Reward politics and Withdrawal behaviour among University Lecturers in Northeast Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the link between reward politics and withdrawal behaviour among university lecturers in North-East Nigeria. Data was collected by administering a well-defined questionnaire from a total of 371 respondents and a multistage sampling technique was employed in conducting the study. The raw data collected were analysed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and statistic software partial least squares 4.0. The result of this study has found that reward politics has a strong relationship with withdrawal behaviour. The research was conducted through the lenses of the conservation of resources theory and social exchange theory. In the context of the conservation of resources theory, the study demonstrates that reward politics has a direct relationship with resource gain and loss while the social exchange theory suggests that the association between workers and their organisation is reciprocal, when workers receive good treatment, their attitude to work will also be positive and vice versa. The study has provided University administrators with an understanding of reward politics in universities and how it affects the psychological well-being of lecturers, often leading to withdrawal behaviour. The study recommends that university management shall deploy policies and culture that recognize, manage and control political actions to ensure friendliness among lecturers and success in any university system.

Keywords: Conservation of resources theory, organisational politics, reward politics, withdrawal behaviour.

1. Introduction

When employees perceive unfair treatment, they may withdraw from their workplace either mentally or physically. This can result in absenteeism, delay in job accomplishment, and turnover. Withdrawal behaviours are displayed by employees when they stay on the job but, for some reason, decide to be less active. These behaviours are usually influenced by organisational politics, which can be assessed through employees' political behaviour, employees' political inaction and reward politics. Universities are reservoirs for intellectual capital, creating

an avenue for knowledge and innovations to grow. Universities promote meaningful ideas and polite expressions of ideas. Withdrawal can be physical or psychological. Physical withdrawal relates to issues such as absenteeism, delay in job accomplishment, and turnover. Psychological withdrawal involves lateness to work, intention to quit, and lack of commitment to work responsibilities (Gaji et al., 2021; Okarche, 2020). Withdrawal behaviours refer to regular manners display by employees when they stay on the job and decide to be less active. Such behaviours are usually influenced by organisational politics (OP). Organisational politics among employees is manifest (Fiaz & Oureshi, 2021). When workers perceive politics in their work domain such as inequitable resource distribution, thev usuallv develop strained and feel emotionally and psychologically disturbed (Haider, S., Fatima, N., & de Pablos-Heredero, 2020). Organisational politics depreciates employee job satisfaction, unsettled work creates an climate. workers' commitment decreases and discriminatory-based personnel actions, job stress and withdrawal behaviour among others (Bwonya et al., 2020).

Organisational politics can be assessed through employees' political behaviour, employees' political inaction and reward politics (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2013). Employees' political behaviours are the general political behaviour of workers organisation. Employees' within the political inaction entails not taking part in any political antics but maintaining a cordial relationship with all stakeholders in the organisation while reward politics happen daily where promotions, awards, pay raises, and other benefits are determined through political tactics than merit (Hochwarter et al., 2020). In the same vein, politics is happening in universities across the globe. Universities are recognised as a reservoir for intellectual capital, creating an avenue for knowledge and innovations to grow. Universities are institutions that socialize citizens. One of the key responsibilities of universities is the promotion of meaningful and polite expressions of ideas in their societies (Gan, 2020).

However, universities in Nigeria are bedevilled by an unfair working climate which degenerate to the selfish interest among staff (Aniefiok et al., 2020). Globally politics has affected the commitment and job satisfaction of many university teachers (Mishra et al., 2016; Nnenna & Mbah, 2019; Teelken et al., 2021a). The reaction of many lecturers in a bad political climate includes reduced positive attitudes, an increase in unethical behaviour more relationship conflict, and high turnover/ withdrawal behaviour (Salah Ud Din Khan et al., 2017). Despite numerous studies on the negative outcomes of OP and their possible solutions research on OP and withdrawal behaviour is limited in the context of Nigerian universities. The variables investigated by this study were not adequately observed by previous Nigerian studies. The university environment has seen the least research on lecturers' withdrawal behaviour in the event of politics in their work environment. This study was driven by existing gaps identified from the current studies on the topical issues Zengtian and Aman (2021). Politics in the organisation has three major variables that are general employees' political behaviour, Political Inaction and reward politics This study focused on reward politics (pay and promotion politics) in 13 public universities in Northeast Nigeria. The unit of analysis in this research is individual.

