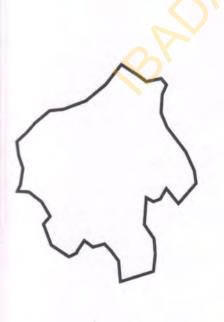# NIGERIAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE REVIEW (NLISR)

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CONTENTS

LIBRARY MANAGERS' DISPOSITION TO WORK POLITICS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The library is an important organ of human resources management where people with formally assigned roles work together to achieve the parent institutional goals. The direct handling of the people served as an integral part of the library managers' line of authority and vice-versa. The library managers are handled by the chief executive of their respective institutions. The direct work relationship between the library managers and the chief executives of their respective institutions as it is in all organization requires a bit of office politics. The general trends of the play of office politics by the heads of libraries were investigated. The findings depicts that majority of the library managers were not politically inclined in their administrative style with their respective institutions' chief executives. The need to develop the good political will and socialise with their respective institutions' chief executives to win uncommon approval was recommended amongst others.

Introduction

Office politics according to commerce dictionary.com (2018), describe the ways in which the people in a workplace relate to and behave towards each other, especially actions and behavior involving competition for status in a workplace. Therefore, the current political interplay in Nigeria politics advocates the need for Library Managers to proactively play an important role in their service domain since the degree of experience and visible successes demonstrated at such social level may enhance outplay of such managers in the service of their nation. Political involvement is a positive way to make a difference in the communities in which you reside and work. The researchers are of the opinion that regardless of which side of the political aisle, people enter local and state political races not for personal gain or influence, but because they truly believe they can make difference and make their own community a better place. This reflects many of the core values of librarianship and is exactly why the researchers are advocating for more librarians to become involved in the political process (Krauss, 2015). The concept of office politics is a tricky landscape, organisational political undercurrent or underbelly that evokes a negative connotation to many. It is an unavoidable part of human relations that is commonly seen on the dark side while the

positive side is never considered but explored by the smartest few. It is noted that, organisations with weak directives, poor communication, and ineffectively managed cultures are breeding grounds for negative dysfunctional interpersonal dynamics referred to as "office politics"(Ochoga, 2013).

Office politics is the way in which an individual or people within an association, institute, organisation use non-formally approved diplomatic strategy to advance their aim which differs from office gossip, in that people participating in office politics do so with the objective of gaining advantage, whereas gossip can be a purely social activity. Though, the two are somewhat related. Office gossip is often used by an individual to place them at a point where they can control the flow of information, and therefore gain maximum advantage. The secretive nature of organisationalpolitics differentiates it from public gossip and thus, may be more harmful to the organisation. But, both can cause one to doubt the intentions of co-workers, which create a hostile work environment. On the other hand, office politics also refers to the way co-workers act among each other in such a way that employee interaction holds the potential to be either positive or negative as well as cooperative or competitive. All these are an attestation that office politics is a fact of organisational life.

This workplace politics, office politics or organisational politics is the use of power within an organisation for the pursuit of agendas and self-interest without regard to their effect on the organisation's efforts to achieve its goals (Webfinace, 2013) Some of the personal advantages may include access to tangible assets, or intangible benefits such as status or pseudo-authority that influences the behaviour of others. Both individuals and groups may engage in office politics (Haight, 2013) which can be highly destructive, as people focus on personal gains at the expense of the organisation. Also self-serving political actions can negatively influence social groupings, cooperation, information sharing, and many other organisational functions (Larsen, 2013). Thus, it is vital to pay attention to organisational politics and create the right political landscape.

Politics is the lubricant that oils organisations internal gears (Bollander, 2013) since it has also been described as "simply how power gets worked out on a practical, day-to-day basis."(Lebarre, 2013). Office politics has both negative and positive sense. In the positive sense it is the tactics individual use in workplace mainly for advancement and to gain advantages on the side of the organisation which includes all employees and also comes with benefits to the side of the player most of the time as well while in the negative sense it is the use of illegitimate power tactics to press on one's aim. The negative face of office politics is identical with manipulations, hypocrisy, diplomacy, backstabbing, secrecy, deal making, rumors, power brokers, self-interest, image building, self-promotion cronyism and cliques. Hence, the question arises to know the reasons for this negativity. Some of the reasons identified from literature and observations include; the hierarchical power structure of most institutions or organisation and the natural state of competition in the workplace. However, the researchers are of the opinion that if well managed in a positive sense it can actually play a positive role in peoples' career. On the other

hand, is office politics a weapon of warfare or bath water that must be thrown away always as postulated by many? Can it also be the baby that must be well cuddled or a useful tool? Therefore the need to examine "Library Manager's Disposition to Work Politics in Oyo State, Nigeria"

Purpose of the study

The study investigates the perception, value, and use of office politics amongst the library managers for effective community service and library management. Specifically, it is to examine the practice of office politics among the library managers and the resultant effect on library service and management. The findings presented here applies specifically to libraries in Oyo State, Nigeria and could be applicable to many libraries in Nigeria via the lessons learnt and the consideration derived from it will have a wider application and potential interest also on the continent of Africa.

