

ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF STAFF PERCEPTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of staff perception of organisational politics on the management of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 9,200 which comprised teaching and non-teaching staff members of three universities in Cross River State. The sample size of the study was 373 respondents drawn from the three universities using the multistage sampling technique and the Krecie and Morgan Table to select the sample size. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the actual respondents for the study. The instrument used for the collection of data for this study was a researcher-made questionnaire named “Perception of Organisational Politics on Management of University Questionnaire (POPMUQ)”. The validity index of the instrument was 0.77 while the reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained for the instrument using the Cronbach alpha method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while one sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study indicated that there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River State and there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State. Based on the findings, it was recommended for the purpose of enhancing the effective management of universities in Cross River State, the Vice-chancellors should appoint the heads of departments based and merit to avoid the appointment of mediocre staff that will not make useful contribution towards the efficient management of universities in the state.

Keywords: Organisational Politics, Management of Universities, Appointment of HODs and staff Recruitment

1. Introduction

Every university is the bedrock of national development and integration in any society. It is a leading pathway and the beacon of scientific advancement and technological breakthrough globally. Every university represents the most vital aspect of the educational system because it is the peak of all academic and scholastic activities. The importance of university education in any society cannot be overemphasized. As a result, its effective management is inevitable. Managing a university is a complex exercise that requires professionalism and requisite qualifications.

Management of a university constitutes the day-to-day running of the activities of universities by staff that are employed to work in the university system. It is the process of planning and coordinating the affairs of universities to achieve the stated goals and objectives of university education (Iyala, 2018).

Management of a university is a systematic process in which the management team mobilise both human and non-human resources towards the attainment of stated goals and objectives (Mande, Onyeizugbe & Musah, 2018)). Effective management of the university system plays a crucial role in building social cohesion, minimising inequalities and increasing the level of competencies, knowledge and skills within society. University management policy is aimed at maximising the individuals' potential concerning their personal growth and development and their contribution towards a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. Effective management of universities in Cross River State has become a nagging issue which may be attributed to the activities of organisational politics (Khan & Hussain, 2022; Kanu 2024; Kanu et al 2024). The politics in the management of universities in Cross River State is a result of power tussle, selfish interest and personal aggrandizement. In most cases, positions are not given to staff based on technical competence and ability but based on political connections. Also, rather than focus on seniority for certain appointments, political inclinations and ethnic affiliations sometimes formed the basis for the appointment of staff into different positions within the university system. The issue of organisational politics in the management and execution of policies in universities is unavoidable because education and politics are intertwined (Igbokwe, Chinyeaka, & Agbodike, 2015).

Organisational politics in this study is the act of politicising the process of managing the university system by the stakeholders through manipulating the rules without applying or observing the necessary due process for the effective management of the university setting. Such practices include the methods of appointment of unqualified persons, promotion of undeserving workers within the university and admission of students into certain professional courses. The above activities are carried out against the established due process and set standards. Pinga, Ivase & Nomayu, (2018) referred to organisational politics as a situation where due process is short-changed by pressure from people in powerful positions within an institution. The activities arising from the politics within the university system may give rise to a deviation from the application of the set standards to facilitate the effective management of universities. Politics prevent the management team of a university from applying the laid down procedures and guidelines for the successful operation of the university system. The manifestation of political influence in universities comes in a variety of ways such as the appointment of council members, directors, Heads of Departments, admission of students, promotion of staff, award of contracts, appointment of external examiners, staff development, staff evaluation, reward of staff for outstanding performance, staff supervision, allocation of students for supervision of projects, allocation of responsibilities to staff, constitution of committees among others (Iyala, Oyekan & Ogbo, 2019). In the Nigerian university system, the academic staff within the professorial cadre are eligible to be appointed as heads of departments. However, Senior Lecturers would be appointed in an acting capacity while Lecturers I and II could be appointed as coordinators (Dueze, & Inmpey, 2019). The interaction of the researcher with some lecturers in universities in Cross River State suggested that the appointment of heads of departments in universities in the state is often influenced by organisational politics. While lamenting the politicisation of the appointment of heads of departments (HODs), directors and staff into different committees in universities in Cross River State, Edet, Asuquo and Okon (2020) noted that politics is pervasive within the administrative

