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Workplace politics: A citadel for administrative manipulation in selected tertiary institutions in rivers state

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Abstract

The increasing rate of workplace politics and administrative manipulation has been a great challenge to Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. The study examined workplace politics and administrative manipulation in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, specifically looked at how misuse of power result to conflict and poor leadership as a result of workplace politics. The internet, theses, and journals assisted in sourcing for relevant and vital literature to the topic "Workplace Politics: A citadel for Administrative Manipulation in Tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The findings from the literatures studied led to the conclusion and recommendations. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the dimension of the study to the measures of the study and that organizational culture is a

confirmed moderator of workplace politics and administrative manipulation. The study recommended that, The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should avoid misuse of power and ensure standard procedures and processes are followed. Promotion of staffs is done based on merit and not for selfish interests. Encourage just and equitable playground for their staffs where every individual irrespective of personal interest will be treated fairly and justly. Avoid witch hunting employees who they feel are not in support of their views or opinions and also avoid hording information from certain individuals in the organization. They should ensure that the culture adopted should be one that does not allow for misuse of power and also frowns deeply against administrative manipulations

Keywords: Workplace politics, Administrative Manipulation, Misuse of power, Conflict, incompetent leadership

Introduction

One of the greatest problems most Tertiary Institutions face in Rivers State is due to unhealthy workplace politics which has given birth to a disaster called "administrative Manipulation". Mcshane and Glinow (2000) ^[12] defined workplace politics as an attempt to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives. However, for the purpose of this study, we would define Workplace politics as a process and also an act of using power or authority to influence administrative processes and procedures for the purpose of achieving personal gains or interest. Other researchers have seen it as an unmerited means of attaining power for personal interests. This validated the view of Dubrin in Shamaila and Aylia (2012) ^[17] who considered workplace politics as an unofficial advancement for attaining power. Nihat, Samet and Ozgur (2016) ^[13] defined workplace politics as the use of power in order to obtain results that either not approved by the workplace or organization or use tools that are also not approved by the organization.

Eze (2011) ^[4] opined that workplace politics is a self-serving behavior which seeks to achieve self-interests, and benefits out of the expense of others. This means, management make decisions influenced by people's personal benefits or interests, such organization is being political. Workplace Politics is linked to a human personality trait called Machiavellianism, which means employing cunningness and duplicity in workplace. It is named after the 15th century Renaissance historian and political theorist, Niccolò Machiavelli.

The ugly face of workplace politics could actually be seen in the mirrors of university administrative control. This could range from attaining power by hook or crook, promotion of persons to unmerited positions due to personal interests, bending of rules, regulations and organizational policies to suit certain persons within the university, victimization of employees and hording vital information from an even flow just because you don't want certain persons to have access to such information which of course they should. In the words of Goldstein, Read, and Cashman, (2009) ^[7] information can be distorted, misdirected or surprised in order to manipulate a situation for short term interest. This in return has cracked the shell of administration in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

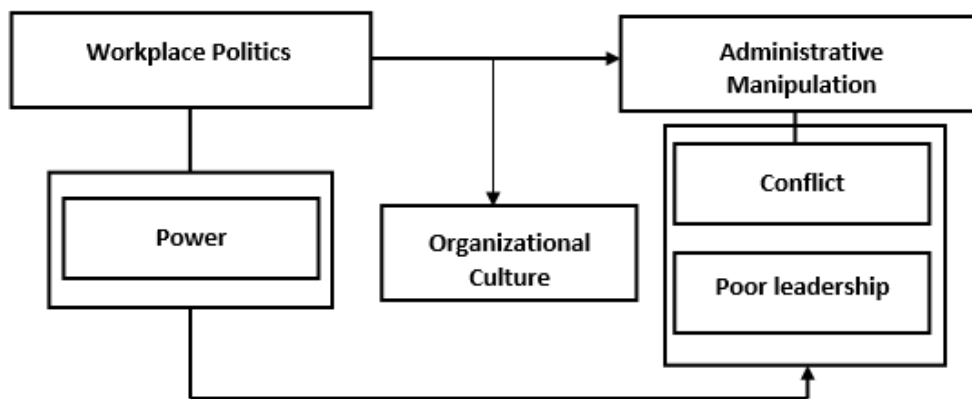
Today, unmerited promotion of certain employees against those that merit it, undue removal of vital administrative positions from the hands of certain people due to personal interests, subverting of information meant for all to oneself due to selfish gains is now the order of the day which has further caused a huge conflict amongst employees in the university as well as grave incompetence in leadership. This is one big fact that affects administrative procedures and processes. According to Karen (2014) [8] opined that workplace politics is the pursuit of individual agenda and self interest in an organization without regard to their effect on the organizations efforts to achieve its goals or objectives, or organizational development and sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

