

# How political skill and work engagement differ by hierarchical level: Evidence from Brazil

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this study is to analyze how levels of political skill and work engagement vary among managers of different hierarchical levels in the scenario studied.

**Theoretical framework** – This research is based on the existing literature on leadership and is aligned with recent studies focusing on politics and engagement within work environments.

**Methodology** – Changes in the study variables, their effects and relationships were verified by multivariate analysis of variance in a sample (n=308) of professionals from three segments of the Brazilian private sector. The measurement instrument for political skill was adapted and validated for Portuguese.

**Findings** – Hierarchical level affects the linear interaction between engagement and political skill, but in the scenario studied, politics played a greater role in this dynamic. The results suggest that engagement in work is a consistent attribute for managers regardless of their managerial position, while political skill within the organization progressively increases with each advancement in hierarchical level.

**Practical & social implications of research** – It is expected that leadership development programs will take into account the importance of political skill in their actions and planning, particularly for activities where the need for negotiation, influence, and networking is crucial. The study suggests that the integration of engagement and political skill emerges as an opportunity to be explored in the pursuit of hierarchical advancement.

**Originality/value** – The findings expand current knowledge about the relationships among the constructs in the study by presenting evidence of their intrinsic interactions with the hierarchical position of managers. Complementarily, the study contributes a short version of the Political Skills Inventory, methodologically validated for Brazil.

**Keywords:** hierarchical level, political skills, engagement, managers, MANOVA.

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## 1 Introduction

The role of managers has become increasingly complex due to the expansion of rapidly evolving tasks and relationships, indicating a shift towards broader competencies (Lord & Hall, 2005; Ma et al., 2020; Mintzberg, 2009; Mumford et al., 2007; Sternad, 2020). This complexity is particularly relevant in the context of strategies aimed at gaining a competitive advantage, where there is a strong emphasis on leadership development, performance enhancement, and results improvement (Ma et al., 2020; Mintzberg, 2009; Sternad, 2020).

Contemporary research suggests that managers exhibit a high level of engagement with their responsibilities, manifesting an emotional, physical, and cognitive connection to their work environments (De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Garg et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2019; Nikolova et al., 2019). Consequently, they are more inclined to be open, connect with stakeholders, and invest personal effort to fulfill their roles at work (De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Holding a managerial position contributes significantly to work engagement, a concept closely linked to positive organizational behavior. Work engagement is characterized by a sense of fulfillment and encompasses the elements of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Li et al., 2021; Mazzetti et al., 2021; Schaufeli, 2012).

However, the increasingly social and ambiguous nature of work has heightened the emphasis on the ability to understand and navigate the social fabric of organizations (De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Lazreg & Lakhali, 2022; Maher et al., 2021). Leading teams requires having and maintaining a strong network of relationships, effective communication, and persuasiveness. Therefore, in addition to engagement, managers need to possess political skill within the organization, i.e., interpersonal attributes that enable them to successfully secure resources and influence others at work to ensure the success of their actions (Ewen et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2012; Mehmood et al., 2019).

In this study, the concepts of engagement and political skill will be analyzed in an integrated way because previous research suggests that they work together but leaves gaps regarding the behavior of the two concepts when observed at different managerial levels (Basit, 2020; Dechurch et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2019; Philip, 2021), despite the fact that, in practice, there are managers positioned at more than one organizational level, and the

well-known differentiation resulting from hierarchical levels in organizations (Anzengruber et al., 2017; Pavett & Lau, 1983).

Based on this preliminary discussion, the aim of this article is to analyze how the levels of political skill (PS) and work engagement vary according to hierarchical position. The research used data from managers and non-managers from heterogeneous activities to test the hypotheses developed in the next topic. To achieve the objective, multivariate statistics were used and it was also necessary to validate an instrument for measuring PS that has not yet been published in Brazil (De Moraes et al., 2023).