processes in all the universities in the state. It is quite unfortunate as sometimes, staff members lobby to be appointed heads of departments using their friends, relatives and other factors available within their reach to induce the Vice-chancellors to appoint them to head the departments at the detriment of the qualified ones. Mande, Onyeizugbe and Musah (2018) conducted a study and found that organisational politics adversely appointment of officers like heads of departments (academic and non-academic), giving rise to frequent conflicts among employees who feel denied, thereby reducing productivity. Oftentimes, politicians, interfere in terms of selection and choice of administrators of universities. In certain situations, some vice-chancellors use their influence against all odds to appoint their friends or people from their ethnic backgrounds to head different departments. Sometimes, the head of department position is reserved for the indigenes (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022)

Staff recruitment is another means through which organisational politics interfere with the management of the university system in Cross River State. Staff recruitment is the process of filling vacant positions with a qualified workforce to ensure that quality jobs are performed to achieve the goals of Universities. In the opinion of Odor, Martins-Emesom, & Bakwuye (2019) recruitment is a process which begins with getting an applicant motivated to write an application for a particular job in a particular organisation and the process stops when his application has been received by the organisation. Those seeking jobs are informed through advertisements using different communication media to create awareness in the minds of those willing to get a new job where vacancies exist. The criteria needed for the job are normally clearly stated so that those who feel they are qualified and have the potential to do the job can apply with ease. Recruitment into universities in Cross River State seems to be influenced by ‘godfatherism’, religious and ethnocentric factors that sometimes lead to the employment of some academic and non-academic staff with mediocre skills and knowledge that would not enhance the successful management of universities in the state. Badmus and Okiki (2022) conducted a study and found that there is a negative impact of politics on the recruitment of staff in tertiary institutions in Taraba State. In most cases, the available positions are shared among politicians, council members and influential management staff of universities. The names that will be submitted by such stakeholders are automatically employed irrespective of their performance during the interview session. Staff members who are employed through such processes may not be diligent in performing their assigned responsibilities to enhance the effective management of the university system (Ogunode et al, 2020).

The educational system of any society is a reflection of that society’s political system. This is so because education is financed by the government and managed through different government policies. When the politics are unfavourable to the rules and regulations guiding the management of universities, it becomes a negative influence because the set objectives of a university’s education may not be fully accomplished (Afolabi, Ekundayo & Ogiye, (2020). Several studies have been conducted on political influence on the management of universities in Nigeria, however, the issue of organisational politics remains a nagging problem in the management of the university system in Cross River State. This study investigated the staff impact of perception of organisational politics on the management of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the problem

The difficulties experienced in the process of enhancing the effective management of universities in Cross River State is a thing of concern to the stakeholders of university education in the state including the students, parents, academic and non-academic staff as well as the government. The major factor that militates against the successful management of universities in Cross River State

seems to be emanating from the politicisation of staff recruitment in the university system as the recruitment activities are dominated by the issues of ethnicity and “godfatherism”. The above situation has resulted in the employment of staff with mediocre skills. The recruitment of incompetent staff induces poor job performance that has reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of universities in Cross River State.

Furthermore, it is quite unfortunate as appointment and recruitment into universities in Cross River State are done on merit. Although quota system and zoning of certain offices and appointments may attempt to manage the diversity inherent in our society, it is often overshoot and its implementation has been laden with other political criteria like favouritism, godfatherism and political affiliation among others that are influencing poor management of the university system in the state. The foregoing problems prompted this study which investigated the impact of staff perception of organisational politics on the management of Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the impact of staff perception of organisational politics on the management of Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives of the study were:

- a. To determine the impact of staff perception on the appointment of heads of departments on the management of Universities in Cross River State.
- b. To examine the impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State.

4. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River state?
2. What is the impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁: There is no significant impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River State

HO₂: There is no significant impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State.

5. Methodology

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 9,200 academic and non-academic staff members obtained from the three universities in Cross River State. The sample size of the study consisted of 373 respondents drawn from the three universities using the multistage sampling procedure. The instrument used for collection was a questionnaire named “Perception of Organisational Politics on Management of University Questionnaire (POPMUQ)”. The validity index of the instrument was 0.77 while the internal coefficient of 0.75 was obtained after pilot testing the instrument. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

Research Question One: What is the impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River state?

