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	<p>RESEARCH ARTICLE </p>
	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Employee Political Will in Organizations: A Multidimensional Conceptual Review, Measurement Challenges, and Directions for Future Research</h2>
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p>	
<p>Employee political will has emerged as a critical yet underexplored construct within the field of organizational politics, despite its fundamental role in shaping political behavior, decision-making processes, and career outcomes. While prior research has predominantly focused on political skill as a determinant of organizational effectiveness, the motivational and volitional foundations of political behavior—captured by the concept of political will—remain insufficiently theorized and empirically examined at the individual level. Drawing upon the theoretical foundations of organizational politics, particularly the framework introduced by Henry Mintzberg, this study provides a comprehensive and integrative review of the concept, dimensional structure, and measurement approaches of employee political will. The analysis synthesizes existing literature to conceptualize political will as a multidimensional construct encompassing personality traits, attitudinal orientations, and dynamic cognitive-motivational processes underlying political action. Furthermore, the study systematically examines the antecedents and consequences of political will, highlighting its role in influencing political behavior, workplace performance, and organizational dynamics. By critically evaluating existing theoretical models and empirical findings, this review identifies key limitations in current research, including conceptual ambiguity, insufficient measurement validity, and the lack of integrative frameworks capturing the interplay between political will and related constructs such as political skill. The paper contributes to the advancement of organizational behavior literature by proposing a refined conceptual understanding of employee political will and outlining a future research agenda emphasizing scale development, multilevel analysis, and cross-cultural validation. These insights offer important implications for both scholars and practitioners seeking to better understand the motivational drivers of political behavior and their impact on organizational effectiveness.</p>	
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## Introduction

Political will has long been recognized as a central construct in explaining policy formation, institutional reform, and socio-economic transformation across disciplines such as political science, sociology, and management. Traditionally, the concept has been applied at the macro level to examine the commitment of governments and decision-makers in addressing complex societal challenges, including corruption control, environmental governance, and public sector reform (Lee, 2019; Zalmanovitch & Cohen, 2015). In this context, political will is often interpreted as a collective force that drives or constrains policy implementation and societal change.

However, recent theoretical developments suggest that political will is not solely a macro-level phenomenon but also emerges from the motivations and behaviors of individuals operating within organizations. Although individual-level political will may appear limited in isolation, it can aggregate and evolve into collective dynamics that significantly influence organizational outcomes and broader institutional processes (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). This shift in perspective highlights the importance of examining political will within the micro-foundations of organizational behavior.

The theoretical roots of this perspective can be traced to the seminal work of Henry Mintzberg (1983), who conceptualized organizations as inherently political systems. Within this framework, organizational effectiveness is shaped by two interrelated individual-level constructs: political skill and political will. While political skill refers to an individual's capacity to understand and influence others, political will reflects the underlying motivation to engage in such influence-oriented behaviors. Despite this conceptual distinction, the extant literature has disproportionately emphasized political skill, positioning it as a primary determinant of career success, leadership effectiveness, and organizational performance (Treadway et al., 2013; Kalra et al., 2017; Breland et al., 2017).

This imbalance has resulted in a critical gap in the literature. Although political skill explains *how* individuals navigate organizational politics, it does not adequately account for *why* individuals choose to engage in political behavior. As argued by Treadway et al. (2005) and supported by Jeffrey Pfeffer (1992), political will represents a fundamental motivational driver that precedes and activates political action. Without sufficient political will, even highly skilled individuals may refrain from engaging in influence processes, thereby limiting their effectiveness within organizational contexts.

In recent years, scholarly attention has increasingly turned toward the study of employee political will within the field of organizational behavior. Emerging evidence suggests that political will plays a significant role in shaping employees' political behavior, career trajectories, and contributions to organizational change (Doldor et al., 2013; Shaughnessy et al., 2017; Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Blickle et al., 2018). Moreover, political will has been linked to broader organizational outcomes, including decision-making processes, leadership dynamics, and the success of strategic initiatives. These findings underscore the theoretical and practical importance of integrating political will into mainstream organizational research.

Despite these advances, the literature on employee political will remains fragmented and underdeveloped. Key challenges include conceptual ambiguity, the absence of standardized measurement scales, and limited empirical investigation of its antecedents and consequences. Furthermore, the interaction between political will and related constructs—such as political skill, organizational culture, and leadership styles—has not been sufficiently theorized or empirically tested.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive and integrative review of the concept of employee political will within the framework of organizational politics theory. Specifically, the study synthesizes existing research on the conceptualization, dimensional structure, and measurement of political will, while also examining its antecedents, outcomes, and underlying mechanisms. By addressing existing gaps and proposing directions for future research, this study seeks to advance theoretical understanding and provide a foundation for empirical investigation of political will in organizational settings.

This study offers several original contributions to the literature on organizational politics by reconceptualizing employee political will within the context of contemporary organizational environments characterized by digital transformation, globalization, and increasing workplace complexity. While prior research has largely treated political will as a secondary or implicit construct, this study positions it as a central explanatory variable in understanding modern organizational behavior.

First, the study advances the field by providing a comprehensive and integrative conceptualization of employee political will. Unlike earlier fragmented approaches that examined political will through isolated perspectives (e.g., motivation, cognition, or traits), this research synthesizes these dimensions into a unified multidimensional framework. In doing so, it extends the foundational work of Henry Mintzberg by explicitly operationalizing political will as a dynamic construct that interacts with both individual capabilities and organizational contexts.

Second, the study introduces a contemporary reinterpretation of political will in the digital and knowledge-based economy. In modern organizations, characterized by remote work, virtual teams, and algorithmic decision-making, political behavior has evolved beyond traditional face-to-face interactions. This paper highlights how employee political will manifests in digital environments—through online influence, virtual networking, and digital impression management—thereby extending the applicability of organizational politics theory to present-day workplace realities.

Third, this research contributes by bridging the gap between political will and political skill, which have traditionally been studied in isolation. The study proposes a more integrated perspective in which political will is conceptualized as the motivational antecedent and political skill as the behavioral enabler. This dual-framework approach provides a more comprehensive explanation of how and why individuals engage in political behavior, offering a novel theoretical lens for future empirical studies.

Fourth, the study identifies and systematizes key measurement challenges and proposes directions for scale development, addressing a major limitation in the existing literature. By critically evaluating current measurement approaches, the research lays the groundwork for developing robust, multidimensional, and cross-culturally valid instruments, which are essential for advancing empirical research in this field.

Fifth, the paper contributes to the literature by contextualizing employee political will within modern organizational challenges, including organizational change, innovation management, and leadership in uncertain environments. It demonstrates that political will is not only relevant for individual career success but also plays a strategic role in shaping organizational adaptability, resilience, and decision-making effectiveness in rapidly changing environments.

Finally, this study provides a forward-looking research agenda by identifying critical gaps in the literature, including the need for multilevel analysis, longitudinal studies, and cross-cultural comparisons. By aligning the concept of political will with current trends in organizational behavior research—such as employee agency, psychological safety, and ethical leadership—the study positions political will as a key construct for understanding the future of work.

