce suspicions and grievances that fuel conflicts.
- *Anti-Corruption Measures*: Implement robust anti-corruption measures to ensure that municipal resources are used efficiently and fairly. Establish independent oversight bodies to monitor and investigate allegations of corruption.
- *Capacity Building*: Train municipal officials in conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation skills to manage disputes effectively and prevent escalation.

2. Enhance Community Engagement

- *Regular Dialogue*: Establish regular forums for dialogue between municipal officials and community members. This can include town hall meetings, public consultations, and community advisory boards.
- *Participatory Budgeting*: Involve communities in the budgeting process to ensure that their needs and priorities are addressed. This can enhance trust and reduce conflict over resource allocation.

- *Conflict Resolution Committees*: Create local conflict resolution committees composed of community leaders, municipal officials, and other stakeholders to address grievances before they escalate.

3. Improve Service Delivery

- *Equitable Services*: Ensure that services are delivered equitably across all communities to prevent feelings of neglect or marginalization. Monitor service delivery to quickly address any disparities.
- *Efficient Management*: Improve the efficiency of service delivery through better planning, resource management, and the use of technology. This can help meet community expectations and reduce dissatisfaction.

4. Foster Economic Development

- *Job Creation Programs*: Implement job creation programs to address unemployment, which can be a source of frustration and conflict. Focus on skills training, support for small businesses, and attracting investment to the area.
- *Infrastructure Development*: Invest in infrastructure development projects that can provide immediate jobs and long-term economic benefits, such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities.

5. Promote Social Cohesion

- *Cultural and Social Programs*: Support cultural and social programs that promote unity and understanding among different community groups. This can include sports events, cultural festivals, and educational campaigns on social cohesion.
- *Youth Engagement*: Engage young people in community development projects and decision-making processes. Youth are often at the forefront of protests and conflicts, so involving them positively can reduce tensions

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The public managers should continue demonstrating leadership traits to successfully navigate politically motivated workplace conflict.

The causes of politically motivated conflict in the workplace should be addressed before they can lead to conflict; in that way, it will help managers to solve fewer conflicts.

In addressing politically motivated workplace conflict, the municipality should consider stringent measures on people who do not focus on their tasks because it slows down the progress of the institution.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After analyzing the empirical evidence gathered and given the implications of this study, the researcher makes the following specific recommendations:

Future researchers should explore how leadership roles by public managers are linked with politically motivated conflict, particularly leadership roles in public institutions.

The findings of this study should not be generalized to other populations, particularly in other public institutions. However, they could be used as a benchmark.

There is also a need for future researchers to conduct a complementary study to analyze the experiences of public managers on the effectiveness of solving politically motivated workplace conflict.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study's conclusions were drawn in line with the set objectives as a recap to ascertain the extent to which the researcher managed to probe or achieve the initial objectives as laid out in Chapter 1. The findings on the evaluation of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflict by managers revealed that leadership traits in

municipalities can successfully navigate politically motivated conflict. However, it was clear throughout the analysis of data that there were causes and effects of politically motivated workplace conflict.

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Annexure A: Consent forms

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, (**Radzilani Florence**), about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and declare myself willingly prepared to participate in the study.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

Full Names of Participant

Date

Signature

I, **Radzilani Florence**, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully Informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher **Radzilani**

Florence

Date...**13** **October** **2023**.....

Signature.....

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

..... Date **13 October 2023**

Signature.....

Annexure B: Research instruments – Interview Schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- What is your age?

18 – 29 years	
30 – 39 years	
40 – 49 years	
50 years +	

- What is your gender?

Male	
Female	

- How long have you worked for the organization?

Years (Experience)	
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16 years+	

- What is your level of education?

Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Post-graduate	

SECTION B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the leadership traits required to successfully navigate politically motivated conflicts in the workplace by public managers?

What are the causes of politically motivated workplace conflict?

What are the effects of politically motivated conflicts on organizational production?

What are the conflict management strategies that can be employed by public managers?

Annexure C: Draft Covering Letter

Draft Covering Letter

Dear participant

My name is Florence Radzilani, and I am currently doing a Master's degree program at the University of Venda. I invite you to take part in the research, titled:

The role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers: A case of Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo


I would like to therefore appeal to you to take part in this study which will be conducted through semi-structured interviews. The study is based on your freewill and you will not be prevented from withdrawing if you so wish. None of your private details will be requested. The study is solely for academic purposes and no information will be disclosed to third parties.

