



## Political influence and human resource management (HRM) in Niger delta university teaching hospital

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### Abstract

Examining the impact of politics on human resource management (HRM) at the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital is the goal of the study. The Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital has a number of issues that make it more difficult for it to carry out its duties in an efficient manner. The politicization of HRM with regard to hiring, placement, and compensation of civil servants, as well as their advancement and demotion, is one of these issues. Patronage-based hiring procedures have led to redundancy issues in the health institution, where harsh measures such as staff suspension and termination of appointment are rarely considered. People at the top of HRM found it extremely challenging to operate in a political workplace in this setting.

It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of politics on human resource management (HRM) in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. This study is anchored on the Elite Theory. The study adopts descriptive survey design. Due to the small size and category of the population 137 (30%) of the total population was sampled and, stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample size of staff from the health Institution. Data for this study is gathered through primary and secondary sources which include questionnaires, personal observation, textbooks, magazines and journals. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) is employed to analyze the research questions, with a criterion mean of 2.5 is used. There is a strong political influence on the Human Resource Management in staff recruitment, promotion, and Employees recommendation by Politicians in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. In view of the findings this study amongst other recommends that there should be an alignment of HR strategies with ethical principles and fostering a culture of accountability, organizations that can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of political pressures on human resource decisions and processes And finally, concluded that HR professionals can play a critical role in fostering a public service that is both accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizenry.

**Keywords:** Human resource management (HRM), patronage-based hiring, redundancy issues, political influence

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### Introduction

The Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital plays a crucial role in providing healthcare services to the people of the Niger Delta region and Bayelsa state in particular. However, the hospital has faced numerous challenges, including political interference in its human resource management practices. Understanding the historical and contextual background of these challenges is essential for comprehending the complexities of the current situation. This study aims to delve into the intricate dynamics of political influence on human resource management in the context of the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. By examining the historical factors that have shaped the hospital's HRM practices, we can gain valuable insights into the obstacles it faces today. Moreover, a deeper understanding of the background will shed light on the potential solutions and strategies for mitigating the negative impact of political influence on the hospital's HRM processes.

In doing so, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the intersection of politics and HRM in the healthcare sector, with a specific focus on the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital has been confronted with several problems which militate against the effective performance of their functions. One of such problems is the politicization of HRM in terms of recruitment, selection and placement, compensation, promotion and demotion of civil servants. Recruitment practices based on patronage have created problems of redundancy in the institution where stern measures like termination of appointment and suspension of staff are rarely contemplated. In this situation, those who are in charge of HRM found it very difficult to work in a politicized working environment.

Furthermore, the Governor, State House of Assembly members, and Commissioners recruit and place their relations, friends, and political sympathizers or party members into Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital without due regard to rules and regulations or in keeping with manpower requirement of the HRM in the Hospital. The impact of this on the inefficiency that characterized poor health service delivery in the Hospital stems largely from the politicization of staff recruitment, compensation, promotion and discipline in this health institution. In essence, the end product results are the employment of candidates not on merit but rather on the choice of the ruling class. Politicization of HRM has always perverted the Weberian principles of bureaucracy. Promotion, recruitments, and appointments of staff to positions and offices are far near the qualifications and professional competencies of the incumbents rather it is based on whom one knows and one's connection or relationship with those at the control of political and administrative powers in Bayelsa State. This effect means that mediocrity is gradually taking over meritocracy in the process of recruitment and placement in the Bayelsa State tertiary owned institutions. The unending complaints from the populace about low productivity and poor health service delivery by the health institution have an issue of great concern over the years. Inyang (2001) <sup>[3]</sup> strongly noted that, the civil service has a penchant for recruiting untrained and unqualified personnel and does little or in most cases makes no attempt to train and develop its personnel even after recruiting them. It is against all this backdrop that this study will be examining the political influence on human resource management (HRM) in Bayelsa State owned Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives

1. To examine the influence of politics on employee recruitment in Human Resource Management at the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.
2. To examine the influence of politics on promotion and demotion of staff in Human Resources in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### Research Questions

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, the following research question will be posed:

1. What influence does politics have on employee

recruitment at the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital?

2. What is the influence of politics on promotion and demotion of staff in Human Resources in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital?

### Significance of the Study

The result of this research will no doubt inform decision making on employee recruitment, promotion and demotion of staff in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### Literature Review

#### Conceptual Framework

#### Human Resource Management

The field of human resource management (HRM) has become increasingly crucial in today's rapidly evolving business landscape, as organizations recognize the pivotal role that their workforce plays in driving success and innovation. Over the years, the HR function has evolved from a mere administrative role to a strategic partner, responsible for aligning employee goals with organizational objectives.

The history of HR management can be traced back to the early 20th century when organizations began to recognize the need for formal policies and practices to manage their employees more effectively. As the Industrial Revolution gained momentum, the focus shifted from a purely transactional approach to a more holistic view of employee management, encompassing areas such as recruitment training, and compensation (Kaufman, 2009) <sup>[4]</sup>. During this period, the role of the "personnel manager" emerged, responsible for handling employment-related tasks and fostering harmonious labor-management relations.