Table 1: Staff perception of the impact of appointment of Head of Department on the Management of Universities (n=358).

S/ N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	Std.	Decisio n
1.	Tribal sentiment influences the appointment of Heads of Department which adversely affects university management	3.3 2	0.77	Perceive d
2.	Appointments of HOD have been based on religious affiliation which has negatively affected the management of the university	2.6 3	1.10	Perceive d
3.	Considering members of the same social groups during appointments has adversely affected the management of the university	2.9 6	0.91	Perceive d
4.	Those who are in the good books of the authorities are often appointed and this makes management unproductive	3.1 5	0.99	Perceive d
5.	Relationship with higher authorities influences the Appointment of Heads of Department thereby reducing the effectiveness of workers	3.0 8	0.99	Perceive d
6.	Political affiliation has influenced the Appointment of Heads of Departments and this has taken a toll on the management of the university	2.8 7	0.93	Perceive d
7.	Belonging to the same clique influences Appointment thereby making the university not to be productive	2.9 0	0.93	Perceive d
8.	Consideration has been given to people who can give kickbacks and this has increased bribery among university management	3.0 7	0.93	Perceive d
Cluster Mean		2.9 9	0.95	Perceiv ed

Table 1 above shows that the staff of Universities in Cross River State universities have an acceptable level of perception of the impact of tribal sentiments, religious affiliation, membership of social groups, favourites of authorities, relationship with authorities, political affiliation, membership of cliques, bribery and corruption, favouritism and indigenisation as factors influencing the appointment of Head of Department by the university management (Decision point ≥ 2.5). However, with a grand mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 2.99 which is greater than the criterion mean($\bar{X}$)

of 2.50, it was taken that the staff perceived that the appointment of heads of departments has a positive impact on the management of Universities in Cross River state.

Research Question Two: What is the impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River state?

Table 2: Staff perception of the impact of staff recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State (n=358)

S/ N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	Std, Decision	
9.	Recruitment has been influenced by religion and this reduces efficiency.	3.3 2	0.99	Perceive d
10.	Sharing the same political party influences the recruitment of staff and this has killed meritocracy.	2.6 3	0.87	Perceive d
11.	Tribalism influences staff recruitment and this has made the university more like a village square	2.9 6	1.03	Perceive d
12.	Belonging to a similar social club influences recruitment and this has reduced productivity in the university.	3.1 5	0.89	Perceive d
13.	People who come from the local of the university are considered qualified and this has gradually killed the university administration.	3.0 8	0.97	Perceive d
14.	People from high political forces are recruited and this has rendered the university workforce redundant.	3.0 1	1.01	Perceive d
15.	Belonging to the same social-cultural groups influences recruitment which reduces the status of the university to ethnic.	2.9 0	0.95	Perceive d
16.	Godfatherism influences recruitment and this has reduced accountability in the university.	3.0 7	0.96	Perceive d
Cluster Mean		3.0 1	0.96	Perceive d

Table 4 above shows clearly that staff of Cross River State universities perceive religion, political affiliation, tribalism, social-cultural grouping, same locality, bribery, foot leaking, high political forces and Godfatherism as factors influencing recruitment of staff of management of the university. (Decision point ≥ 2.5). Nevertheless, a grand mean score of 3.01 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5, which indicates that the staff of Cross River State universities accept that recruitment has a positive impact on the management of Universities in Cross River State.

7. Testing of Hypotheses

All the null hypotheses were tested using a t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Table 4-9 below:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River State

Table 3:

T-test Statistic showing the Impact of Staff Perception of Appointment of HODs on the Management of Universities

Variables	N	Df	t-value	P-value	Level of sig	Decision
Staff Perception of Appointment of HODs						
Management of Universities	358	356	47.42	0.000	0.05	Rejected

Results in table 3 showed the significant impact of staff perception of the appointment of the Head of Departments on the management of universities in Cross River State. The analysis of hypothesis one revealed that the p-value is 0.000 while the t-value is 47.42. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected which implies that there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of appointment of heads of Departments on the management of universities in Cross River State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State

Table 4:

T-test Statistic showing the Impact of Staff Perception of Recruitment on the Management of Universities

Variables	N	df	t-value	P-value	Level of sig	Decision
Staff Perception of Recruitment						
Management of Universities	358	356	48.64	0.002	0.05	Rejected

Results in table 4 showed the significant impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State. The analysis of hypothesis three revealed that the p-value is 0.002 while the t-value is 48.64. Since the p-value of 0.002 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected which implies that there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State.