2. Literature Review

Organizational politics has been prevailing. but it appears differently in different organisations due to cultural disparity among entities. One of the frequent discussed issues in today's foreverchanging working climate is politics in the office, it is behaviour that is happening both consciously and subconsciously between employees, managers and chief executives (Ullah et al., 2019). Political practices in the workplace are enacted to promote selfinterest against the interests of others and that of the organisation (Cheng et al., 2020). Favouritism-based actions in many work climates have negatively subdued workers' psychological and physical wellness (Akuffo & Kivipõld, 2021). Organizational politics has created a stressful environment which build uncertainty and obscurity in place of work and such issues impede organisational productivity and individual employees' focus on the job (Clercq et al., 2022).

Consequently, influence and political power play behaviour excel in an organization in the absence of clear rules and policies (Mishra et al., 2020). Individual resort to political behaviour when the work environment has an ambiguous work process such a workplace has promoted self-serving behaviour. Uncertainty hurts the decision-making process since decision-makers will not have a clear basis for their decision (Koav et al., 2022). One of the key forces that make political behaviour susceptible in the office is a lack of goal clarity. Politics distort the clarity of information which subjects it to misinterpretation by stakeholders. People engage in politics because valued resources are limited and people struggle to maximize benefit from such resources (Olufayo & Akinbo, 2022).

Furthermore, politics sparks conflict because policymakers use influence tactics for self-interest which often counters the interest of other individuals (Lu et al., 2017). When individuals perceive a clash of interests, they retaliate and retaliation usually gives rise to conflict (Mishra et al., 2016). Politics divides the organizations into three classes the strong and the weak and the third group is workers who don't partake in politics. The strong group also known as the ingroup is the individuals who have the power to influence decisions and resources to their advantage while the weak group which is known as the outcome group are the individuals in the organization who engage in conflict with the political activities of the strong group. In a politically charged work environment workers who don't take part in politics in the office are seen by political actors as friendly individuals and they often get favours without any hindrance (Olufayo & Akinbo, 2022).

2.1 Reward Politics

Many supervisors and decision makers were cut in some manipulative action in implementing reward systems, especially in the payment of allowances, bonuses, and other non-financial incentives such as transfers. placement, training, and conferences (Roques, 2022). It was posited that many organizational policies on employee rewards were designed in a manner that promotes self-serving behaviour, individualized reward system as against organizational-oriented rewards normallv triggers the rewarding of politically induced behaviour meaning individuals close to decision makers both on the official and personal grounds. They tend to get rewarded frequently than those who are too official in their relationship with their bosses (Chaturvedi, 2021; Kapoutsis et al., 2012; Teelken et al., 2021a). Career success is determined by political forces in the work environment many supervisors use influence tactics in promoting their close ally among supervisees. Politics hinders objectivity in carrier growth (Teelken et al., 2021b).

Furthermore, organisational politics may be seen in Pay and Promotion Policies (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2013). Most human capital management policies are planned in a manner that promotes political behaviour, even though implementers of policies normally find themselves in a mix of politics unknowingly because human resources practices are sometimes designed in a manner that gives rise to unfair practices which promote individual-centred interest against the goals of the organisation (Bwonya et al., 2020).

Policies of pay recognition, appointments and promotions have been one of the critical means through which workers assess the suitability of their workplace (Karppinen, 2007). Nowadays promotions, pay raises, appointments and other nonmonetary rewards are more politically influenced than merit (Olufayo & Akinbo, 2022). The promotion gives employees job satisfaction but vacancies for promotion in many organisations are limited and the limitation for career advancement makes workers compete with one another thereby creating room for politics in the quest to be promoted (Imran & Haque, 2018).