The contribution of this work focuses on the study of leadership dynamics and expands the possibilities for planning, implementing, and evaluating management development policies. The findings present a scientific perspective on the presence of politics in companies in conjunction with engagement, two factors that deserve attention due to their potential in leading teams and the search for results.

## 2 Theory and hypotheses

Work engagement (WEG) is a recurring theme in organizational studies due to its association with employee well-being and performance (Christian et al., 2011; Halbesleben, 2010; Saks, 2019). It is defined as a positive and persistent emotional-motivational state, characterized by the confluence of vigor (energy, will, and resilience), dedication (enthusiasm, challenge, and pride), and absorption (concentration and immersion in the task). Understanding the process of managerial engagement is a key issue for organizational studies in relation to the continuous growth of research focused on evidence-based management (Li et al., 2021; Nikolova et al., 2019).

The findings accumulated in recent decades support the importance of this characteristic as a fundamental attribute for managers: WEG is associated with creativity, willingness to develop tasks beyond established roles, and provides more meaning to work activities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Chaudhary & Akhouri, 2019). High levels of engagement have been found in employees who shape the characteristics of their actions to improve results (Lu et al., 2014). WEG has a positive relationship with task performance, transformational leadership, and helping behaviors (Lai et al., 2020; Neuber et al., 2022). It has strong associations with affective organizational

commitment (Orgambídez & Almeida, 2020) and a reduction in absenteeism rates (Neuber et al., 2022). Engaged employees tend to behave innovatively by activating coping strategies to deal with challenges (Kwon & Kim, 2020).

Political skill (PS) is based on the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use this knowledge to encourage employees to act proactively towards their personal and organizational goals (Ferris et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2016). It is a skill that stems from a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, with cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations, the effects of which have a direct impact on employee outcomes (Ferris et al., 2007; Saks, 2019). Underlying political skill is social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and the ability to demonstrate sincerity (De Moraes et al., 2023; Ferris et al., 2007; Maher et al., 2021; Munyon et al., 2015). These characteristics differentiate this construct from others that are relevant to understanding how people interact and behave in complex organizational environments, such as impression management (IM) and self-monitoring (SM). While PS is more related to understanding and manipulating power and relationship dynamics within an organization, IM is focused on how an individual deliberately shapes the way they are perceived by others (Bolino et al., 2016), and SM relates to the ability to adapt one's own behavior based on social cues (Day & Schleicher, 2006).

Previous studies have shown that the combined action of WEG and PS has a positive impact on a wide range of aspects of everyday life in companies, such as increasing service performance (Kim et al., 2019), fostering self-esteem and connection with the organization (Basit, 2020), strengthening proactive relationships (Philip, 2021), coping with psychological pressures from superiors (Sun et al., 2022), and it extends to issues such as popularity and self-assessment (Garden et al., 2018). This research reports on a single managerial level, only distinguishing between managers and non-managers. However, in practice, these professionals have hierarchically heterogeneous positions, such as bosses, foremen, supervisors, managers, and directors, leaving gaps as to the possible differences in the WEG-PS combination resulting from these variations. In order to fill this gap, this study defends the hypothesis that hierarchical level will influence this dyad in a similar way to that found in other constructs typical of the world of work, such as commitment (Hill et al., 2012), job satisfaction (Downey,

2008), and organizational citizenship behavior (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021).

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>)** - *The hierarchical level of managers has an influence on the linear combination of WEG and PS.*

From the postulate in H<sub>1</sub>, we do not expect a balance in the influence of hierarchical level on WEG and PS, as they are concepts of different natures. Engagement reflects a persistent emotional-cognitive state over time with more clearly defined associations with the task itself, beyond the established position in the organization. Thus, the engaged professional rises to higher positions because of their involvement and invests efforts at the level they are at, with a link that is generated to a greater extent with the core of the activity than with the leadership position (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Chaudhary & Akhouri, 2019, Kwon & Kim, 2020; Saks, 2019). On the other hand, the accumulated knowledge about the power effects that some leaders have on their followers is one of the cornerstones of leadership models that have been consolidated and even integrated in recent decades, such as transformational, transactional, and charismatic leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Fuller et al., 1999; Shamir et al., 1993; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). While the former is based on the assumption that employees are transformed as a result of their experiences with their leaders, the latter is based on exchanges and transactions between leaders and followers, where the leader offers rewards and incentives in exchange for accomplishing the tasks and goals set (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Finally, charismatic is characterized by the influence and inspiration that a leader exerts on their team through their charismatic personal qualities, inspiring vision and communication skills (Sacavem et al., 2017).