Ferris and Kacmar (2011) [5] Opined that actors in tertiary

intuitions often engage in workplace politics because of securing and maximizing personal interests. Today, this thought has given birth to the rise of administrative manipulation in tertiary institutions in Rivers State due to the unhealthy romance of politics and administration in the workplace. Issues such as workplace deceit, hoarding of vital information from certain employees, victimization, conflict of interest and gross incompetence in leadership is now at the fore front of administration due to unhealthy workplace politics. Therefore, it is the purpose of the study to identify the extent of relationship that exists between workplace politics and Administrative manipulation in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. Specifically, looking at how Power influences administrative manipulation which was measured with workplace conflict and Poor leadership while organizational culture stood as the moderating variable.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Research Desk, (2021).

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of the relationship between Workplace Politics: A citadel for Administrative Manipulation in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Review of Relevant Literature

Workplace Politics

Just as humans cannot exist without politics, so are organizations. This means organizational workplace is characterized in one way or the other with certain political elements. Politics have been regarded as critical factor in the workplace. However, its role in manipulating administrative processes and installing poor leadership to pilot the affair of the organization cannot be overemphasized. Ferris and Kacmar (2011) [5] defined workplace politics as the amount to which employees observe their work setting as political in nature which results to make them feel their workplace is unfair and unjust. Every organization has a goal they are set out to achieve before their individual goals. However, workplace politics tend to put the individual interest above organizational interest. Irrespective of the possible benefits organizations can derive from playing politics in the workplace, workplace politics remains a stronghold in manipulating the administrative process of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Overtime, we have observed that certain individuals are promoted before those that merit the promotion, this in return affect employees relationship and it goes further to create conflict amongst them because, those that are not qualified for a given position are appointed to occupy such positions due to personal interest. For instance, we see quiet often where an assistant lecturer will be appointed Head of

department over the senior lecturers in departments on the platform of who is loyal and who is not. Merit is not-longer a thing of merit but of interest. This most times brings on board incompetent leadership to pilot the affairs of the organization and further divide the employees.

Uzoigwe (2009) [19] posited that efficient and effective management of workplace politics and work conflict are fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevalent situation in Nigeria universities constitute a reversal of the reality. When self-interest is carried above that of the interest of the organization, failure most times is inevitable.

Types of Workplace Politics

There are basically 4 types of workplace politics developed by Michael Jarrett;

The Weed

The Weed is politics supported by personal influence and informal networks within an organization rule. It is a dynamic that grows naturally, without any maintenance. He asserts that, dealing with the weeds will require getting involved to understand the strength and weakness of the informal network at play, identify the key brokers, so as to understand whether they are doing more harm than good.

The Rock

The Rock describes power that rests on individual interactions and formal sources. It might include influence arising from membership of high status group within the organization. This politics relies on formal sources of power, rather than fighting against them. The Rock is equivalent to the kind of power and political behaviour that inspired Max Weber on his classic book Bureaucracy.

The High Ground

The High Ground combines formal authority with organizational rules, guidelines, structure and procedures that form the basis of political activities within the organization. It provides guide rails for the rocks that are a functional political process that uses structures of control systems, incentives and sanctions that keeps the organization in compliance.

The Wood

The Wood is politics derived from organizational implicit norms, hidden assumptions and unspoken routines. It provides cover and safety for people in your organization. Michael asserts that this quadruple proposition helps to understand the political terrain which help Chief Executives fight dysfunctional politics within an organization.

Concept of Power

Power is one of the critical dimensions of workplace politics. It has the capacity to mar your organization when used wrongly or misused and can also make your organization if used wisely and evenly. Scholars overtime have emphasized the use of power to avoid administrative manipulation which in return could cripple the system. Vince, (2001) ^[20] opined that workplace politics may mute the voices and opinions of employees in the organization. Accordingly, because of management or those occupying top positions have power to hire and fire, even when these employees feel organizations are treating them unfairly and unjustly, they cannot speak because of the fear of losing their jobs knowing full well that if they cough, those who have power might fire them?

