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PERCEIVING ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND GETTING SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED WITH JOB

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated perception of organizational politics and how it affects workers' job satisfaction. Two levels of organizational politics were considered, namely, group level and organizational level. Two hundred and three (203) employees participated in the study which employed ex post facto design. Scales used in the study include 9-item modified perception of organizational politics scale originally developed by Ferris and Kacmar (1992), 6-item perception of group politics and 10-item job satisfaction scale by Adanijo (1987). Independent t-tests were used to test the study's three hypotheses. It was found that perception of politics at the management or organizational level affected employees' job satisfaction significantly. There was no significant difference in the way male and female employees perceived politics at the organizational level. Similarly, male and female employees did not report job satisfaction differently. The findings point to the fact that organizational policies need to always recognize the need for eliminating intense politics in the work place to boost workers' job satisfaction and productivity. Findings also point to the need for harmonizing goals of employees and their organizations.

Keywords: *Politics, perception, job satisfaction, productivity, gender*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational politics is inevitable in organizations and is viewed as a fact of life in modern worksites (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005). While describing organizational politics as attempts to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives, Vigoda and Kapun (2005) also view the construct as involving use of discretionary behaviours - neither explicitly prescribed nor prohibited. The authors contend that politics may be good or bad for the organization.

Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989) define organizational politics as behaviour strategically designed to maximize the self-interests of individuals, behaviour that thereby conflicts with the collective organizational goals or the interests of other individuals. Essentially, organizational politics is the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair (Ferris, Fedor, Chachere & Pandy, 1989). Ferris and Kacmar (1992) have argued that the higher the perceptions of politics are in the eyes of an organization member, the lower in that person's eyes is the level of justice, equity and fairness. Organizational

performance is also examined through the eyes of employees.

Organizational politics has been studied along 3 levels of analysis - individual activity (Farrell and Peterson, 1982), subgroup behaviour and the collective behaviour of the whole organizational group. Mintzberg (1983, 1985) views organizational politics as reflecting action beyond the parameter of accepted organizational behaviour that are designed to promote self interest.

According to Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989), organizational politics is a social influence process in which behaviour is strategically designed to maximize short term or long term self interest, which is either consistent with or at the expense of others' interest. Politics also refers to the process of plotting or scheming for power, recognition and adulation within an organizational set up. Inevitably, every individual or group participates in politics either as a political actor or as a political audience. This is due partly to scarcity of resources and other necessities or good things of life.

In an attempt to have or grasp a fair share of limited resources, therefore, individuals or groups in and outside organizations adopt various means of getting the best out of the system to meet their needs. In organizations, the way politics is played as well as perception of organizational politics both affect employees' job satisfaction.

Among the necessary ingredients that are needed for the smooth running of industries and organizations in modern days are power and politics. Power may be defined as a potential to control or influence others with or without their consent. Leadership is viewed as the revolving point of administration. The social power and politics that are being exercised in an organization emanate from leadership.

Leaders achieve their goals, vision and missions through routine decisions. Good decisions derive from the legitimate authority that leaders are given to lead and direct others within the organization. Legitimate authority to lead and direct is referred to as power and managers exercise their discretion in adopting the type of power to be adopted.

French and Raven (1959) have identified five bases of power: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent power bases. The type of power that a leader uses is discretionary and sometimes situation-specific. Therefore, caution must be taken so that the choice of power is not the destructive type. If the choice of power by leader is such that is high handed and destructive, this could lead to job dissatisfaction on the part of the subordinate.

Workplace politics is fallout from the exercise of power. This essentially takes place when managers take vital decisions that are not based on rational considerations, for instance sending an employee on training based on the employee's personal relationship with the manager rather on need and merit. Unrestrained workplace politics leads to job dissatisfaction among subordinates

concerned. Two levels of politics were considered in this study. These are politics at the organizational level and politics within work-group level.

Different types of organizational politics have been identified by researchers. For instance, Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) identified different types of organizational politics to include attacking and blaming, controlling information, forming coalitions, cultivating networks, creating obligations and managing impressions.

Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) have also viewed certain conditions as supporting organizational politics. Among these conditions are scarce resources, complex and ambiguous decisions, tolerance of politics and personal characteristics. The above conditions serve as ideal habitat for the emergence of power-seeking or influential behaviours that are targeted at various members of the intra- and extra-organizational sphere. This 'political behaviour' represents hidden dynamics, undercover activities, or other goal-seeking events that frequently conflict with the overall organizational goals.