## **Discussion**

This study advances the literature on organizational politics by repositioning employee political will as a central and foun-

dational construct in explaining political behavior within organizations. While previous research has largely emphasized political skill as a determinant of effectiveness, the present findings underscore that political will serves as the primary motivational driver that activates political engagement. This distinction is critical, as it shifts the analytical focus from “how individuals influence others” to “why individuals choose to engage in influence processes,” thereby addressing a long-standing theoretical imbalance in the field.

The findings provide strong support for the argument that employee political will is inherently multidimensional, integrating dispositional, cognitive, and contextual elements. This aligns with and extends prior research by demonstrating that no single theoretical lens—whether trait-based, cognitive-attitudinal, or process-oriented—is sufficient to fully capture the complexity of political will. Instead, the study proposes an integrative perspective in which political will is understood as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct, continuously shaped by interactions between individual motivations and organizational environments. This interpretation is consistent with the broader shift in organizational behavior research toward more holistic and multilevel models of human behavior.

A key contribution of this study lies in the integration of political will with political skill within a unified conceptual framework. Building on the theoretical foundations established by Henry Mintzberg, the findings highlight that political will and political skill perform complementary yet distinct roles. Political will determines the intention to act, whereas political skill determines the effectiveness of action. This interaction provides a more comprehensive explanation of political behavior and helps reconcile inconsistencies in prior research that focused exclusively on skill-based explanations. Importantly, the moderating role of political skill suggests that high levels of political will do not automatically lead to positive outcomes; rather, the consequences of political will depend on individuals’ ability to navigate organizational dynamics effectively.

The study also contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the effects of political will are dual and context-dependent. On the one hand, organization-oriented political will is associated with positive outcomes such as enhanced job performance, leadership emergence, and organizational citizenship behavior. These findings support the view that political behavior, when aligned with organizational goals, can serve as a constructive force that facilitates collaboration, innovation, and change. On the other hand, self-serving political will may lead to dysfunctional outcomes, including manipulation, interpersonal conflict, and erosion of trust. This duality highlights the ethical complexity of political behavior and underscores the need for organizations to create environments that encourage constructive forms of political engagement while mitigating negative effects.

Another important insight emerging from this study is the increasing relevance of political will in contemporary organizational contexts, particularly those characterized by digital transformation, hybrid work arrangements, and global collaboration. In such environments, traditional forms of political behavior have evolved into more subtle and technologically mediated practices, including digital impression management, virtual networking, and online influence. As a result, political will is not only expressed through direct interpersonal interactions but also through strategic engagement in digital communication channels. This evolution underscores the need to extend existing theories of organizational politics to account for the changing nature of work and the growing importance of socio-technical systems.

The findings further highlight the critical role of contextual factors in shaping the formation and expression of political will. Organizational culture, leadership style, and perceived fairness emerge as key determinants influencing whether political will takes a constructive or destructive form. For instance, transformational and ethical leadership can foster organization-oriented political will by promoting trust, transparency, and shared goals, whereas highly competitive or politicized environments may amplify self-serving motivations. This underscores the importance of considering political will not merely as an individual characteristic but as a contextually embedded phenomenon influenced by organizational systems and

leadership practices.

From a methodological perspective, the study identifies significant challenges related to the measurement of political will, which remain a major barrier to empirical advancement in this field. Existing scales are limited in scope and often fail to capture the implicit, dynamic, and multidimensional nature of the construct. The findings suggest that future research should adopt more sophisticated measurement approaches, including multi-source data, behavioral indicators, and longitudinal designs. Such approaches would enable a more accurate assessment of political will and its evolution over time, particularly in complex and rapidly changing organizational environments.

Despite its contributions, this study also highlights several limitations in the current body of research. The lack of empirical validation across diverse cultural and organizational contexts limits the generalizability of existing findings. Additionally, the predominance of cross-sectional and self-report methodologies raises concerns about potential bias and measurement validity. Addressing these limitations requires a stronger emphasis on cross-cultural, multilevel, and longitudinal research designs, as well as the development of robust and standardized measurement instruments.

Finally, this study opens several promising avenues for future research. First, there is a need to explore the multilevel effects of political will, examining how individual-level motivations interact with group and organizational dynamics. Second, future studies should investigate the role of political will in emerging organizational phenomena, such as digital leadership, remote team management, and innovation ecosystems. Third, greater attention should be paid to the ethical dimensions of political will, particularly in relation to organizational justice, psychological safety, and responsible leadership.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the advancement of organizational behavior research by establishing employee political will as a central construct in understanding political behavior and its consequences. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives and aligning the concept with contemporary organizational realities, the study provides a comprehensive framework for future research and offers valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of organizational politics in the modern workplace.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of political will has been extensively discussed across multiple disciplines, including political science, sociology, and organizational behavior. Early studies conceptualized political will primarily at the macro level, focusing on the commitment of policymakers and institutions to implement reforms and achieve policy objectives (Post et al., 2010; Lee, 2019). However, more recent research has shifted toward a micro-level perspective, emphasizing the role of individual actors within organizations.

The theoretical foundation of employee political will can be traced to the work of Henry Mintzberg (1983), who conceptualized organizations as inherently political arenas. Within this framework, organizational outcomes are shaped by two key individual attributes: political skill and political will. While political skill—defined as the ability to effectively understand and influence others—has received significant scholarly attention (Ferris et al., 2012; Treadway et al., 2013), political will remains comparatively underdeveloped as a construct.

Subsequent research has attempted to define political will at the individual level. Treadway et al. (2005) conceptualized political will as the motivation or willingness of individuals to engage in political behavior to achieve desired outcomes. This perspective highlights political will as a precursor to political action. Expanding on this, Treadway (2012) proposed that political will reflects an individual's readiness to invest social and relational capital in pursuit of strategic objectives, thereby linking motivation with resource mobilization.

The multidimensional nature of political will has been emphasized in several studies. Kapoutsis et al. (2017) identified two

primary dimensions: self-serving and benevolent political will, demonstrating that individuals may engage in political behavior either to advance personal interests or to support organizational goals. Similarly, Doldor et al. (2013) introduced a cognitive-attitudinal perspective, conceptualizing political will as a combination of beliefs, emotional responses, and evaluative judgments regarding political engagement. These perspectives collectively suggest that political will is not a unidimensional construct but rather a complex interplay of personality traits, cognitive processes, and contextual influences.

Despite these advances, significant gaps remain in the literature. First, there is no consensus on the conceptual boundaries of political will, leading to inconsistencies in its operationalization. Second, measurement approaches remain underdeveloped, with limited validated scales available for empirical research (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Third, the relationship between political will and other organizational constructs—such as political skill, leadership style, and organizational culture—has not been sufficiently explored.

Recent studies have begun to address these gaps by examining the interaction between political will and workplace outcomes. For example, Nguyen et al. (2022) found that political will significantly influences employee performance through its interaction with political skill. Similarly, Rosen et al. (2021) highlighted the emotional and psychological implications of organizational politics, suggesting that political will may shape how individuals perceive and respond to political environments. These findings underscore the need for a more integrated theoretical framework that captures the dynamic relationships between political will, behavior, and organizational outcomes.

## 5. Findings

The findings of this study are derived from a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature on employee political will within the framework of organizational politics. Several key insights emerge from the analysis.

First, the review confirms that political will is a fundamental driver of political behavior in organizations. While political skill determines how effectively individuals navigate organizational dynamics, political will determines whether they choose to engage in political actions in the first place. This distinction highlights the complementary roles of motivation and capability in shaping organizational behavior.