8. Major Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study were:

1. There was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River State.
2. There was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State.

9. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of the appointment of heads of departments on the management of universities in Cross River State. These results agreed with the findings by Nwachukwu, Tamuno, Pepple, and Nchey-Achukwu, (2019) who ascertained that one major area where politics is noticeable in the university system is in the appointment of heads of departments. Oftentimes, politicians, interfere in terms of selection and choice of administrators of universities. It is quite unfortunate as sometimes, staff members lobby to be appointed heads of departments using their friends, relatives and other factors available within their reach to induce the Vice-chancellors to appoint them to head the departments at the detriment of the qualified ones. In certain situations, some vice-chancellors use their influence against all odds to appoint their friends or tribal people to head different departments. In some universities, the head of department position is reserved for the indigenes irrespective of their qualifications or work experience. The use of political factors and other inducements for the appointment of heads of departments against merit is preventing the effective management of universities in Cross River State as staff members with less working experience are sometimes appointed to head some departments.

The findings of the study further showed that there was a positive *significant* impact of staff perception of recruitment on the management of universities in Cross River State. The findings of the study disagreed with Malbus, et al (2018) who maintained that there is a negative impact of politics on the recruitment of staff in tertiary institutions in Taraba State. Inefficiency and mediocrity dominate the management of universities in Cross River State as internal arrangements and guidelines for staff recruitment are paving the ways for political considerations and influences. The outcome of the study is not surprising some politicians normally use their political positions to influence the employment of their relations and political associates to work in the universities. These acts by political officeholders have proven to be detrimental and hazardous to the achievement and sustainability of quality management of the university system. It is unfortunate as the vacant positions in universities are shared among politicians, council members and influential management staff of every university. The names of prospective staff submitted by such influential individuals are automatically employed irrespective of their performance during the interview session. Staff members who are employed through such processes may not be diligent in performing their assigned responsibilities to enhance the effective management of the university system

10. Conclusion

Organizational politics within the context of the governance of the university involves the informal, unofficial, and sometimes hidden actions and behaviours used to influence decisions, actions and outcomes within the university system. There are several aspects to this which can include: decision-making, information management, interest groups, conflict resolution, etc. Where this is effective, it can lead to improved decision-making, increased collaboration, and enhanced innovation. Given the importance of organizational politics in the university system, there is need for the provision of training on organizational politics and its impact, development of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills, offering of leadership development programs, fostering teamwork and collaboration, and encouragement of mentoring. In relation to the governance of universities in Cross Rivers State, the study concludes that organisational politics plays significant roles in the overall management of universities in Cross River State.

11. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings;

1. To enhance the effective management of universities in Cross River State, the Vice-chancellors should appoint the heads of departments based on merit to avoid the appointment of mediocre staff that will not make useful contributions towards the efficient management of universities in the state.
2. Staff recruitment in the university system should be conducted based on the guidelines for employment as stated by the National Universities; Commission (NUC) to ensure that only qualified individuals are employed to contribute towards effective management of universities in Cross River State.
3. As regards policy recommendations, there is need to establish clear communication channels to reduce rumors and misinformation, develop and implement transparent policies and procedures, foster a culture of openness, trust, and accountability, encourage employee participation in decision-making processes, and provide training on conflict resolution and management.
4. In relation to administrative recommendations, there is need to regularly assess staff perception of organizational politics, address issues promptly to prevent escalation, foster collaboration among departments and units, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and recognize and reward outstanding performance.
5. The leadership is recommended demonstrate transparency and accountability, lead by example in promoting ethical behavior, foster a positive work environment, encourage open communication, and address conflicts promptly.

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