However, as the business environment grew more complex, the limitations of this traditional personnel management approach became increasingly apparent. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of the human resource management (HRM) paradigm, which emphasized the strategic alignment of an organization's human capital with its overall goals and objectives. (Qadeer, 2014) <sup>[6]</sup> This shift in perspective has been critical in driving the evolution of HR, as it has transformed the function from a purely administrative role to a strategic partner responsible for driving organizational performance.

#### Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital Bayelsa State

The hospital was established in 1982 as a cottage hospital located at Okolobiri; Okolobiri is a community in Gbarain-Ekpetiama in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The cottage hospital was built by the then Old Rivers State Government of Chief Melford Okilo's Administration. The conception and implementation of the cottage hospital brought the opportunity to the people in that locality to access medical care. It remained a cottage hospital until the creation of Bayelsa State in 1996 by General Sani Abacha's led administration.

As a State, it became imperative to upgrade the cottage hospital into a General hospital as part of the state's developmental agenda. The upgrading was implemented by the military administrator, Group Captain Phillip Ayeni in 1996. With the establishment of the Niger Delta University and the College of Health Sciences in Bayelsa State, there was an urgent need to train medical students, house officers, nurses and students from other paramedical disciplines.

It is in this light that the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital was established in September 2007 by upgrading the General Hospital to the status of a teaching Hospital.

One of the HR theories is the organizational lifecycle theory. This is the first human resource management theory. Historians and academicians have observed that organizations, just like that of living organisms, have life cycles. They are born (established or formed), they grow and develop, they reach maturity, they begin to decline and age, and finally, in many cases, they die.

The study of the organizational life cycle (OLC) has resulted in various predictive models. These models, which have been the subject of considerable academic discussion, are linked to the study of organizational growth and development. Organizations at any stage of the life cycle are impacted by external environmental circumstances as well as internal factors. The rise and fall of organizations and entire industries have been witnessed. Products also have life cycles, a fact that has been long recognized by marketing and sales experts. It seemed reasonable, for academicians, to conclude that organizations also have life cycles.

### **Political Influence in Human Resource Management in Niger Delta Teaching Hospital**

Politics has encroached and permeated the recruitment and selection processes in Ondo State civil service. The political heavyweights more often than not take advantage of their privileged positions to reward their political thugs who worked strenuously to see them emerge victorious during the electoral process with appointment into the state civil service. Similarly, there are cases where recruitment and selection into the state civil service are based on the concept of "godfatherism", which throws merit criteria to the wind. Furthermore, another trend in meddling politics in the recruitment and selection processes is the need to compensate party loyalists. In this situation, principal officers of the party are usually allowed to nominate a given number of persons for appointment in the service. Members of the state house of assembly, commissioners, and special advisers to the governor are also privileged to nominate people for the same purpose. The basis for this kind of appointment is always political affiliation. More so, it is no longer news that the transition to a new government always heralds appointments of people from the same locality, relations, friends, and associates of the governor into the public service. That explains why whenever there is a change of government; the dialect of the new governor assumes the lingua franca in the state government house. This shows that people from the same locality as the number one citizen are likely to be given undue consideration for appointment even when there is an obvious employment embargo.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The foundation of this research will be Elite Theory. This notion can be traced back to Pareto's Elite Circulation Law from 1968. According to Pareto, elites rule over people all the time, with the exception of brief periods (Delican, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>. According to him, the history of men is essentially the story of how certain elites are always replaced as one rises to a lower position; this is the true phenomena, even though it frequently takes on a different appearance for us (Delican, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>. According to the thesis, the majority of power is held by a small minority that is made up of members of the economic elite and networks that formulate public policy;

this power is said to be unaffected by democratic elections. Pareto used elites as a stockyard to further categorize social strata. The others, or non-elites, are viewed as belonging to the bottom stratum, whereas elites represent the superior stratum. Since there isn't just one elite stratum in his opinion, he highlights it even more and breaks it down into smaller groupings. It is divided into several strata, all of which make up the elite stratum. The governing elite, which is made up of everyone else who either directly or indirectly holds a significant position in government, the non-governing elite, which is made up of everyone else in the elite stratum, and the political elite, which specifically and efficiently exercises political power, are the three main strata that make up the elite stratum (Delican, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>.

This background is associated with the Nigerian civil service scenario. The expression "man-know-man," which refers to the interaction between the general public and the Elites (those in positions of authority), is widely known among the populace. The people in issue are afraid of being ousted by anyone, which makes them pick more carefully who they give positions of authority or responsibility. When they are unable to continue holding the rotation of power and authority inside them, they would rather bring in or recruit members of their community, supporters, political heavyweights, and even their personal relations. This is also true for the civil service and other employment organizations, where Human Resource Managers anticipate working with employees they can get along.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design is suitable for this study because the researcher wishes to describe the impact of political influence in the Human Resource Management in the Niger Delta University teaching Hospital in Bayelsa State.