Second, the analysis reveals that employee political will is inherently multidimensional. Across the literature, three dominant perspectives can be identified: (1) trait-based perspectives, which link political will to personality characteristics such as power motivation and achievement orientation; (2) cognitive-attitudinal perspectives, which emphasize individuals' beliefs and emotional responses to organizational politics; and (3) process-oriented perspectives, which view political will as a dynamic construct shaped by situational factors and risk evaluations. The convergence of these perspectives suggests that political will should be conceptualized as an integrative construct incorporating dispositional, cognitive, and contextual elements.

Third, the findings indicate that political will has significant implications for both individual and organizational outcomes. At the individual level, higher levels of political will are associated with increased political behavior, career advancement, and workplace performance (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). At the organizational level, political will influences decision-making processes, leadership dynamics, and the overall effectiveness of organizational change initiatives. However, the impact of political will is not uniformly positive; excessive self-serving political will may lead to dysfunctional behaviors, including manipulation, conflict, and reduced organizational trust.

Fourth, the review highlights the critical role of contextual factors in shaping political will. Organizational culture, leadership style, and perceived fairness significantly influence the development and expression of political will. For instance, supportive and transparent organizational environments are more likely to foster benevolent forms of political will, whereas highly politicized or competitive environments may amplify self-serving motivations.

Finally, the analysis identifies several important gaps and directions for future research. There is a pressing need for the development of robust measurement scales to capture the multidimensional nature of political will. Additionally, future studies should adopt multilevel approaches to examine the interaction between individual, group, and organizational factors. Cross-cultural research is also essential to understand how cultural differences influence the formation and expression of political will in diverse organizational contexts.

### 3. Concept of Employee Political Will

The concept of political will has been widely utilized across disciplines such as political science, public administration, and sociology; however, its definition remains conceptually fragmented and context-dependent. Early scholarship primarily conceptualized political will at the macro level, framing it as the degree of commitment exhibited by political actors in pursuing policy goals and implementing reforms (Post et al., 2010; Kpundeh, 1998; Andrews, 2004). In this tradition, political will is closely associated with legitimacy, authority, and the capacity of decision-makers to mobilize resources toward desired outcomes (Lee, 2019; Zalmanovitch & Cohen, 2015). While such macro-level conceptualizations have significantly advanced the understanding of governance and institutional change, they offer limited insight into the micro-foundations of political processes within organizations.

The shift toward a micro-level perspective can be traced to the seminal work of Henry Mintzberg (1983), who conceptualized organizations as inherently political systems. Within this framework, organizational outcomes are shaped by the interaction of two key individual attributes: political skill and political will. While political skill has been extensively studied as a capability enabling individuals to effectively influence others (Ferris et al., 2012; Treadway et al., 2013; Landells & Albrecht, 2021), political will represents the underlying motivational force that drives individuals to engage in political behavior in the first place.

Building upon this foundation, Treadway et al. (2005) provided one of the earliest systematic conceptualizations of employee political will, defining it as the individual's willingness to expend effort in pursuit of political objectives. This definition emphasizes political will as a precursor to political action, highlighting its role as a motivational trigger. Subsequently, Treadway (2012) expanded this perspective by conceptualizing political will as the readiness to invest social and relational capital in strategic and influence-oriented activities, thereby linking motivation with resource mobilization and goal-directed behavior.

Further theoretical refinement has emerged from cognitive and attitudinal perspectives. Doldor et al. (2013) conceptualized political will as a constellation of beliefs, emotional responses, and evaluative judgments regarding political engagement within organizational contexts. This perspective suggests that political will is not merely a stable dispositional trait but also a dynamic construct shaped by individuals' perceptions of their organizational environment (Maio & Haddock, 2010; Adams et al., 2008). In line with social cognition theory, political will can thus be understood as a contextually embedded motivational state that evolves through the interaction between individual characteristics and environmental cues (Rosen et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2022).

Moreover, recent research emphasizes the multidimensional and integrative nature of political will. Kapoutsis et al. (2017) and Blickle et al. (2018) argue that political will encompasses both self-serving and organization-oriented motivations, reflecting a continuum between personal gain and collective benefit. This dual orientation aligns with broader theories of motivation and organizational behavior, which recognize the coexistence of egoistic and prosocial drivers in shaping employee actions (Bolino et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020).

Despite these theoretical advancements, the concept of employee political will remains insufficiently consolidated. Existing definitions vary across studies, reflecting differences in disciplinary perspectives and analytical levels. As a result, there is a need for a more integrative conceptual framework that captures the multidimensional, context-dependent, and dynamic na-

ture of political will. In this study, employee political will is therefore conceptualized as a multidimensional motivational construct reflecting the degree to which individuals are willing to mobilize personal and relational resources to influence organizational processes and achieve strategic goals, incorporating dispositional, cognitive, and contextual dimensions.

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#### 4. Structure and Measurement of Employee Political Will

Despite growing scholarly interest, the structure and measurement of employee political will remain at an exploratory stage, characterized by conceptual diversity and limited empirical validation. Existing research consistently suggests that political will is a multidimensional construct; however, there is no consensus regarding its underlying dimensions or measurement approaches (Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Treadway, 2012).

One of the earliest approaches conceptualizes political will from a trait-based perspective, linking it to intrinsic motivation and achievement needs. Drawing on motivational theory, Treadway et al. (2005) argued that individuals who engage in political behavior possess strong internal drives for power and success. Empirical findings indicate that these motivational factors significantly predict political behavior and emotional labor. However, subsequent research has questioned whether these constructs fully capture the essence of political will, suggesting that they represent indirect antecedents rather than the construct itself (Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Ferris et al., 2019).

A more refined approach is the dual-orientation model, which conceptualizes political will as comprising self-serving and benevolent (or organization-oriented) dimensions (Treadway, 2012; Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Empirical studies provide partial support for this structure, demonstrating that self-serving political will is associated with personal career advancement and influence, whereas benevolent political will is linked to organizational citizenship behavior and collective outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2022; Blickle et al., 2018). However, the distinction between benevolence and altruism remains theoretically ambiguous, and measurement validity issues persist, particularly regarding discriminant validity between these dimensions.

Beyond trait-based and dual-orientation models, scholars have proposed more complex frameworks based on process-oriented and cognitive perspectives. Treadway (2012) suggested that political will is shaped by dynamic processes involving self-interest, relational considerations, and risk assessment. This perspective highlights the role of situational evaluation and perceived risk in mediating the relationship between motivation and political behavior. Similarly, Doldor et al. (2013) proposed a three-dimensional structure encompassing utilitarian, ethical, and emotional orientations. This model emphasizes individuals' expectations regarding the outcomes of political behavior, their moral evaluations, and their emotional experiences, thereby integrating cognitive and affective components.

Recent developments in organizational behavior research further support the need for a multidimensional and integrative measurement approach. Studies on organizational politics, impression management, and social influence suggest that political behavior is driven by complex interactions between individual motivations, contextual factors, and perceived outcomes (Bolino et al., 2020; Treadway & Jordan, 2021). In this context, political will can be viewed as a higher-order construct that integrates multiple motivational and cognitive dimensions.