2.2 Withdrawal Behaviour

Politics in our organisations distort the entire administration, management and governance processes. It is visible in the distribution of resources, forecasting, strategy selection and implementation. (Shahani et al., 2019). Politics can create resistance among management teams and slow down the process of decision-making (Kaya et al., 2016). Similarly, the negative impact of politics on the flow of communication and coordination of activities in the workplace. The presence of politics in the workplace triggers a decline in the physical and emotional commitment of employees in the organisation (Gaji & Galoji, 2022). Withdrawal behaviours are a set of attitudes and behaviours seen in workers whose productivity on the job is deteriorating (Okache, 2020; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Even-Zohar, 2011; Tian et al., 2021). Withdrawal behaviours can be psychological or physiological.

Physiological withdrawal relates to issues such as absenteeism, delay in job accomplishment and turnover. Psychological withdrawal involves job anxiety, intention to guit and lack of commitment to work responsibilities (Serfraz et al., 2022). Therefore, when an employee withdraws, he/she may be present at their workplace, their mind may be elsewhere and lack concentration (Mishra et al., 2020). Withdrawal behaviours can be detrimental to organizations from a human capital management perspective, an organization's reputation, relationships with business partners. and relationships among employees (Bhatti et al., 2019). Withdrawal attitudes by employees can be in the shape of physical or mental disengagement from

organizational life. It is the process in which workers detach themselves from their work environment through deliberate negligence. absenteeism. lowered commitment, and eventual voluntary turnover (Burris et al., 2008). employees start withdrawing from their organization by reducing work effort, disassociating with office colleagues. and late accomplishment of tasks given. the first step to final withdrawal behaviour is to search for a new job (Arshad & Puteh, 2015).

2.3 Empirical Review

Salah, Siddiqui, Zhiqiang, & and Weijun (2021) determine the interactive impact of political skills and ethics on the connection between OP and job attitudes. The study was conducted on 310 academic staff of selected educational bodies in Pakistan. The statistical inference based on the data collected has indicated that workplace satisfaction has an adverse link with OP. The study encouraged managers/leaders of organisations to build the political skills of their employees to control political situations.

Accordingly, Ahmed & and Patrick (2020) study the effect of justice in organisations and politics in organisations on workers' dedication at work. The study was conducted among faculty members in an Indian university and the result from the study has indicated a negative link between organisational politics perception and faculty members' commitment to work, it was further tested that iustice in organisation promotes favourable workers attitudes. Educational institutions should encourage fairness in all aspects which can result in highly engaged faculty members thereby contributing to quality education.

Ahmed (2018) investigated the relationship between three OP antecedents' favouritism, reward system, and limited resources in a plan to quit. Organisational politics has a strong alliance with the intention to quit. The study found that favouritism, politics in and resource allocation reward antecedents to OP and they often lead to withdrawal behaviour. Furthermore, Chan and James (2020) found that politics in the workplace reduces job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion increases and intention to guit. The scholars further found that politics has no affiliation with workplace citizenship behaviour and performance. Gupta, Singhal, & Chauhan (2021) piloted an assessment to evaluate the impact of politics on organisational affairs, worker turnover and employee performance in banks. One of the vital outcomes of this study justified that office politics was reasonably linked with withdrawal behaviour and work stress is strongly connected to employee turnover. Based on the available empirical evidence the study postulates that:

H₁: There is a positive link between organisational politics and lecturer withdrawal Behaviour

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The conservation of resources (COR) theory is among the widely cited premises in behavioural sciences especially politics in organisations (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2017). The theory of COR is predictive of strain, burnout, traumatic stress and withdrawal behaviour. The theory forecasts that resource injury is the primary element in the process of stress building (Xia & Wang, 2019). Gaining resources is an important component for maintaining sound mental well-being among individuals. Resourceful gain is as important as resource loss. Loss of useful resources can be protected with resources. Many stressful situations arise as a result of resource loss, people are daily become exposed daily to the risk of failure in terms of wealth, position, time, energy and even well-being. Considering the impact of resource loss which has negatively impacted the resourcefulness of workers

(Shapira-Lishchinsky & Even-Zohar, 2011).