### **Population of the study**

The Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital has about 458 employees (Ogoina 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>, which consist of 93 nurses, 57 consultants, 45 administrative officers, 21 medical officers and the remaining 242 staff are other medical and non-medical health workers (Ogoina 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### **Sample size**

For populations under 1,000, a minimum ratio of 30 percent is advisable to ensure representativeness of the sample. Hence, this study sampled 137 staff which present 30% of the total number of staff in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### **Sampling Technique**

This study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to select 137 (30%) employees from the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. This is suitable in situations where the population is made up of several different categories that can be grouped into several strata and to select the sample size from the different categories of workers.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection is a self-developed questionnaire titled; 'Political Influence and Human Resource Management in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital Questionnaire' (Pihrmnduth). The questionnaire had a four-rating scale instrument items that examined the

influence of Politics on Human Resource Management in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital in Bayelsa State.

### Method of Data Collection

Data for this study were gathered through primary and secondary data which include, self-made questionnaires, personal observation, text materials, magazines, and journals. One hundred and thirty seven (137) copies of the instrument will be administered to the respondents in the Hospital based on the different departments. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) is used to answer the research questions.

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

This chapter presents a number of analyzed data and results subjects to further discussions and interpretation in the next

chapter. One Hundred and thirty seven (137) staff are used as the sample size for this study.

### Research Question

1. What influence does politics have on employee recruitment at the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital?

The first objective of the study is to examine political influence and Human Resource Management in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. Associated with this objective, Questions were raised to find out what is the impact of Politics on Human Resource Management in employee recruitment.

**Table 1:** The responses of staff from the Niger Delta University are presented below

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	ST.D.	Remark
1	Politicians influence who is employed during staff recruitment in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.	86	32	8	11	3.4	7.6	Accept
2	Employees recommended by Politicians are not more qualified than other applicants.	104	28	2	3	3.7	8.9	Accept
3	Politicians do not influence employee recruitment in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.	6	5	73	53	1.7	7.7	Reject

From the table above, it is observed that questions 1 and 2 have a mean above the criterion mean of 2.5. Therefore, Item 1 and 2 are accepted and indicate that there is political influence on Human Resource management on employee

recruitment.

2. What is the influence of politics on promotion and demotion of staff in Human Resources in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital?

**Table 2:** The responses of staff from the Niger Delta University are presented below

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	ST.D.	Remark
1	Employees are promoted based on their connections with politicians in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.	12	11	63	51	1.8	7.0	Reject
2	Staff are promoted based on qualification in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital	51	49	16	21	2.9	6.2	Accept
2	Politics influence Human Resource management on Demotion of staff in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.	33	56	27	21	2.7	6.1	Accept

### Summary of Findings

#### The results of the research show the following

1. There is a strong political influence on the Human Resource Management in staff recruitment in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.
2. Employees recommended by Politicians are not more qualified than other applicants.
3. Staff are promoted based on qualification in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.
4. Politics influence Human Resource management on Demotion of staff in Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital.

### Discussion

**Recruitment and Selection:** Political pressures can affect the selection process by prioritizing candidates aligned with the ruling party's ideology or specific agendas. This can undermine meritocratic hiring practices and lead to the appointment of unqualified individuals. HR professionals in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital are faced with the challenge of navigating political pressures while maintaining neutrality and objectivity. Maintaining **Neutrality and Objectivity:** They need to ensure that recruitment decisions are based on meritocratic principles and serve the best interests of the Health Institution and the public.

**Performance Management:** Political influences can also impact performance management systems. Priorities set by

the ruling party may influence performance criteria and accountability measures, potentially leading to a focus on achieving political goals rather than organizational objectives. This can also create redundancy among employees within the institution as most staff will not be productive.

**Compensation and Benefits:** Political decisions often impact the compensation and benefits packages offered to staff of the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital. Budget constraints or political priorities can affect salary increases, benefits packages, and retirement plans, potentially impacting employee morale and retention.

**Building Trust and Transparency:** Public trust in the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital is paramount. HR professionals need to prioritize transparency and accountability in all HR practices, ensuring that decisions are communicated clearly and supported by evidence.

**Developing Political Savvy:** Understanding the political landscape is essential for HR professionals in the public service. Developing political acumen and understanding the motivations and priorities of different political stakeholders is crucial for navigating the complex political environment.

### Conclusion

Political influence on public service HRM is a reality that cannot be ignored. While it can create challenges, it also presents opportunities for HR professionals to contribute to the public good and ensure effective and efficient service delivery. By navigating these challenges with integrity,

transparency, and political savvy, HR professionals can play a critical role in fostering a public service that is both accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizenry.

### **Recommendations**

In navigating the complex intersection between political influence and Human Resource Management (HRM), strategies for mitigating negative political impact are crucial for organizational success. Transparent communication, stakeholder collaboration, and ethical leadership are essential to counteract negative political influences within organizational HR practices. By aligning HR strategies with ethical principles and fostering a culture of accountability, organizations can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of political pressures on human resource decisions and processes.

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