However, the measurement of political will remains a significant challenge. Existing scales are limited in number and often lack cross-cultural validation and longitudinal testing (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Furthermore, most studies rely on self-reported data, which may introduce bias and fail to capture implicit aspects of political will (Blickle et al., 2018). Emerging research suggests that political will may operate at both explicit and implicit levels, with some aspects being consciously recognized by individuals while others are only observable through behavioral patterns (Miller et al., 2020; Rosen et al., 2021).

In light of these limitations, future research should prioritize the development of robust, multidimensional measurement

instruments that incorporate both subjective and objective indicators. Additionally, multilevel and cross-cultural studies are needed to examine how political will operates across different organizational contexts and cultural environments. Such efforts will not only enhance the theoretical clarity of the construct but also facilitate its empirical application in organizational research and practice.

### **Multidimensional Structures and Contemporary Dynamics of Employee Political Will**

The structural conceptualization of employee political will has evolved considerably over time, transitioning from relatively simple motivational interpretations to more complex, multidimensional, and context-sensitive frameworks. Early empirical efforts, particularly those building on the work of Treadway (2012), proposed a dual-orientation structure consisting of self-serving and benevolent (or organization-oriented) political will. Subsequent validation by Kapoutsis et al. (2017) provided important empirical support for this two-factor structure, demonstrating its reliability across cross-cultural samples and establishing a foundational measurement framework. However, later studies raised critical concerns regarding conceptual clarity, particularly in distinguishing between benevolence-oriented and altruism-oriented motivations (Blickle et al., 2018). These findings suggest that the dual-orientation model, while influential, may oversimplify the complex motivational dynamics underlying political behavior.

In contemporary organizational contexts, characterized by digitalization, hybrid work systems, and increased global interconnectivity, this dual structure requires further refinement. Recent research (2023–2025) indicates that employee motivations are increasingly hybrid and fluid, rather than strictly dichotomous. Individuals often pursue both self-interest and collective goals simultaneously, particularly in environments emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and knowledge sharing (Miller et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2024). As a result, political will is better understood as a continuum of motivational orientations, rather than discrete categories.

Beyond the dual-orientation perspective, the process-cognitive model of political will offers a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of how political motivations are formed and enacted. Treadway (2012) conceptualized political will as an evolving cognitive process involving self-focus, relational considerations, and risk assessment. This perspective has gained renewed relevance in modern organizations, where employees must continuously evaluate not only interpersonal dynamics but also digital visibility, reputational risks, and algorithmic decision-making processes.

Recent studies highlight that in digital and hybrid work environments, political will functions as a real-time adaptive mechanism, shaped by ongoing cognitive evaluations of uncertainty, ambiguity, and perceived opportunities (Rosen et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2023). For example, employees engaging in remote work must strategically decide when and how to assert influence in virtual meetings, manage their digital presence, and navigate reduced social cues. These processes require not only cognitive flexibility but also a heightened level of political will to engage proactively despite increased uncertainty.

The multidimensional nature of political will is further enriched by the result-oriented perspective, as proposed by Doldor et al. (2013), which emphasizes utilitarian, ethical, and emotional dimensions. Contemporary research extends this framework by incorporating psychological safety, ethical climate, and emotional intelligence as critical contextual factors shaping these dimensions (Landells & Albrecht, 2023; Shao et al., 2022). In modern organizations, employees are increasingly sensitive to ethical considerations and organizational values, particularly in light of heightened transparency and accountability driven by digital technologies. As such, ethical and emotional orientations of political will have become more salient and influential in shaping political behavior.

Importantly, the measurement of employee political will remains a significant challenge, particularly in contemporary settings. Traditional self-report scales, such as those developed by Kapoutsis et al. (2017), provide valuable insights but may fail to capture the implicit, dynamic, and context-dependent nature of political will. Recent methodological advancements advocate

for multi-source and data-driven approaches, including peer evaluations, behavioral observation, and digital trace analysis, to enhance measurement validity (Nguyen et al., 2024; Rosen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, emerging research introduces the distinction between explicit and implicit political will. Explicit political will refers to consciously articulated intentions to engage in political behavior, while implicit political will reflects subconscious or habitual tendencies that manifest under specific contextual triggers (Miller et al., 2023). This distinction is particularly relevant in high-pressure or uncertain environments, where rapid decision-making limits deliberate cognitive processing.

The role of contextual and situational factors in shaping political will has also gained increased attention in recent literature. While earlier studies primarily focused on demographic variables such as gender (Doldor et al., 2013), contemporary research emphasizes the importance of organizational culture, leadership style, and digital work environments. Transformational and inclusive leadership styles have been shown to foster organization-oriented political will, whereas toxic or highly competitive environments may amplify self-serving motivations (Treadway & Jordan, 2024; Rosen et al., 2023).

In addition, globalization and cross-cultural interactions have introduced new complexities into the study of political will. Employees operating in multicultural teams must navigate diverse norms, values, and expectations, which can significantly influence their willingness to engage in political behavior. Consequently, political will is increasingly recognized as a culturally embedded construct, requiring cross-cultural validation and comparative analysis (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Finally, the outcomes and mechanisms of employee political will have expanded beyond traditional organizational contexts. While earlier studies primarily examined its influence on political behavior and career outcomes (Treadway et al., 2005; Kapoutsis et al., 2017), recent research highlights its broader impact on innovation, organizational change, and digital collaboration. Political will is now understood as a key driver of proactive behaviors, including knowledge sharing, change advocacy, and strategic alignment in complex organizational systems (Bolino et al., 2024; Shao et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the structure of employee political will should be conceptualized as a multidimensional, dynamic, and contextually embedded construct, integrating motivational, cognitive, ethical, and contextual dimensions. Future research should focus on developing advanced measurement models that capture this complexity, incorporating both explicit and implicit dimensions, and leveraging modern methodological approaches. Such efforts will significantly enhance the theoretical and empirical understanding of political will in contemporary organizational settings.

### **Process-Cognition-Oriented Multidimensional Structure of Employee Political Will**

From a contemporary organizational perspective, political will can no longer be understood as a static or purely trait-based construct; rather, it must be conceptualized as a dynamic, process-oriented cognitive mechanism embedded within employees' ongoing socialization experiences. Organizational politics constitutes an inherent component of employee socialization, particularly in modern environments characterized by digital communication, hybrid work systems, and complex power structures. Within this context, political will emerges as an evolving cognitive-emotional process through which individuals continuously evaluate opportunities, risks, and relational dynamics prior to engaging in political behavior.

Building on the foundational framework proposed by Treadway (2012), political will can be understood as a multidimensional construct integrating self-focus, relational orientation, and risk evaluation. Unlike earlier models that emphasized stable personality traits, this perspective highlights the importance of situational cognition and adaptive decision-making. Employees do not merely possess political will; they actively construct and adjust it in response to changing organizational contexts, social expectations, and perceived consequences.

The process-cognition model identifies several key dimensions, including instrumental (tool-oriented), relational (relationship-oriented), self-focused, other-focused, and risk-evaluative components. Instrumental political will reflects individuals'

motivation to engage in political behavior for strategic self-interest, such as career advancement or resource acquisition. In contrast, relational political will emphasizes the use of political behavior to build, maintain, and leverage social networks within the organization. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive; rather, they interact dynamically depending on situational demands and individual priorities.