However, in order for these styles to drive organizational dynamics forward, managers increasingly need to have political skills to articulate and develop persuasive tactics, which are crucial for those who lead teams (Ewen et al., 2013; Mahajan & Templer, 2021; Yang & Zhang, 2014), since PS permeates interpersonal relationships to the point of influencing, for example, decision making, changes in resource allocation, and project priorities, issues that are more evident the closer they are to the centers of power, i.e. higher managerial positions (Chen et al., 2021; Maher et al., 2021). Thus, it is possible to hypothesize that even though WEG and PS influence each other, hierarchical level plays a greater role in varying political skill than in engagement.

**Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>)** - *The hierarchical level explains a greater proportion of variance for PS than for WEG.*

The two previous hypotheses deal with an overall relationship between the level of hierarchy and the two concepts studied, and it remains to be seen whether the proposition also occurs in the transition from one managerial level to another. To this end, it was considered that managers are faced with increasing complexity and an ever-widening range of tasks and relationships that change rapidly, requiring both a strong commitment to their activities and the political ability to influence and move within their organizational context (Ewen et al., 2013; Lord & Hall, 2005; Mahajan & Templer, 2021; Mintzberg, 2009), suggesting that the career development of leaders develops WEG and PS together, as well as other skills such as mobilization capacity (Hetland et al., 2018), visionary competence, and knowledge of organizational culture (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989; Chen et al., 2021; Kwon & Kim, 2020). It can thus be hypothesized that the WEG and PS traits will be more evident with each increase in hierarchical status:

**Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>)**: *Individuals will report higher PS scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level.*

**Hypothesis 4 (H<sub>4</sub>)**: *Individuals will report higher WEG scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level.*

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Sample and data collection procedures

The concepts studied here are based on proposals for universal use in work environments, without assertions originating from specific terminologies of a particular field. Thus, the opinions of professionals about their own work were sought without the aim of evaluating any particular organization. After checking for extreme cases and missing data, a sample of 308 respondents was obtained (See supplementary data – Appendix C – database). All of them are from the tertiary sector with diverse activities, with 68.8% from the Southeast region and the remainder from the Northeast of Brazil. Managers are divided into three levels: entry level, which includes titles such as department head and supervisor; intermediate (e.g., supervisors, junior managers); and senior (e.g., managers, directors). Those who do not hold any management position account for 28.9% of the sample and will serve as the control group for the analyses. Table 1 provides a detailed characterization of the sample.

Participation in the data collection was voluntary and relied on the professional and personal networks of the researchers as a starting point. This constitutes

Table 1  
Sample characterization

Characteristic	Subdivision	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Job Tenure</b> M=5.7; SD=4.3 Range: 1 to 22 years	Up to 5 years	179	58.12%
	6 to 10 years	105	34.09%
	Over 10 years	24	7.79%
<b>Education</b>	High school	27	8.77%
	Graduate	224	72.73%
	Postgraduate	57	18.51%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	137	44.48%
	Male	171	55.52%
<b>Age</b> M=37.2; SD=10.02 Range: 1 to 58 years	Up to 30 years	90	29.22%
	From 31 to 40 years old	95	30.84%
	From 41 to 50 years old	92	29.87%
	Over 50 years old	31	10.06%
<b>Segment</b>	Wholesale trade	117	37.99%
	Services	83	26.95%
	Financial intermediation	108	35.06%
<b>Hierarchical level in management</b>	1. Does not act as a manager	89	28.90%
	2. Entry level	74	24.03%
	3. Intermediate	67	21.75%
	4. Senior	78	25.32%

Note. M=mean; SD=standard deviation.



a non-probabilistic convenience sample resulting from the researchers' access to these sources. Opinions were gathered after invitations were sent through social media and messaging applications, using the LimeSurvey platform, which is optimized for mobile devices. This method has proven to be effective, with strong motivation and acceptance from respondents due to its practicality in their daily lives (Salama et al., 2020; Schobel et al., 2015; Van Berkel et al., 2017).