An important focal point in organizational behaviour today is the organizational political metaphor developed by Mayes and Allen (1977) and Pettigrew (1973). Organizational political metaphor sees people as having a diverse set of objectives in social interactions, often related to power which leads to goal attainment. Human beings are said to be political animals. Therefore, power play in an organization influences employees positively or negatively depending on how the employees perceive the workplace. This could result to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. An-Ming (2001) carried out a study aimed at developing localized and suitable inventory for measuring perceptions of organizational politics in domestic enterprises and using the model proposed by Ferris et al. (1989). In this research, An-Ming (2001) found perceptions of organizational politics to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction, job stress and organizational commitment. Results of An-Ming's (2001) study further indicated that job tenure moderated the relationship between politics and job satisfaction.

Other variables obviously within an employee have also been found to influence perceptions of organisational politics (POP). For instance, a study by Ladebo's (2006) revealed that job ambiguity predicted perception of organizational politics. POP was negatively related to felt obligation and organisational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and positively associated with job distress. The relationship between POP and OCB was stronger when employees reported lower rather than higher levels of felt obligation toward the organisation. However, there was no significant moderating effect of felt obligation on the relationship between POP and job distress.

Denga (1996) defines job satisfaction as contentment experienced when need is fulfilled. Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) described satisfaction as a function of

difference between what is expected as a fair return and what is actually experienced. Whereas satisfaction refers to the contentment experienced when a need is fulfilled, motivation, a related term, refers to the drive and effort to satisfy a need or want. Lately, organizational politics has become an essential popular point of discourse in the management literature. Social scientists and management researchers (such as Ferris, Fedor, Chachere and Pondy, 1989 and Klein, 1988) have attempted to focus on defending and identifying the political behaviour in organizations and also investigated how politics influence industries positively or negatively. It is important to study workplace politics and job satisfaction for a number of reasons. First, workforce and the industrial setting in a given industry have the most influential impact in the attainment of job satisfaction by employees. Politics perceived within organizations has influence on the motivation of employees. Politics in the organization retard progress, block advancement among workers in the organization.

The understanding and acknowledgement of the primary issues involved in organizational politics and job satisfaction are among the essential requirements for the successful running of organizations. Nonetheless, often neglected is the fact that politics in the organization could wear a destructive mask if care is not taken.

Employees generally perceive politics and power play negatively. It is a double edge sword capable of reducing the productive capacity of any organization. Politics tends to have some negative consequences on employees who have been denied their rights, rewards and other incentives. Some of the problems of organizational politics include: victimization, partiality, favouritism, nepotism, which also leads to other problems such as absenteeism, late coming, turnover intention, perceived poor working environment, dissatisfaction and many others.

The present study has suggested various ways of improving politics perceived by employees in organizations. The study also sought to boost job satisfaction in employees of industries and organizations. Job satisfaction and productivity have been found to have a positive relationship. It is, therefore, assumed that boosting employees' job satisfaction will go a long way to impacting positively on the productivity of employees.

In this study, it has been hypothesized that:

1. Employees' perception of politics at the organizational level will significantly affect employees' job satisfaction.
2. Female workers will perceive politics more at the organizational level than their male counterparts.
3. Female employees will be significantly more satisfied with their jobs than male employees.

Methodology

Design

The study utilized ex post-facto design due to the fact that the researcher did not directly manipulate the variables in the study. Perception of organizational politics was considered at two levels, namely, organizational level and group level. Politics at organizational level referred to power play that occurred at the management level where organizational policies were manipulated by few decision makers to promote self interest. Within group politics referred to the maneuvering and domination of organizational policies by unit heads, supervisors, managers and cliques to the detriment of others. Job satisfaction is the dependent variable in this study.

Instruments

The questionnaire used in the study contained a section that tapped participants' demographic information such as sex, age, marital status, years of experience, educational qualification and official status. The questionnaire also contained the perception of organizational politics scale developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). The organizational politics scale contained 15 items. 9 of the 15 items measured politics at the organizational level while 6 items measured politics within the group level. Each of the 9 items measuring politics at the organizational level had a five point Likert format. Kacmar and Ferris (1991) originally obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.77 with item total correlation ranging from .62 to .87. The original items had a standard alpha of .94 and unequal length Spearman Brown alpha of .92. However, this researcher obtained for the items reliability coefficient of 0.74 with item total correlation ranging from .63 to .86. This researcher also obtained for the items Standard alpha of .93 and unequal length Spearman Brown alpha of .91.