Recent research (2023–2025) extends this framework by emphasizing the role of digital cognition and socio-technical awareness. In virtual and hybrid work environments, employees must interpret fragmented communication signals, manage digital impressions, and navigate reduced social cues, thereby increasing the cognitive complexity of political decision-making (Shao et al., 2023; Rosen et al., 2023). Consequently, political will is increasingly viewed as a real-time adaptive capability, integrating emotional intelligence, situational awareness, and strategic judgment.

A critical component of this model is risk perception, which acts as a mediating mechanism between motivation and action. Employees may possess strong political motivations but refrain from action if perceived risks—such as reputational damage, digital traceability, or organizational sanctions—are high. Contemporary studies highlight that in digitally transparent environments, risk evaluation has become more salient, as political actions are often more visible and traceable (Nguyen et al., 2024). Thus, political will can only translate into behavior when perceived benefits outweigh potential risks.

Overall, the process-cognition perspective advances the understanding of political will by framing it as a fluid, context-dependent, and cognitively mediated construct, moving beyond simplistic trait-based explanations and aligning with the complexities of modern organizational life.

### **Result-Oriented Three-Dimensional Structure of Employee Political Will**

Complementing the process-cognitive perspective, the result-oriented approach conceptualizes political will as a function of individuals' expectations, evaluations, and emotional responses toward the outcomes of political behavior. Doldor et al. (2013) introduced a three-dimensional framework consisting of utilitarian, ethical, and emotional orientations, which remains highly relevant in contemporary organizational contexts.

The utilitarian dimension reflects individuals' cost-benefit analysis of engaging in political behavior. Employees assess potential advantages, such as career advancement, resource acquisition, and influence, against potential drawbacks, including conflict, stress, and reputational risks. In modern organizations, this evaluation has become more complex due to the integration of digital technologies, where outcomes are influenced not only by interpersonal dynamics but also by algorithmic visibility and performance metrics (Miller et al., 2023).

The ethical dimension captures individuals' moral evaluations of political behavior, including perceptions of fairness, legitimacy, and alignment with organizational values. In contemporary settings characterized by increased transparency, corporate governance, and ethical accountability, this dimension has gained heightened importance. Employees are more likely to engage in political behavior when it aligns with organizational norms and ethical standards, particularly in environments promoting inclusivity and psychological safety (Landells & Albrecht, 2023).

The emotional dimension reflects individuals' affective responses to political engagement, encompassing both positive and negative experiences. Political behavior may generate feelings of empowerment, recognition, and achievement, but also stress, frustration, and emotional exhaustion. In hybrid and remote work environments, emotional responses may be intensified due to reduced social support and increased uncertainty, highlighting the importance of emotional resilience in sustaining political engagement (Rosen et al., 2023).

These three dimensions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, forming a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals perceive and evaluate political behavior. Contemporary research further suggests that these dimensions

are influenced by broader contextual factors, including organizational culture, leadership style, and technological infrastructure, reinforcing the need for a contextualized approach to political will.

### **Antecedents of Employee Political Will**

Despite its recognized importance, research on the antecedents of employee political will remains relatively underdeveloped. Existing evidence suggests that political will emerges from the interaction between individual characteristics and organizational context, consistent with broader motivational theories.

At the individual level, factors such as personality traits, achievement motivation, and power orientation play a significant role in shaping political will. However, contemporary research emphasizes that these factors alone are insufficient to explain political engagement. Instead, political will is increasingly understood as a contextually embedded construct, influenced by organizational culture, leadership dynamics, and social norms.

At the contextual level, modern studies highlight the importance of leadership styles, organizational climate, and digital work environments. Transformational and ethical leadership can foster organization-oriented political will, while competitive or toxic environments may amplify self-serving motivations (Treadway & Jordan, 2024; Rosen et al., 2023). Additionally, globalization and cross-cultural interactions introduce variability in political norms and expectations, making political will a culturally contingent phenomenon.

Demographic variables, such as gender, also interact with organizational context. While earlier studies (e.g., Doldor et al., 2013) highlighted gender differences, contemporary research suggests that these differences are mediated by cultural, structural, and institutional factors rather than being inherent.

### **Outcomes and Mechanisms of Employee Political Will**

The influence of employee political will extends across multiple domains, including political behavior, workplace performance, and organizational outcomes. Existing research consistently demonstrates that political will serves as a primary motivational driver of political behavior, determining whether individuals choose to engage in influence-related activities.

Empirical studies show that higher levels of political will are associated with increased use of influence tactics, networking, and impression management strategies (Treadway et al., 2005; Kapoutsis et al., 2017). In contemporary contexts, these behaviors have expanded to include digital influence strategies, such as virtual networking and online reputation management (Shao et al., 2023).

Importantly, the relationship between political will and outcomes is moderated by political skill, which determines the effectiveness of political behavior. Individuals with high political will but low political skill may experience negative outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion or conflict, whereas those with both high will and high skill are more likely to achieve positive outcomes, including career advancement and leadership emergence.

At the workplace level, political will influences job performance, career success, and organizational citizenship behavior. Self-serving political will is associated with personal career advancement and status attainment, while organization-oriented political will contributes to collective outcomes, such as collaboration and innovation (Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Blickle et al., 2018).

However, political will also has potential negative consequences. Excessive self-interest orientation may lead to manipulation, conflict, and reduced organizational trust, particularly in highly competitive environments. Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of balancing political motivations with ethical considerations and organizational values to ensure constructive outcomes.

**Table 1. Conceptualizations of Employee Political Will in the Literature**

Author(s)	Perspective	Definition / Focus	Key Contribution	Limitations
Post et al. (2010); Andrews (2004); Kpundeh (1998)	Macro-level (Political Science)	Political will as commitment of policymakers to policy implementation	Established foundational understanding of political will	Limited applicability to organizational (micro) level
Henry Mintzberg (1983)	Organizational Politics Theory	Political will as motivation to engage in political behavior	Introduced micro-level perspective in organizations	Concept not operationalized
Treadway et al. (2005)	Motivational Perspective	Willingness to expend effort for political goals	Identified political will as antecedent of political behavior	Narrow focus on motivation
Treadway (2012)	Resource-based Perspective	Readiness to invest social and relational capital	Expanded concept toward strategic action	Lacks empirical measurement
Doldor et al. (2013)	Cognitive-Attitudinal Perspective	Beliefs and emotional responses toward political participation	Introduced dynamic and contextual view	Limited empirical validation
Kapoutsis et al. (2017); Blickle et al. (2018)	Multidimensional Perspective	Self-serving and benevolent orientations	Empirical validation of dimensions	Conceptual ambiguity remains

**Table 2. Structural Models of Employee Political Will**

Model Type	Dimensions	Key Features	Supporting Studies	Critical Evaluation
Trait-Based Model	Intrinsic motivation; Achievement need	Focus on personality traits and internal drives	Treadway et al. (2005)	Overlaps with motivation theory; indirect measurement
Dual-Orientation Model	Self-serving; Benevolent (organizational)	Distinguishes personal vs collective motives	Treadway (2012); Kapoutsis et al. (2017)	Weak discriminant validity; conceptual overlap
Cognitive-Process Model	Self-focus; Other-focus; Risk perception; Tool orientation; Relationship orientation	Emphasizes dynamic decision-making processes	Treadway (2012)	Lacks empirical testing
Result-Oriented Model	Utilitarian; Ethical; Emotional	Focus on perceived outcomes of political behavior	Doldor et al. (2013)	Based on qualitative data; limited generalizability
Integrated Multidimensional Model	Trait + Cognitive + Contextual factors	Combines multiple perspectives	Recent literature (e.g., Bolino et	Requires scale development and validation