Specific ethical procedures for research involving human subjects in the fields of humanities and social sciences were followed. The project was approved by an Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects, affiliated with the National Commission for Ethics in Research (Conep) of the Ministry of Health of Brazil (Brasil, 2022). It is registered under the CAAE (Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation) number 52852321.2.0000.5072.

### 3.2 Measures

**Political Skill Inventory (PSI-Br):** To measure political skill, the short eight-item version of the PSI - Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al., 2005) developed by Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) was used. To date, it has not been possible to identify the use of this version in Portuguese in the indexed databases (De Moraes et al., 2023). Therefore, one of the stages of this study was to verify the adaptation of the instrument into Portuguese, called PSI-Br. The cross-cultural adaptation followed the procedures described by Hernández et al. (2020). The choice of a shortened version stems from the expectation of greater respondent adherence, since very long questionnaires can cause disinterest due to lack of time. In addition, the one-dimensional version of the PSI meets the objectives of this study in terms of a general representation of PS. The statements were answered on a scale from 1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree (details in Appendix A).

**Work Engagement Scale:** The nine-item version (Appendix B) of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) and validated for Portuguese by Agnst et al. (2009). It is a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (never/ever) to 7 (always/every day). It is a stable version of the instrument that is widely used in the Brazilian context (Porto-Martins et al., 2013). In this study, McDonald's omega reliability coefficient

(McDonald, 2013) showed an adequate value ( $\omega=.925$ ; CI .913 .938).

### 3.3 Analysis strategy

#### Validation of the PS measurement instrument:

Given that the short version of the PSI is unprecedented in the Brazilian context (De Moraes et al., 2023), we opted for an exploratory and semi-confirmatory factor analysis using Factor version 12.01.02 software (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2013) to ascertain whether item retention remains consistent in the Portuguese version. The factor retention technique employed was the optimized implementation of parallel analysis with 500 random permutations, as developed by Timmerman and Lorenzo-Seva (2011). Key model fit indices, model quality, replicability, and stability were assessed. The database matrix was subjected to polychoric correlation analysis, with the estimator being robust diagonally weighted least squares (Ferrando et al., 2019; Li, 2016).

**Hypothesis testing:** A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was carried out in order to determine the extent to which and in what proportion the average PS and WEG scores (dependent variables) varied for employees at different hierarchical levels (See supplementary data – Appendix D – scripts). Each group segmented by hierarchical position had more than 30 observations, and the ratio between the largest and smallest groups was no less than 1.50, which provides good robustness for analysis at the macro and micro levels (Cleff, 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2021). The procedures were developed in the R language environment, version 4.2.1 (R Core Team, 2022), and SPSS version 22. In all the analyses reported, confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated from 1000 bootstraps using the bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) method, whose main advantage is the correction of bias and asymmetry in the distribution of bootstrap estimates (Chernick & Labudde, 2014). This is a parsimonious procedure that increases the reliability of the results. For more details on this procedure, see Efron and Narasimhan (2020).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Validation of the Portuguese Version of the Political Skill Inventory (PSI-Br)

The optimized implementation of parallel analysis indicated that only one factor concentrates 77.26% of

the real variance explained, confirming the PSI-Br as a unidimensional instrument. The model's plausibility was assessed by the following indices: relative chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Table 2 shows the results obtained together with the appropriate values suggested in the literature (Brown, 2015). Supplementary indices were considered to certify the evidence of validity and usefulness of the instrument in practice: Factorial Determination Index (FDI); McDonald's omega and H indices, as well as their suggested cut-off points (Ferrando et al., 2019; McDonald, 2013).