Similarly, human beings often seek more valued resources and avoid loss of resources. Workers are motivated by pay raises, awards, promotions, and better conditions of service (Bon & Shire, 2022). When workers have access to a quality work climate and better pay their performance is at its peak but when they perceive a loss of such resource their performance declines, job discontentment emerges and withdrawal behaviour sets in (Hobfoll et al., 2017). In the same vein, this theory is generally considered the most suitable in stress-related research. It is generally believed in numerous organizational science research that COR theory is fundamental in connecting stressrelated work experience and workplace (Westman et al., outcomes 2012). According to Bon & Shire (2022), The primary pillars of the theory presumed that the loss of resources is more impactful than resource accumulation. The major resource in human life is food, accommodation, a sound sense of belonging, and societal recognition. The secondary resources are needed to protect the main resources including suitable work, a caring family, a friendly culture, time, and money.Further, the function of both resource forfeitures and gains in forecasting stress outcomes is also considered in Political behaviour, political inaction and reward politics are workplace stressors which threaten both individual and organisational resources (Hobfoll et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study is quantitative in nature and a cross-section survey design because data was collected within a period of one month through the administration of a structured questionnaire to 371 respondents. The population in the context of this study are the academic staff of public universities across the Northeast region of Nigeria. North-East region of Nigeria has six states; these states are Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe with each having two public Universities except Borno state which has three. Each state has both Federal and State universities. This current study has a total population of 9047 academic staff of Public Universities in North-East Nigeria (staff Nominal Roll, February 2023). To cartel possible sampling error, the sample size of the study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population. The study drew samples from thirteen (13) public universities in North-East, Nigeria. For this reason, the study used multistage sampling. The universities were stratified into class federal and state universities The states were considered as clusters while the universities were stratified into two strata federal and state universities, because of differences in the population sizes of each university was categorised as а subpopulation ensure and to fair representation each subpopulation was allocated with the sample in proportion to their population. To achieve a fair sample for each sampling unit the number of populations for the 13 public universities was obtained from the establishment office of the universities.

3.1 Measurement of Instrument

The study has adopted the measurement instruments used in determining the relationship between the variables under study. To measure reward politics the study adapted the perception of the organisational political scale on pay and promotion developed by Kacmar and Carlos (1997) while to measure withdrawal behaviour the study also adapted: Croparzano and Granday (1997). The study has subjected the measurement items to validity and reliability tests to ensure that the items can test the variables under study. The reliability of the measurement instruments

was ascertained by assessing indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha, reliability coefficient and the composite reliability, convergent validity employing the average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity via the Fornell-Larcker criterion

Table 3.1 indicated all the loadings meet the recommended 0.7 and above threshold while indicator items with loadings of less than 0.7 were deleted. Thus: Reward politics (RP) was initially measured by eight items but reduced to four items: Items RP1, RP2, RP3 and RP8 were deleted because they loaded below 0.7, Withdrawal Behaviour (WB) is also measured by eight items but purified to seven items. Item WB3 was discarded due to a low factor loading of below 0.7. All these were discarded to improve the reliability and AVE of the construct. Thus, this showed that the indicators of each construct were highly correlated with their respective construct and also all the AVEs are above the critical value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017) as presented in Table 3.1 thus is indicative of convergent validity.

To further verify the convergent validity of the measurement model, further analysis to determine the internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha. composite reliability and the reliability coefficient of the constructs was conducted. Table 3.1 shows the Cronbach's alpha, reliability coefficient and composite reliability values of the constructs in the research model. As indicated by the result. the Cronbach's alpha, reliability coefficient and composite reliability values, which measure the extent to which the indicators depict the construct, all reported values higher than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.7. Therefore, the requirement for convergent validity was achieved.