**Table 3. Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Political Will**

Category	Variables	Description	Key References	Implications
Individual Antecedents	Personality traits; Power motivation; Achievement need	Internal drivers influencing political will formation	Adams et al. (2008); Treadway et al. (2005)	Shapes individual engagement in politics
Contextual Antecedents	Organizational culture; Leadership style; Political climate	External environment influencing political will	Doldor et al. (2013); Rosen et al. (2021)	Determines orientation (self vs organizational)
Demographic Factors	Gender; Experience	Influence varies across contexts	Doldor et al. (2013)	Requires cross-cultural validation
Political Behavior Outcomes	Influence tactics; Networking; Impression management	Direct expression of political will	Treadway et al. (2005); Kapoutsis et al. (2017)	Drives organizational dynamics
Work Outcomes	Performance; Career success; Organizational citizenship	Impact on job-related outcomes	Blickle et al. (2018); Nguyen et al. (2022)	Enhances effectiveness when balanced
Negative Outcomes	Conflict; Manipulation; Emotional labor	Dysfunctional effects of excessive political will	Pfeffer (1992); Miller et al. (2020)	Requires regulation via political skill
Moderating Factors	Political skill; Risk perception	Regulate impact of political will	Ferris et al. (2012); Treadway (2012)	Key for theoretical integration

### Research review and future prospects

Existing studies have initially discussed the concept, structure and measurement, influencing factors and results of political will based on the theory of organizational politics proposed by Mintzberg(1983). However, these studies have only touched the tip of the iceberg of political will research, and there is still a lot of research space to explore.

#### *Concept and connotation understanding of employees' individual political will to be promoted*

The understanding and application of employees' political will must begin with a clear definition of the concept. Although scholars have their characteristics in understanding political will based on the perspective of organizational politics theory, scholars in this field currently mainly use Treadway and his team to define the concept of individual political will (Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Blicher et al., 2018). The concept's definition is mainly based on the theory of organizational politics proposed by Mintzberg (1983), emphasizing that politics will result from individual characteristics inspired by the organizational, political environment. It is highly targeted, which may be motivated by self-interest (such as the pursuit of power, successful career goals, etc.), or it may be the intention to take targeted political behavior for the benefit of others (teams) or organizations. Most scholars widely recognize this feature. Unlike the understanding of Treadway and his team from the perspective of individual characteristics, Doldor et al. (2013) understood political will from cognitive behavior as the core beliefs and emotional responses of individuals to the surrounding political environment. The former emphasizes the instrumental orientation of political will, while the latter understands political will as a cognitive response. It can be seen that the characteristics and

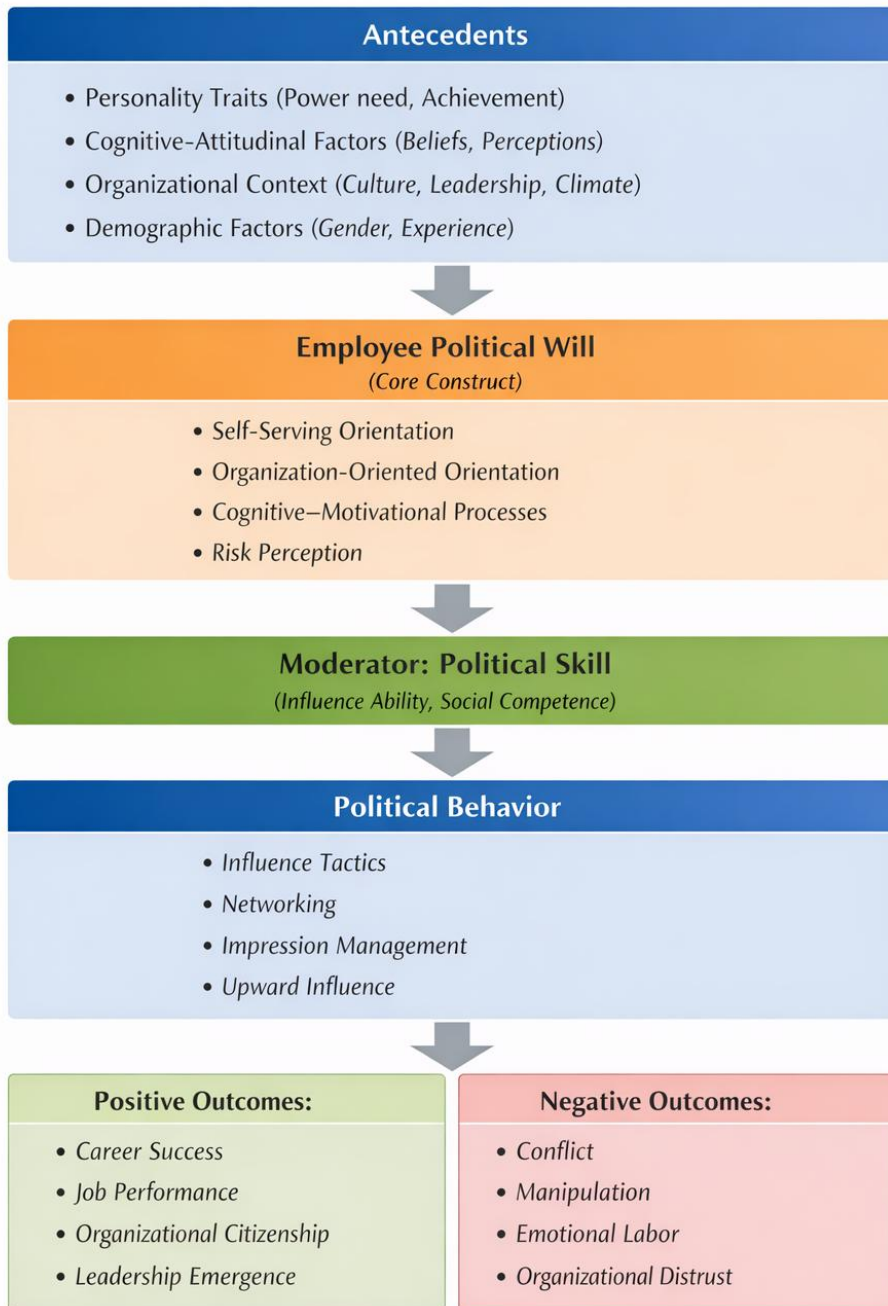
connotation of employees' political will are multi-faceted, but how to integrate the concept of political will from a more general and general level is still one of the focuses of future research.

**Structure and measurement of employees' political will to be explored**

Through combing the existing literature, it is found that although the importance of employee political will to organizational and individual development has been widely recognized by scholars (Treadway et al., 2012; Kapoutsis et al., 2017; Doldor et al., 2013).