The indices obtained prove the probability of the theoretical model fitting the data ( $\chi^2/df$ ) and the independence between the measured variables (TLI), even with a relatively small sample, since the comparative fit index (CFI) was within the fit values. Finally, a good fit of the model to the population was obtained, considering the RMSEA values. The replicability indices suggested a well-defined PS latent variable with a greater likelihood of being replicable in future studies (H-latent=.934), and the same is true for the identification based on the observed item scores (H-observed=.925). The results presented in this topic allow the PSI-Br to be accepted as a unidimensional instrument with psychometric characteristics that have been methodologically assessed to measure latent levels of Political Skill in the context studied.

### 4.2 Hypothesis testing

A MANOVA was carried out to check whether the hypotheses of the study were supported. The latent variables PS and WEG were the dependent variables and Hierarchical Level was the independent variable. Prior to

this procedure, a Pearson correlation analysis was carried out on the dependent variables ( $r = .283$ ;  $p < .01$ ; 95% CI BCa .178 - .380) to test the MANOVA assumption that these variables would be moderately correlated and thus not have multicollinearity problems (Cleff, 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2021).

The Box's M test fulfilled the assumption of homogeneity of covariance (Box's M = 11.624;  $F(9, 908, 264.76) = 1.276$ ;  $p = .244$ ). The type of appropriate distribution was verified with the Shapiro-Wilk test for multivariate normality ( $W = .995$ ,  $p = .456$ ). There were no problems with multivariate outliers, since the Mahalanobis distance was 8.65, below the critical value of 13.82. Table 3 shows that the multivariate effect was significant by hierarchical level ( $\lambda = .61$ ,  $F(6, 608) = 28.46$ ) with a high effect ( $\eta^2 p = .22$ ) and an observed power of 1.00 for an alpha of .05 (Cleff, 2019), supporting **H<sub>1</sub>**: *The hierarchical level of managers has an influence on the linear combination of engagement and political skill.*

The tests of between-subjects effects (Table 4) indicate that 34.5% of the variance in overall PS was accounted for by the hierarchical profiles, a large effect size ( $\eta^2 p = .345$ ;  $p < .001$ ), in contrast to a moderate and considerably smaller effect for WEG ( $\eta^2 p = .130$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which supports **H<sub>2</sub>**: *The hierarchical level explains a greater proportion of the variance for PS than for WEG.*

Figure 1 shows the graphical representation of the post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction, used to assess differences in PS levels between individuals of different hierarchical positions. The overall sample mean was 4.18 (CI 4.08 – 4.29). It is noteworthy that the variation in PS means ( $\Delta M$ ) is significant and increases with each rise in managerial position, supporting the third hypothesis of the study: **H<sub>3</sub>** – *individuals will report*

Table 2  
Fit and quality indices

Type	Index	Values obtained	Appropriate value
Fit	$\chi^2/df$	.709	<3.00
	RMSEA	.048; CI BCa 95% (.000 .060)	<.08
	NNFI	.997; CI BCa 95% (.995 1.000)	>.95
	CFI	.998; CI BCa 95% (.997 1.000)	>.90
Replicability	H-Latent	.934; CI BCa 95% (.915 .945)	>.80
	H-Observed	.925; CI BCa 95% (.894 1.500)	
Quality and Effectiveness	FDI	.966	>.90
Internal consistency	McDonald's Omega ( $\omega$ )	.931	>.70

Note. CI: confidence interval. df: degrees of freedom. BCa: bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap interval.



Table 3  
Multivariate test

Effect	Wilks' Lambda ( $\lambda$ )	F	df	$\eta^2_p$	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ( $\alpha=0.05$ )
Hierarchical level	.61	28.46***	(6, 606)	.22	170.76	1.00

Notes. Dependent variables: WEG, PS. \*\*\* Significant at 1% level. df: degrees of freedom.  $\eta^2_p$ : partial eta squared.