Ogwuche (2014) ^[14] posited that both politics and power are significant parts of human behavior as they affect the ability to secure one's goals and interest in a social system. Power when misused is a critical predictor of workplace conflicts and poor leadership. This is often seen in Nigerian Universities where those who have power to make appointments such as VCs, Deans and HODs tend to make these appointments based on personal interests and bias which goes against administrative procedures and processes. Similarly, during promotion of staffs we tend to see the hands of workplace politics thwarting due processes as those who are perceived to be loyal even if they don't get to be qualified for such promotion will be promoted and this overtime metamorphoses into witch haunting of fellow colleagues. We cannot deny the fact that workplace politics has its benefits it brings to organizations or institutions but in same vein, the negative effect on administrative control is worrisome. Imagine, being underrated and overlooked down on just because you don't support certain views of those in power.

Administrative Manipulation

Administrative manipulation is defined as the process of distorting administrative processes and procedures for selfish gains or personal interests. It could also be seen as an act by

which individuals use indirect means to achieve their goals. These goals are most times achieved at the expense of their colleagues and organization, even if it means bringing them down. This is usually seen in the atmosphere of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State where promotions are not always done based on merit but on who can protect one's interest up there. Vital information are being subverted on a daily basis. The likes of Curtis (2003) ^[3] and Poon (2003) ^[16] opined that workplace politics restricts information sharing and communication.

We tend to see staffs long due for promotion but not promoted whereas, those who are not qualified for such positions or promotion are being promoted on a daily bases. It is a fact that workplace politics and organizations can never be separated. However, it should be played on a merit bases as it is the administration of the institution that carries the burden of unhealthy workplace politics. The following are the measure of administrative manipulation.

Workplace conflict

Conflict has its origin in difference, in objectives, interest efforts, approach, timing attitudes and others. Conflict is defined as an overt behaviour arising out of a process in which one unit seeks the advancement of its own interest in its relationship with others (Lamner, 2009) ^[9]. The workplace has never been peaceful or without conflict because, people who make up organizations come from different walks of life, have different believes and culture and as such conflict is an inevitable factor of every organization. Gerardi, (2011) ^[6] workplace conflict is an expression of dissatisfaction within the employment relationship especially those pertaining the employment contract and the collection bargaining. Marshall, (2004) ^[11] viewed workplace conflict as resulting from the incompatible interest of workers and employers in the workplace; disagreement arising when the terms and the conditions of employment clash resulting from opposing view held by the management participant in the workplace fashioned according to their steps and position on the organizational location.

Workplace conflict is one of the children of administrative manipulations and when not managed very well could lead to organizational breakdown. When employees begin to feel they are not treated fairly and justly, it give room for conflicts between employees and management staffs. And because employees feel cheated and underrated, their performance scale will be brought to a minimal level. It will further lead to communication gap amongst these employee and management which in return affects the day to day running of the Institutions. Decisions will be made without due consultation. The misuse of power is one of the causes of workplace conflict. Take for instance where employees feel they are treated unjustly compared to their counterparts in terms of promotion and appointment etc. no wonder Crossman (2016) ^[2] posited that conflict arises when resources, status and power are distributed unequally.

Incompetent leadership

Workplace politics is one of the foremost contributors of incompetent individuals occupying vital positions in the organization not because they deserve or merit the position but because they are there to serve some personal or selfish interests, this in return affects administration badly. Today, in Nigerian Universities, we could see how those who are not qualified for certain positions are made to occupy such

positions all in the name of interest and when they do, they begin to hunt their colleagues that never supported and also doctor genuine administrative processes and procedures.

Workplace politics most times result into incompetent leaders (Yara, 2017) ^[23]. Take for instance, the Vice Chancellor (VC) of a faculty decides to always repeat a particular person or individual as Head of Department (HOD), not because the person is capable to man such position but because they can easily manipulate them administratively, where decisions that concern the department or faculty will only be made to favour certain individual interests. With this, one can boldly say, misuse of power can result to incompetent leadership of the organization which in return would affect administrative procedures and processes negatively.

Moderating effect of Organizational Culture on Workplace Politics and Administrative Manipulation.