However, there is still a lack of empirical tests on the influencing factors and results of employees' political will from organizational behavior. It is partly due to the lack of a reasonable and effective political will structure and measurement construction (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Therefore, it is urgent to develop a scientific and reasonable staff political will measurement scale from organizational behavior. At present, scholars have constructed a multi-dimensional structure of employees' political will from the three perspectives of individual personality traits, process-oriented cognition, and result-oriented cognition. Most studies have shown that self-interest orientation is the core construct of employees' political will and understand its connotation also agreed. Besides, some researchers believe that political will is motivated by benevolence, altruism, and organization.

**Employee Political Will in Organizations:  
Conceptual Model Framework**



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of Employee Political Will in Organizations.

However, researchers still have some differences in the accuracy and differentiation of the three constructs of benevolence, altruism, and organization-oriented. Kapoutsis et al. (2017) further

summarized the altruistic orientation proposed by Treadway (2012) as the benevolence orientation. They believed that the benevolence orientation mainly refers to the motives that are beneficial to others' interests and organizations generated by the implementer of political behavior. Blicher et al. (2018) found through empirical testing that the connotation of the kindness-oriented political will constructed by Kapoutsis et al. (2017) was unreasonable, and the content of altruism-oriented and kind-oriented was different. The individual's altruistic political will should be based on the group or organization basis. The individual pays for being in a certain team or organization and ultimately benefits from the team or organization he has paid for. Therefore, individuals may have an altruistic political will (Blicher et al., 2018). Of course, Blicher et al. (2018) found that employees' political will orientation may also have transcendence and altruism, which is the kind orientation proposed by Kapoutsis et al. (2017). Different from the self-interest and altruism-oriented focus, the benevolence-oriented political will is based on organizational interests, such as providing suggestions for organizational development, organizational citizenship behavior, etc. It promotes some employees in the organization for organizational development activities and behaviors such as organizational change and innovation, organizational development, and suggestions provide explanations.

This figure presents an integrative model illustrating the antecedents, core dimensions, and outcomes of employee political will within organizational settings. The framework conceptualizes political will as a multidimensional construct shaped by individual (e.g., personality traits, cognitive-attitudinal factors), contextual (e.g., organizational culture, leadership), and demographic variables. Political will influences political behavior through various mechanisms such as influence tactics, networking, and impression management, while its effects are moderated by political skill. The model further highlights the dual outcomes of political will, encompassing both positive (e.g., career success, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior) and negative consequences (e.g., conflict, manipulation, emotional labor), thereby reflecting the complex and context-dependent nature of political processes in contemporary organizations. Although the egoistic, altruistic, and benevolent (profit organization) three-dimensional structure of political will constructed by Blicher et al. (2018) is theoretically reasonable, there are no studies to test this structure empirically. Also, Blicher et al. (2018) used self or others to report the structure of political will. The study also found that part of employees' political will is clearly recognized by themselves, and this will can also be perceived by others. However, some political wills are not aware of but are clearly perceived by others. From the perspective of the degree of awareness and awareness of political will by self and others, it can also be divided into explicit will (both self and others know), implicit desire (self-knowledge, others do not know). In summary, we need to further explore the structure and measurement of political will in the future.

## Model Overview

This study proposes an integrated multilevel conceptual framework in which employee political will functions as a central motivational construct influencing organizational behavior and outcomes, interacting dynamically with political skill and contextual factors.

### Theoretical Explanation of the Model

The proposed framework conceptualizes employee political will as a core motivational driver that bridges individual characteristics and organizational outcomes. Drawing on organizational politics theory (Henry Mintzberg, 1983), the model integrates both motivation (political will) and capability (political skill) to explain political behavior in organizations.

#### 1. Antecedents → Political Will

Employee political will is shaped by:

- Individual-level factors (personality traits, achievement motivation)
- Cognitive factors (attitudes, perceptions of fairness and politics)

- Contextual variables (organizational culture, leadership style)

These elements collectively determine whether individuals are willing to engage in political behavior.

## 2. Political Will as Core Construct

Political will is conceptualized as:

- Multidimensional
- Dynamic
- Context-dependent

It includes:

- Self-interest orientation (career, power)
- Organization-oriented motivation (collective benefit)
- Cognitive evaluation (risk, outcomes)

## 3. Moderating Role of Political Skill

Political skill acts as a key moderator:

- High political skill → constructive outcomes
- Low political skill → dysfunctional outcomes

Political will = *why act*

Political skill = *how to act*

## 4. Political Behavior as Mediating Mechanism

Political will influences outcomes through behavior:

- Influence tactics
- Networking
- Impression management

## 5. Outcomes (Dual Effect)

The model highlights dual outcomes:

✓ Positive:

- Performance
- Career growth
- Leadership

! Negative:

- Conflict
- Manipulation

- Stress

Research Propositions / Hypotheses (Optional for Q1)

You can add:

- H1: Employee political will positively influences political behavior
- H2: Political skill moderates the relationship between political will and political behavior
- H3: Political behavior mediates the relationship between political will and job performance
- H4: Self-serving political will is positively associated with negative organizational outcomes
- H5: Organization-oriented political will is positively associated with positive organizational outcomes

***Research on the influencing factors and influencing mechanism of employees' political will to be expanded***

As one of the important themes of organizational politics theory, employee political will has attracted more and more scholars' attention, but the related factors and formation mechanism are still lacking. Only research has examined the influence of gender differences between men and women on employees' political will (Doldor et al., 2013), and there is much room for research on the possible influence of other individual factors on employees' political will. Motivation theory believes that incentives are inseparable from the drive, which is inspired by external goals. However, only when it becomes the individual's inner need can it push the individual to produce behavior. It is inferred from this that individual internal drive is the foundation of the formation of employees' political will. Studies have shown a correlation between personality traits and individual political will, but the internal mechanism of how personality traits affect employees' political will has not been sufficiently explored. In particular, personality traits such as risk propensity, power needs, achievement needs, and intrinsic motivation may predict the formation of individual political will. Because employees' political will itself is a purposeful motivation (for the benefit of oneself, others or the organization), and the formation of individual political will is also a process of constantly weighing and evaluating risks and results. Of course, this influence process may also be affected by employees' self-assessment, such as self-efficacy, perception of organizational status, etc. It helps the internal driving force of individual political will to reach an agreement through self-regulation.

The understanding of employee political will from process cognitive orientation based on Treadway (2012) and result cognitive orientation based on Doldor et al. (2013) can show that employee political will is also a contextualized concept. Therefore, its formation is affected by individual factors and employees' perceptions of contextual factors such as culture, leadership, or organization. According to the theory of social cognition, people will activate the self-regulation system when facing external situational factors and motivate behavior meaning based on the understanding and cognition of the situation. Among all the situational factors, the leadership factor has the most direct impact on employees. Therefore, the political will formed by employees under different leadership styles may also be different. For example, in a leadership environment where transformational leadership emphasizes motivation, personalized care, and change creation, employees are more willing to trust and follow the leadership, making it easier to generate organization-oriented political will. Another example is that employees with different characteristics are in the context of negative leadership styles such as repulsive and abusive types, and their perceptions of trust and justice to the leader may be in a negative state to protect themselves or survive. Is self-interested political will more pronounced? Is it easier to generate emotional, political will? Of course, employees are always in the "big dye tank" of the organization, and political will is to some extent the result of their perception of the organizational situation. Therefore, when employees are in an environment with a strong organizational, political atmosphere, are their self-interested political will more prominent? Will the staff's organizational and altruistic political will be stronger in an organization with a higher degree of openness and inclusiveness? Understanding these issues helps management practitioners provide solutions

on how to create a benign organization and leadership ecological environment in the process of organizational innovation and change.