Table 4  
Tests of between-subjects effects

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	$\eta^2_p$	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ( $\alpha=0.05$ )
PS	142.47	3	47.49	53.27***	.345	159.81	1.00
WEG	84.73	3	28.24	15.11***	.130	45.33	1.00

Notes. Independent variable: hierarchical level. \*\*\* Significant at 1% level. df: degrees of freedom.  $\eta^2_p$ : partial eta squared.

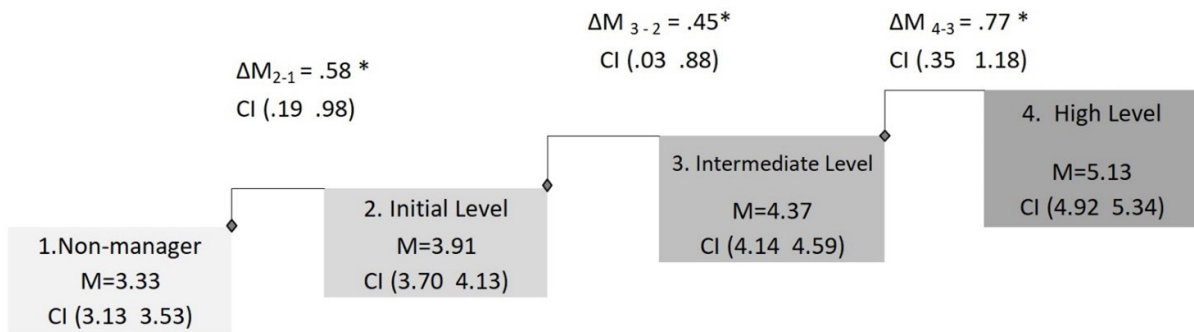


Figure 1. Multiple comparisons diagram for PS.

Notes. \* the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. M = mean;  $\Delta M_{B-A}$  = difference in means between levels; CI = confidence interval (BCa 95%)

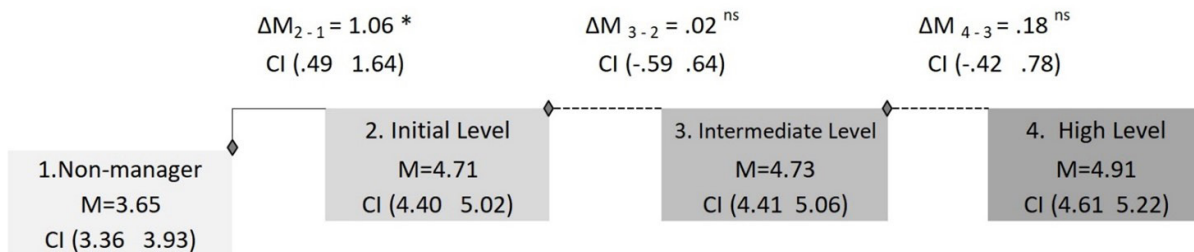


Figure 2. Multiple comparisons diagram for WEG.

Notes. \* the mean difference is significant at the .05 level. ns = non-significant. M = mean;  $\Delta M_{B-A}$  = difference in means between levels; CI = confidence interval (BCa 95%)

higher PS scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level.

Figure 2 shows the Bonferroni post-hoc analysis pertaining to the testing of hypothesis 4:  $H_4$  – individuals

will report higher WEG scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level. Multiple comparisons focused on differences in mean WEG scores by hierarchical level reveal a significant value only during the transition from

non-managers to entry-level managers ( $\Delta M_{2-1} = 1.06$ , at 5%). The overall mean WEG score for the analyzed sample was 4.50 (CI 4.35-4.66). There was no statistically significant difference between management levels, a result that does not support  $H_4$ . In the diagram below, non-significant relationships are represented by dashed lines.

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

The results of this study stem from a sample comprising professionals from different sectors who occupy four different positions within their work environments: non-managers and managers at the entry, intermediate, and senior levels. The focus of the study is to examine the influence of hierarchical level on political skill and work engagement, for which a set of hypotheses was tested (Table 5).