Organizational culture according to Schein, (2004) ^[18] is as set of shared assumptions, values, and norms that guide employee behaviours within an organization. The culture of an organization define to a huge extent how far workplace politics can go which also affects how administrative procedures are being manipulated to suit personal interest of certain employees. Again, if the culture of the organization does not permit for such selfish and personal interest, it will not stand. This means that organizational culture is a confirmed moderator of workplace politics.

Campbell and Goritz (2014) ^[1] found that even when organizations have a code of conduct, employees do not take them seriously if it is not enforced and there are no consequences. These scholars posited that, just setting rules and regulations or code of conducts to curb workplace politics is not enough and that organizations should go further to enforce them. Organizational culture is a critical part of building against administrative manipulation. Thus, if the culture of the organization promotes unhealthy workplace politics such that, it keeps blind eyes to merits and encourages administrative manipulations, such organization is bound to experience great employee divide which will result to conflicts and incompetent leaders running the affairs of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Empirical Reviews

Mande, Onyeizugbe and Muzah (2018) ^[10] conducted a research on organizational politics and workplace conflict in selected tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between organizational politics and workplace conflict in selected tertiary institutions in Edo State. Having done analysis, the findings of the study revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between self-interest and communication breakdown of selected tertiary institutions in Edo State, based on the findings, the study concluded that organizational politics leads to workplace conflict. The study therefore, recommended that the management of tertiary institutions should put more effort in the supervision of staffs so as to manage the extent / level of organizational politics.

Wilson and Judge (2012) carried out a study on workplace politics and employee performance in using 4 manufacturing firms. The study was guided by two research questions and descriptive research survey research design was used. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study revealed that workplace politics has a negative effect on employee performance.

Negative Side of Workplace Politics

Conflict: Conflict is inevitable in any organization, where there are more than two persons working together for common goal. Politicking is workplace improve the tendency for conflict in an organization. It is possible that the most qualified person will not be chosen ahead of those that know how to manage their way and very close with power that be, in an organization. Those who felt cheated may find it difficult to work harmoniously with the selected person. Organization must put in place various mechanism to resolve resultant conflict from workplace politics.

Poor Leadership

Workplace politics most times result into incompetent leaders (Yara, 2017) ^[23]. Leadership most time is not only about academic qualifications. It requires personal qualities such as ability to work under pressure, investigative ability, listening hear, forecasting skills, planning and decision making ability etc. These, most times do not come with academic qualifications and training. Lobbying and politicking in workplace may not give room for evaluation of the above mentioned abilities, resulting into defective leadership.

Broken Trust

Workplace politics breeds hatred and lack of trust in an organization. Those that were outsmarted may find it difficult to work with the chosen one. The outsmarted staff will not be able to trust the selected person, and may find it difficult to have informal communication with such person.

Methods

The method used in this paper is the secondary data collection method from the relevant sources of research, scholarly works, articles and government sources. These data were intensively reviewed to gather the needed information that will help to identified and proffer solution on the causes of administrative manipulation in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The literature reviewed showed that the impact of workplace politics affects administrative procedures. Haven examined the relationship between workplace politics and administrative manipulation in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, the findings of the literature revealed that Workplace politics negatively influence administration. The findings also revealed that misuse of power in workplace leads to employee conflicts and incompetent leadership to run the affairs of administration. The study went further to reveal that, the culture of the organization is a confirmed moderator of both workplace politics and organizational performance.

Conclusion

In line with the findings of this study and to the extent of its consistency with results of similar literatures studied, the study concluded that workplace politics leads to administrative manipulation and that it leads to employee conflict and poor leadership. They study also concluded that organizational culture plays a moderating role between workplace politics and administrative manipulation. If workplace politics is not managed properly, administrative collapse of Tertiary institutions in Rivers Stat will be inevitable.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended that;

1. The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should avoid misuse of power and ensure standard procedures and processes are followed for occupying vacant posts or positions and these standards must be met to avoid undue advantage.
2. The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should ensure promotion of staffs is done based on merit and not for selfish interests as this will reduce conflict and promote competent hands in leadership positions.
3. The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should promote just and equitable playground for their staffs where every individual irrespective of personal interest will be treated fairly and justly as it will help to reduce conflict and also promote team spirit.
4. The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should avoid witch hunting employees who they feel are not in support of their views or opinions and also avoid hording information from certain individuals in the organization by doing so, organizations will increase Staff efficiency.
5. The Management of Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should ensure that the culture adopted should be one that does not allow for misuse of power and also frowns deeply against administrative manipulations.

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