The modified 6-item scale that measured organizational politics within the group level similarly had a five point Likert format. Kacmar and Ferris (1991) originally obtained reliability of .75 for the items. However, this researcher obtained for the items a reliability coefficient of .72 and an item total correlation that ranged from .47 to .84 with a standard item alpha of .89 and an equal-length Spearman Brown alpha of .85. A few of the items in both scales were reversed because they contained statements indicating positive attitudes towards politics.

The job satisfaction scale was used to assess employee's level of satisfaction on the job. The ten (10) items on the scale were initially generated and developed by Adanijo (1987). The Adanijo scale has five point Likert response pattern and a reliability coefficient of .93. This researcher obtained for the scale an item total correlation ranging from .68 to .95. Five items on the scale were scored in reversed form (Strongly Agree - 1 to Strongly Disagree 5) to prevent obvious participants' obvious understanding of item patterns. Also a standardized item alpha of .97 was calculated along with an equal Spearman-Brown coefficient alpha of .96.

Participants

Two hundred and three (203) first and second generation bank workers of different cadres participated in the study. The participants were drawn from three banks located in Lagos and Ibadan cities in Southwestern Nigeria. These banks, which existed on their own before the 2006 bank consolidation in Nigeria, were Equity Bank of Nigeria Limited, Societe Generale Bank Nigeria and Citizens International Bank Limited. Being new generation banks with high sales targets and other demands on their employees, it was assumed that organizational politics in these banks will be more intense compared to the old generation banks. Due to the recent consolidation of banks in Nigeria, the names of the above-mentioned banks have might have changed.

There were one hundred and forty-four males (70.9%) and fifty-nine females (29.1%). Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 64 years. Marital status of participants included eighty-seven (42.9%) married, ninety-two (45.3%) single, sixteen (7.9%) divorced and eight (3.9%) separated. Participants' self-reported work experiences were in two categories, namely, 1-5 years (75 participants) 6 years and above (128 participants). Participants' educational qualifications range from General Certificate and Senior Secondary School Certificate (GCE/SSSCE) holders (46), Ordinary National Diploma (OND) (84) and Higher National Diploma (HND) and above (73).

Procedure

For the purpose of completion by participants, eighty-five (85), eighty (80) and eighty five (85) questionnaires were distributed among Equity Bank, Societe Generale Bank, and Citizens International Bank Limited respectively. Although it was originally intended for the study, the random distribution of the questionnaires was no longer possible because of the tight work schedules that affected banks reported for their workers. Therefore, the managements of the affected banks distributed the questionnaires among their workers on behalf of the researcher. The researcher went to the banks a week later to pick up the completed questionnaires and code them preparatory for statistical analysis.

Results

It was stated in hypothesis one that employees' perception of politics at the organizational level will significantly affect employees' job satisfaction. This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent group design. The result, which showed that employees' perception of politics at the organizational level significantly affects employees' job satisfaction, is presented in Table 1. The hypothesis was accepted ($t = 7.89$, $df(201)$, $P < .05$).

Table 1: Summary of Independent T-Test Showing Difference in Satisfaction at Organizational Level Politics

Politics at Organization level	N	X	SD	df	T	P
Low	55	37.76	11.03	201	7.89	<.05
Satisfaction High	148	22.17	13.00			

Hypothesis two which stated that female workers will perceive politics more at the organizational level than their male counterparts was not supported. Results obtained showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of organizational politics at the organizational level between male and female employees. The hypothesis was not accepted ($t = .89, df(201), P < .05$).

Table 2: Summary of Independent T-Test Showing Gender Difference in Politics Perceived at the Organizational Level

Variable	N	X	SD	df	T	P
Male	144	33.61	10.18	201	.89	>.05
Female	59	35.01	9.97			

Hypothesis three stated that female employees will be significantly more satisfied with their jobs than male employees. This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test. From the results presented in Table 3, it was found that females were not significantly more satisfied with their jobs than their male counterparts. The hypothesis was not accepted ($t = .25, df(201), P < .05$).