The literature documents a positive influence of WEG and PS on key leadership performance dimensions such as proactivity, connectivity, and resilience (Kim et al., 2019; Basit, 2020; Sun et al., 2022). The findings of this study add another perspective to the existing knowledge by demonstrating that hierarchical level impacts the interaction between WEG and PS ( $H_1$ ). However, political skill is, overall, more affected by this factor in the context studied, as proposed in  $H_2$ , confirming the expectation that higher positions within the organization are associated with a greater capacity to navigate organizational dynamics in terms of the ability to articulate and develop persuasion tactics (Ewen et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2012; Yang & Zhang, 2014).

When we analyze the role of the change of each hierarchical level in the average scores of political skill, we observe significant and larger differences in the latent traits of PS with each increase in hierarchical position, thus confirming Hypothesis 3. This allows us to suggest that managers possess a growing arsenal of networking,

social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and the ability to demonstrate sincerity. These are important indications from the present study and suggest that such attributes differentiate managers in their career progression, supporting studies that emphasize the role of PS as a resource for survival, growth, and effectiveness in organizational leadership (Ewen et al., 2013; Mahajan & Templer, 2021; Chen, et al., 2021).

The same dynamic was not observed in relation to engagement ( $H_4$ ) because it was not possible to assert that there are differences in the means of this attribute among those holding managerial positions. However, it is evident that the managers in this sample exhibit a strong energetic, emotional, and cognitive connection to their tasks, as the overall mean of 4.50 exceeds what has been reported in other research in Brazil, such as 3.78 (Oliveira & Rocha, 2017) and 3.82 (Oliveira & Ferreira, 2016), which also featured heterogeneous samples and aggregated data from both managers and non-managers. Thus, it is confirmed that leaders tend to be strongly involved in their tasks, as a result of the resilience and dedication typically associated with engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Chaudhary & Akhouri, 2019; Kwon & Kim, 2020; Saks, 2019). However, in the results of this investigation, such a condition is not amplified with each increase in hierarchical position, but rather is positively influenced across different organizational strata in which professionals are situated.

At a macro level, the evidence that the variables WEG and PS, when considered together, are significantly influenced by hierarchical level contributes to previous findings regarding the increasing complexity of management activities and the skills required for this career (Lord & Hall, 2005; Mintzberg, 2009; Mumford et al., 2007; Ma et al., 2020; Sternad, 2020). Specifically, the behavior of the average scores of these two concepts across the levels investigated points to different pathways: it was

Table 5  
Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Description	Results
$H_1$	The hierarchical level of managers has an influence on the linear combination of Work Engagement (WEG) and Political Skill (PS).	<i>Supported</i>
$H_2$	The hierarchical level explains a greater proportion of the variance for Political Skill than for Work Engagement (WEG).	<i>Supported</i>
$H_3$	Individuals will report higher Political Skill (PS) scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level.	<i>Supported</i>
$H_4$	Individuals will report higher Work Engagement (WEG) scores when compared to those at the previous hierarchical level.	<i>Not supported</i>



confirmed that work engagement is an attribute inherent to a manager's makeup, stemming from the necessity to remain physically, emotionally, and cognitively connected to their tasks (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Li et al., 2021). However, this holds true regardless of whether the leader occupies an entry-level, intermediate, or senior position, as indicated in the present study. On the other hand, the observation of a concurrent increase in management level and PS suggests that this skill can be a differentiator in a leader's career progression, supporting previous research emphasizing the importance of navigating and benefiting from the social fabric of organizations (De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Lazreg & Lakkhal, 2022; Maher et al., 2021).