Thank you in advance for your support

Yours sincerely
Florence Radzilani 0725555570

Annexure D: Permission to conduct research at Vhembe District Municipality

VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
PRIVATE BAG X5006, THOHOVANDOU, 0950
TEL: 015 960 2000, FAX: 015 962 1017
Website: www.vhembe.gov.za



Eng: Tshikovha N.C
General Manager: Corporate Services
015 960 2035

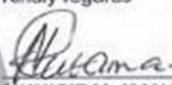
Att: Mrs Radzilani Florence
Masters Research Student
University of Venda
Thohoyandou
0950

Dear Madam

Re: Permission to Conduct Research at Vhembe District Municipality

1. The above-matter bears reference.
2. Your request to conduct research in Vhembe District Municipality is hereby granted on the topic "The role of leadership traits and skills to successfully navigate politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers"
3. The data collected should be used for research purposes as approved.
4. The Municipality wishes you all the best in your academic journey.

Kindly regards


MUNICIPAL MANAGER
KUTAMA Z.N

21 August 2021
DATE

"A developmental municipality focusing on sustainable service delivery and socio-economic development towards an equal society"

Annexure E: Permission to conduct research at Collins Chabane Local Municipality

225 Collins Chabane Dr
OldDCO Building
Hospital Roads
Malamulele
0982



COLLINS CHABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Enq
Contact : 015 851 0110

: Maputla T.M.D (Senior Manager- Corporate Services)

08 August 2023

Att: Mrs Radzilani Florence
Masters Research Student
University of Venda
Thohoyandou
0950

Dear Madam

Re: Permission to Conduct Research at Collin Chabane Municipality

- 1.The above-matter bears reference.
- 2.Your request to conduct research in Collins Chabane Municipality is hereby granted on the topic “The role of leadership traits and skills to successfully navigate politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers.”
- 3.The data collected should be used for research purposes as approved.
- 4.The Municipality wishes you all the best in your academic journey.

Kind regards



SHILENGE R.R.

MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Vision: “A spatially integrated and sustainable local economy by 2030”

Mission: To ensure the provision of sustainable basic services and infrastructure to improve the quality of life of our people and to grow the local economy for benefit of all citizens.

Annexure F: Permission to conduct research at Musina Local Municipality



Postal Address:
Musina Local Municipality
Private Bag X611
Musina
0900

Physical Address:
21 Irwin Street
Musina
0900

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w

ENQUIRIES SPEAK TO
REFERENCE NO

PM Mudau

95/4/A

19 October 2023

Mrs FF Radzilani
Masters Research Student
University of Venda
Thohoyandou
0950

Dear Madam

Permission to Conduct Research at Musina Local Municipality

1. The above matter bears reference.
2. Permission is herewith granted to Mrs FF Radzilani, student number 8900291 to conduct research at Musina Local Municipality on the topic:
“The role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers.”
3. Hoping that you find the above in order.

Kind regards


TN TSHIWANAMBI
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Annexure G: Editor's Letter

P.O. Box 5575

Thohoyandou

0950

15 May 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: Editing/Proofreading of Florence Radzilani's dissertation (Student no.: 8900291 - University of Venda)

This serves to attest that I edited **Florence Radzilani's** dissertation for a **Master of Public Management** degree, jointly supervised by **Prof PH Munzhedzi** and **DR E Mahole**, titled

“The role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers: A case of Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo province”.

I trust that my linguistic and technical inputs have been appropriately considered in the finalisation of the research document.


Kind regards

A.Z. Nengome

Formerly English lecturer (Served at Univen – until 2018)

Contact numbers : 082 717 4150 & 015 962 8000 (Univen)

Email address : aznaca@gmail.com

Signature  Date 15 /05 /2024

Annexure H: Turnitin Report

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS IN SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING POLITICALLY MOTIVATED WORKPLACE CONFLICTS BY PUBLIC MANAGERS: A CASE OF VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

20%	12%	1%	16%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to North West University Student Paper	1%
2	Submitted to Polytechnic Institute Australia Student Paper	1%
3	Submitted to Vermont State Colleges Student Paper	1%
4	Submitted to Brescia House School Student Paper	<1%
5	www.jetir.org Internet Source	<1%
6	Submitted to American Public University System Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to Florida State University Student Paper	<1%
8	ijecm.co.uk Internet Source	<1%

Annexure I: Ethics Clearance Certificate

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Mrs FF Radzilani

STUDENT NO:

8900291

PROJECT TITLE: The role of leadership traits in successfully navigating politically motivated workplace conflicts by public managers: A case of Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo province.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FMCL/23/PDN/45/2603

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr PH Munzhedzi	UNIVEN, Public and Development Administration	Supervisor
Dr E Mahole	UNIVEN, Public and Development Administration	Co-supervisor
Mrs FF Radzilani	UNIVEN, Public and Development Administration	Investigator-Student

Type: **Masters Research**

Risk: **Straightforward research without ethical problems (Category 1)**

Approval Period: **March 2024 – March 2025**

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
 - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately.
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A it necessary

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: March 2024

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof TS Mashau

Signature 