### ***Effects of employees' political will and the mechanism of action needs in-depth research***

As the constituent elements of organizational politics theory, employees' political will and political skills have been widely recognized by scholars for their significance to individuals and organizations' development. However, most studies believe that individual political skills are the key to personal career success and help employees deal with complex leadership and organizational environments (Shaughnessy et al., 2017; Kalra et al., 2017; Breland et al., 2017). This view has always occupied a relatively dominant position in organizational politics research. It is impossible to predict the success of an individual's career by relying solely on political skills in an organization. The hidden political will of individuals is the key to driving them to implement political behavior in the organization (Treadway et al., 2005). Research by Kapoutsis et al. (2017) shows that individual political will has a more profound impact on individual political behavior, flattery, upward influence, and trust compared with political skills. Of course, employees with specific political skills are better at concealing their true political intentions (Ferris et al., 2012), which can help them choose the direction of social capital or resources more wisely. This process can be regarded as a self-regulatory mechanism in the process of working. In this way, political skills may play a role in mediating consistency between political will and political behavior (Kapoutsis et al., 2017), and exert a unique effect (Treadway et al., 2005). Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to explore further the unique joint effect of employees' political will and political skills in the organization. At present, few studies examine the effects of both factors at the same time.

At the same time, research shows that employees' political will is conscious and purposeful, mainly manifested in self-interest, altruism, and organizational orientation. Under the guidance of these different motivational orientations, the behavior performance will be different, and the impact range may also involve multiple levels of individuals, leaders, groups, and organizations. However, previous studies have only limited the discussion of this effect on a single level of the individual and lack of research on leadership and organization's cross-level effects. Studies have shown that employees' individual political will has a benevolence orientation (Kapoutsis et al., 2017) and altruism orientation (Blicker et al., 2018). This provides an entry point for a broader understanding of organizational politics, encourages scholars and management practitioners to view the organization's operation from a political perspective, and can better understand organizational change and innovation, and the support and opposition of employees in policy formulation implementation. It can provide more explanation basis for employees with selfless performance in the organization (such as advocacy behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, change commitment, knowledge sharing behavior, etc.) and radical behavior (such as organizational change behavior, etc.), individual and leadership pressure in organizational change (Kapoutsis et al., 2017), and the quality of exchange relationship between leaders and members. Of course, self-interest is the most fundamental motive of political will, and its influence on the pursuit of utilitarian political goals such as employee career development and performance appraisal must be significant.

The political will of individuals and leadership levels may also have contagious effects and bring changes to their teams and other groups' psychology or behavior. Also, the effect of employee political will on the organization is not always positive and may hurt the organization (Treadway et al., 2005; Blickle et al., 2018). Since a political will is an individual's conscious and purposeful motives, not all motives can be satisfied. Therefore, the negative behavior produced to balance the dissatisfaction of motivation can also become a "political strategy" for them, such as anti-productive behavior, emotional labor, and performance decline. How can the organization promote the positive effects of employees' political will and restrain its possible negative effects on the organization? Studies have found that political skills, as an adjustment mechanism, can promote the realization of political will and inhibit the possible negative effects of political will (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Therefore, future research can explore the influence of political will and its internal mechanism from multiple levels of organization, leadership, and individuals and explore political skills' boundary effect.

## Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive and integrative review of employee political will within the framework of organizational politics, addressing a critical gap in the existing literature. While prior research has predominantly emphasized political skill as a determinant of organizational effectiveness and career success, this study demonstrates that political will constitutes a foundational motivational driver that precedes and activates political behavior. By shifting the analytical focus from capability to motivation, the study contributes to a more balanced and theoretically robust understanding of organizational political dynamics.

The findings highlight that employee political will is inherently a multidimensional construct, encompassing dispositional, cognitive, and contextual dimensions. Across the literature, political will has been conceptualized through diverse perspectives, including trait-based, dual-orientation, process-oriented, and result-oriented frameworks. The synthesis of these perspectives suggests that political will cannot be adequately captured through a single-dimensional lens; rather, it should be understood as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct shaped by the interaction between individual motivations and organizational environments.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that political will plays a significant role in shaping both individual and organizational outcomes. At the individual level, political will influences political behavior, career advancement, and performance-related outcomes. At the organizational level, it contributes to decision-making processes, leadership dynamics, and the success of organizational change initiatives. However, the impact of political will is not uniformly positive. While organization-oriented political will may enhance collaboration, innovation, and citizenship behavior, excessive self-serving political will may lead to dysfunctional outcomes such as manipulation, conflict, and reduced organizational trust. This duality underscores the importance of examining political will within a broader ethical and contextual framework.

Importantly, the study identifies political skill as a critical moderating mechanism that shapes the expression and consequences of political will. While political will determines the intention to engage in political behavior, political skill influences how effectively such behavior is executed and whether it produces constructive or destructive outcomes. This interaction highlights the necessity of integrating both constructs into a unified theoretical model of organizational politics.

Despite these contributions, the review reveals several important limitations in the current body of research. The conceptualization of political will remains fragmented, with a lack of consensus regarding its definition and dimensional structure. Measurement approaches are underdeveloped, and existing scales lack sufficient validation across different cultural and organizational contexts. Moreover, empirical research on the antecedents and multilevel effects of political will remains limited, particularly with respect to cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal analysis.

In light of these limitations, future research should focus on developing robust and multidimensional measurement instruments, integrating political will into broader theoretical models of organizational behavior, and examining its effects across individual, group, and organizational levels. Additionally, greater attention should be paid to contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and institutional environments, which may significantly influence the formation and expression of political will. Cross-cultural and longitudinal studies are particularly needed to enhance the generalizability and explanatory power of the construct.

In conclusion, this study advances the understanding of employee political will as a central yet underexplored construct in organizational research. By providing a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge and identifying key directions for future inquiry, it lays the foundation for the development of a more integrated and empirically grounded theory of political behavior in organizations.

## Ethical Considerations

This study is based exclusively on a comprehensive review and synthesis of previously published scholarly literature and does not involve human participants, animal subjects, or primary data collection. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required.

The research has been conducted in full compliance with internationally recognized standards of academic integrity and research ethics, including the principles outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics. All sources have been appropriately cited, and no form of plagiarism, data fabrication, or falsification has been involved in the preparation of this manuscript.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Any language editing or technical assistance tools, if used, did not contribute to the scientific ideas, interpretations, or conclusions presented in this study.

### **Data Availability Statement**

This study is based on secondary data derived from previously published academic literature.

All sources used in the analysis are cited in the reference list. No new datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

### **Author Contributions**

The author confirms sole responsibility for all aspects of this work, including:

- Conceptualization
- Literature review and analysis
- Writing - original draft preparation
- Writing - review and editing

The author has approved the final version of the manuscript and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Not applicable.

This study does not involve human participants or personal data.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

This article complies with all applicable ethical standards in research and publication.

The author adheres to internationally accepted guidelines, including those related to transparency, accountability, and responsible research conduct.

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