This research aimed to extend the literature on managerial work by considering the importance of understanding the challenges faced by managers. As a practical implication, it is expected that leadership development programs will take into account the importance of political skill in their actions and planning, especially for activities in which the need for negotiation, influence, and networking is crucial. It is also deduced that the alliance between engagement, as a fundamental attribute of a manager, and political skill, as an interaction tool, represents an opportunity to be explored in the pursuit of hierarchical advancement. This alliance allows for the support of articulation and influence actions through a deeper connection to the work being performed, facilitating a greater sense of ownership by the manager in their work environment. This approach prevents a purely political or task-focused performance without the effective use of interaction tools.

Another noteworthy advancement is the introduction of a methodologically validated measure of political skill (PSI-Br) for Brazil, which showed favorable results in terms of model fit indices, quality, and replicability. The PSI-Br is a shortened version of the PSI (Ferris et al., 2005; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010) designed to assess levels of political skill. Its primary advantage is that it can be used in conjunction with other constructs without inflating the number of questions for respondents, especially given their increasingly limited available time, thereby enhancing data collection adherence rates.

The study has limitations with regard to the sample, which was limited to professionals in the tertiary sector and to two regions of Brazil. This opens avenues for research in other regions, as well as in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy, along with possibilities

for investigations in the public sector, which, despite its comprehensive nature, was not included in this proposal.

Future research could also incorporate variables such as age, years of service, and compensation into the analyses, which were not explored in the present study due to a more parsimonious model choice focused on the influence of hierarchical levels (MANOVA). However, these variables have the potential to influence the results given their possible covariations with the constructs investigated in this study, as suggested by previous research (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014; Schaufeli, 2012; De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020). Such variables represent typical organizational information that could be further explored in designs involving multiple regression or structural equation modeling (SEM).

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## APPENDIX A. Research Instrument

Political Skill Inventory (PSI-Br)

Portuguese version adapted and validated in this study based on Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010).

**Statement:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement about yourself in your workplace.

**Scale of 1 to 7:** 1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Partially Disagree; 4- Neutral; 5- Partially Agree; 6- Agree; 7- Strongly Agree.

Code	Statement
HPO1	Gasto muito tempo e esforço estabelecendo redes com os outros.
HPO2	Sou capaz de fazer com que a maioria das pessoas se sintam confortáveis e à vontade perto de mim.
HPO3	Tenho facilidade em desenvolver um bom relacionamento com a maioria das pessoas.
HPO4	Ao me comunicar com os outros, tento ser genuíno no que digo e faço.
HPO5	No trabalho, conheço muitas pessoas importantes e sou bem conectado.
HPO6	É importante que as pessoas acreditem que sou sincero no que digo e faço.
HPO7	Tenho uma boa intuição ou noção sobre como me apresentar aos outros.
HPO8	Parece que eu instintivamente sempre sei as coisas certas que devo dizer ou fazer para influenciar os outros.

## APPENDIX B. Research Instrument

### Work Engagement Scale

Version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) and validated for Portuguese by Agnst et al. (2009).

**Statement.:** Please carefully read each of the following items and respond if you have experienced what is described in relation to your work. If you have never had such a feeling, mark “1-Never” in the column next to it. If yes, indicate the frequency (“2-Almost Never” to “7-Always”) that best describes your feelings, as described below.

**Scale from 1 to 7:** Scale of 1 to 7: 1-Never; 2-Almost Never; 3-Sometimes; 4-Regularly; 5-Often; 6-Almost Always; 7-Always

Code	Statement
EGT1	Em meu trabalho, sinto-me repleto de energia.
EGT2	No trabalho, sinto-me com força e vigor.
EGT3	Estou entusiasmado com meu trabalho.
EGT4	Meu trabalho me inspira.
EGT5	Quando me levanto pela manhã, tenho vontade de ir trabalhar.
EGT6	Sinto-me feliz quando trabalho intensamente.
EGT7	Estou orgulhoso com o trabalho que realizo.
EGT8	Sinto-me envolvido com o trabalho que faço.
EGT9	“Deixo-me levar” pelo meu trabalho.



## Supplementary Material

Supplementary material accompanies this paper.

APPENDIX C – database

APPENDIX D – scripts

This material is available as part of the online article from <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BK8JHE>

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The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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