Table 3: Summary of Independent T-Test Showing Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction

Variable	N	X	SD	df	T	P
Male	144	26.56	14.56	201	.25	>.05
Female	59	26.00	13.64			

Discussion

The study was aimed at understanding the perceptions of organizational politics and its effect on job satisfaction. The study tested three hypotheses. Hypothesis one which stated that employees' perception of politics at the organizational level will significantly affect employees' job satisfaction was accepted. The results of the present study confirmed the hypothesis. The finding corroborates the findings of Gandz and Murray (1980) and Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989). These previous research findings reported that the morale and consequently the satisfaction of workers on their jobs positively relate to perceived organizational politics experienced on the workers' job, especially at the organization level.

Results of this study did not support hypothesis two which stated that female workers will perceive politics more at the organizational level than their male counterparts. It appears that generally, more men than women in Africa are socialized

to be interested in and more sensitive to politics both within and outside organizations. The reality again seems to be that males tend to be more actively involved in politics than females.

Hypothesis three which stated that female employees will be significantly more satisfied with their jobs than their male counterparts was not supported by the findings of this study. The present research's findings seem to be suggesting that both male and female employees deserve equal levels of incentives in order to be motivated and consequently satisfied with their jobs. In the same manner, organizational policies for both sexes should be different only if and when they are evidence-based and necessary. This would encourage maximum output from employees irrespective of gender.

The present study has made significant contributions in highlighting how perception of organizational politics affects job satisfaction. Above all, findings of the study indicate that, if and when necessary, it is important to delineate political activities at all levels in organizations.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is important to observe that the study has relevance to many aspects of industrial and organizational practice. Managements and managers of organizations need to channel their energies towards ensuring that power play or politics in their organizations do not become destructive and consequently turn counterproductive. It is evident that the negative effects of politics can result in employee dissatisfaction and organizations' low productivity. It therefore becomes pertinent for managers to ensure the presence of industrial harmony at least for the sake of employees' job satisfaction and high productivity. This study has demonstrated that females are much less satisfied with their jobs when in a work environment that is intensely political. The study has also revealed that politics is perceived more at the organizational level than at group level.

The implication of the foregoing is that negative use of politics in organizations does more harm to organizations and employees than good. Unchecked use of politics in organizations negatively affects employees' satisfaction with their jobs. This again suggests that the morale of the workers can equally be affected adversely. Lowered employee morale, no doubt, results in employees' low motivation to perform. Therefore, the most reasonable measure that managers need to take is to provide avenues that would ensure congruence in the needs and values of employees and their organization.

Gender has also been found to play an important role in job satisfaction. Part of the conclusions drawn from the findings of the research is that females are more likely to perceive or sense politics than their male counterparts. When their perception of politics is negative, it results in low productivity. In this respect, it is most pertinent for organizations and managers to be especially sensitive to the

needs of female employees. Being more sensitive to the needs of women improves the lots of women.

It has been observed that, in general, workers will be less affected by politics when they have (a) an understanding of events at work and (b) feeling of control. Understanding is the knowledge of why events at work take place (Ferris, et al).

Recommendations

The nature and direction of the findings of this study calls for a number of recommendations. First, organizations should endeavour to routinely engage organization experts such as industrial/organizational psychologists to identify and manage the problems of their organizations. Organization specialists like industrial/organizational psychologists understand the intricacies of employee needs and employees work environment better. It has also been suggested that organizations should periodically organize development programmes for their managers. Indeed, the whole issue of human resource training and development should be regular and cut across all categories of workers.

This research has brought to fore the effects of politics on workers' job satisfaction. These effects are felt more at the organization level politics than within group politics. Therefore, organizations should also embark on enlightenment programmes for industrial supervisors, managers and top level management. Newcomers to the organization are more susceptible to politics and should be adequately coached and counselled as a way of helping them to understand their work context and environment. With the changing nature of the work place and employee-employee and employer-employee relationships, there is an even greater need to understand the individual roles that the work group and organization play in terms of politics at work. It is similarly suggested that managements should give women in organizations adequate attention by way of providing psychological welfare package to boost women's motivational levels.

Above all, managements of organizations should, as a matter of necessity, device appropriate ways of controlling political behaviour. Managers may find the use of the political behaviour controlling strategies prescribed by McShane and Travaglione (2003) relevant. McShane and Travaglione's (2003) organizational behaviour controlling techniques include provision of sufficient resources, introduction of clear rules, free flowing information, and effective management of change. Others are removal of political norms, hiring of low-politics employees, increasing opportunities for dialogue and peer pressure against politics. Putting this and the other suggestions to practice appears a sure way of turning around the fortunes of 21st century organizations.

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