Construct	Item	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Reward_Politics	RP4	0.749	0.740	0.912	0.596
	RP5	0.765			
	RP6	0.720			
	RP7	0.762			
Withdrawal_Behaviour	WB1	0.714	0.868	0.898	0.559
	WB2	0.710			
	WB4	0.734			
	WB5	0.794			
	WB6	0.801			
	WB7	0.731			
	WB8	0.743			

Table 3.1: Convergent Validity of Measurement Instrument

4. Results and Discussion

The power of prediction is the determination of the coefficient (R2) the coefficient of determination reveals the predictive power of the independent Variable (Reward politics,) on the dependent construct (Withdrawal behaviour). The R2 also signifies the level of variance in the dependent construct explained by the independent (Hair et al.,

2014). Figure 4:2 indicated that the entire four independent constructs in the structural model have a moderate effect on the endogenous construct with (R2 = 0.403). This shows that the coll independent constructs explains about 40 per cent of the variance in the endogenous construct (i.e., Withdrawal behaviour). Table 4.1 reveal that, reward politics (f2=0.125) has a moderate effect size on WB

Table 4.1 Effect Size

Constructs	WB	Effect size		
Reward politics	0.125	Moderate effect		

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original sample	Standard beta	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
H ₁	RP -> WB	0.341	0.349	0.063	5.430	0.000	Accepted

Table 4. 2: Significance Effect of Direct Path Coefficient

This study hypothesized that there is a significant connection between reward politics and withdrawal behaviour." The study suggested a positive and significant relationship between Reward politics and Withdrawal behaviour ($\beta = 0.349$, t = 5.43, The result of the study is p = 0.000). indicated in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, in other words, the regression weight for Reward politics in the prediction of withdrawal behaviour is significantly different from zero at the p-value of 0.000. Based on the results, it can be concluded that reward politics have a positive and significant relationship with Withdrawal behaviour. Thus, the hypothesis (H1): There is a positive relationship between Reward politics and Withdrawal behaviour is accepted.

This study asserts that many university lecturers in northeast Nigeria have demonstrated that preferential treatment in rewards is one of the root causes of withdrawal behaviours Consequently lecturers in Nigerian universities are nowadays looking for jobs outside due to poor remuneration, incentives, and above all unfair conditions of service as well as internal office politics which often undermines staff wellbeing among academic faculties. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of (Nwizia Tordumbari Julius & and Alagah, 2017) and the study by Murtaza et al. (2022) which investigated the effect of perceived organizational politics and effort imbalance on work outcomes. The study is also in accord with Imran and Haque (2018) also ascertained that politics in the employee appraisal hurt employees' job performance as well as overall organizational outcomes. This study is in tandem with COR theory One of the pillars of the theory believes that of individuals the actions in anv organisation are usually driven by resource gain or loss, and politics in the workplace is usually influenced by self-interest promotion especially unfair application of rewards in universities has induced one of the vital resource losses in terms of lecturers' withdrawal behaviour. Scholars usually assess politics in organisations through the lenses of COR theory because of its applicability in explaining work stress-related studies (Abbas et al., 2021; Bon & Shire, 2022; Hobfoll et al., 2017).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Politics in workplaces like universities has a multiplier effect not only on the lecturers but including the students of the institution. Lecturers who perceive negative politics in their faculties are less committed to both research and teaching assignments which by implication affects the quality of graduates produced by the universities. This study recommends that University administrators should put in place strategies that will cartel political behaviour when it is dysfunctional, especially politics which undermines the efforts of others in the organisation. Policies by universities in terms of pay raises. appointments, performance awards, job placement and scholarship/conference, attendance shall be done fairly.

5.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Although the scope of this study is wide and the result of this study brought new issues on politics in universities, notwithstanding, it calls for further studies in the field of organisational politics because change in every organization is inevitable. This means that even the phenomena that cause politics and withdrawal behaviour equally change. This study focused on the negative aspects of organisational politics and withdrawal behaviour. Therefore, further studies should be conducted on the positive side of organisational politics. The study is cross-sectional and there is a need for a longitudinal study as well as a qualitative study because much of the empirical evidence available are quantitative in their approach.

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