Statement of the problem

Office politics was once considered a tool used by upper management seeking to climb the corporate ladder, political behaviours are now often seen as "tools" used by people at all levels to gaincompetitive edge or simply to survive but in librarianship the evidence especially in Oyo State is not yet documented. The cynosure of this study is on the increasing level of organisational government apathy to library development, funding, and societal acceptance. The cross of constant reduction of the library subvention or vote is another critical concern. Can the library managers use office politics to promote the societal acceptance of the

library and the professional? It is imperative therefore to undertake this research so as to ascertain the role, perception and use of office politics in library administration and management among library managers in Oyo State, Nigeria as well as to evaluate its resultant effects.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this research were to

1. explore the perception, value and use of office politics amongst library managers;
2. ascertain the evidence and perception and resultant effects on library management;
3. identify the general trends of office politics/ participation in library management;
4. highlight the self-learning cum self-discovery of library managers administrative styles

Literature review

The literary discourse regarding organisational politics began in the 1970's with a focus on aspects of power and bureaucracy in the work place specifically focused on management and leadership (Drory & Romm, 1988). Mintzberg (1985) acknowledges that the topic received only fragmented exposure in the literature prior to the 1980's and associates the phenomenon primarily with conflict. The initial literary explorations attempted to justify its existence and relevance and struggled with defining the experience (Drory & Romm, 1988). Like the unseen elephant in the living room, one knows it is there, even though, it is difficult to describe and define.

The literature on Library Manager's Disposition to Work Politics in Oyo State, Nigeria"covers various topics, such as, the origin of office politics, variance of office politics, and descriptions of office politics. Although, there are several schools of thought on office politics, some believed it is very difficult to define and a bit ambiguous, but what is certain is that there is no getting around them. For some, mastering the office politics is the key to their careers. Some even believed it is the dark side of human nature, counter-productive at best and destructive at their worst. Others would like to avoid them altogether. Some believed that the impact on employees morale, depending on whom is asked can range from favorable to fatal. However, the fact remains that, it is a fact of life in every workplace where more than one person works. In essence, it is a game everyone plays but the question , what is the disposition of library managers' to it?

According to West (2013), office politics are like national politics inevitably driven by a desire for power and control. All offices have political ways; however, some are functional and some dysfunctional. The culture of an organization is often the primary indicator of predictable and conventional employee behaviour (Ochoga,2013. www.academia.edu).

Office politics (workplace politics or organizational politics) is the use of power within an organization for the pursuit of agendas and self-interest without regard to their effect on the organization's efforts to achieve its goals (Webfinance, 2013). Teatro *(2012)* said, there are three types of office politics, the bad, the ugly and the good office politics. Bad Office politics was described as self-promotion over the greater good.

Self-promotion is not a bad thing. After all, when we accomplish something great it is not wrong to feel proud to talk about it. In fact, sometimes people go the other way and are far too modest when talking about their achievements.

However, self-promotion crosses a line when it is allowed to take precedence over the achievement of collective goals. The practice of bad office politics involves inordinate amounts of unproductive time being spent tapping into the organizational grape-vine, (a repository for incomplete information and throwaway commentary) to determine "strategies" about who to suck up to next or, what tidbit of information might be useful as a questionable tool of "persuasion".

Bad office politics is where gossip and innuendo lie. It represents the gray edges of organisational life and it is no wonder that most people have little tolerance for it. Ugly office politics as destructive behaviour that benefits no one. Ugly office politics takes the notion of self-promotion to greater depths. People who practice ugly office politics are not above taking credit for other people's work. They are often very crafty and good at placing blame on others for mistakes they have made themselves. In the extreme, ugly office politics includes bullying in a variety of forms, a very unattractive and destructive activity. In short, these are the practices that can make organizational life intolerable. But, if bad and ugly office politics are the bath water, then this is where *the baby* comes in and where opportunity lies.

Good office politics asbuilding positive relationships. Building relationships is something that leaders must engage in to get things done. They have to go beyond the

confines of their own area to build purposeful and focused relationships with people in a variety of roles, levels & situations. They do this for a number of reasons that include

i. To understand and stay focused on the purpose and larger objectives of the organization.

ii. To forge mutually beneficial alliances with others both inside and outside the organization and;

iii. To make certain they get the resources they need to accomplish their goals

It means spending time with people at all levels of the organization; finding out what makes them tick; giving support to their goals and using their own power of persuasion to contribute to situations where everyone gets to win. This is the *nature* of good office politics. The practice of good office politics relies on three things:

i. A good moral compass;

ii. A generous attitude toward others and;

iii. An interest in forging collaborative relationships for the purpose of gaining collective strength, learning and growth

Office politics is seen to determine the overall performance of an organization in some instances. As well, the practice of good office politics often carries with it, a bonus. That is, the respect and good will those who practice it earn from the people they work with. In fact, I have observed that people who practice good office politics often have all the recognition and accolades they can handle.

Methodology

In order to gather information from the heads of libraries, the "Kiran KS" measurement instrument was adopted to evaluate the heads of library for a clear evidence of their political interplay. Some of the questions were modified to suit the library managers operations within the three geographical library distributions- Ibadan, Ogbomoso and Oyo axis.

Considering the calibre of the targeted audience, they were encouraged to answer each question with the assumption and intent of learning something about themselves and that it was strictly for academic exercise. Three research's assistance were employed and empowered to administer the questionnaire.

A structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. One hundred questions were harmonised into 4 pages single instrument and distributed to all the heads of library within the three axes randomly, and collected for scoring. Their answer helped the researcher to determine the perception, value, and use of office politics by the library managers and find out the general trends of office politics in library management and enhance the self-learning cum self-discovery of library managers' administrative styles.

This study presents the result of the objectives: disposition of heads of library in Oyo State on benefits of office politics in their respective institutions. It explores the, perception, value and use of office politics amongst library managers. The general trends of office politics in library management, self-learning cum self-discovery of library managers administrative styles were not left out

Population of study

However, the targeted population of study were the heads of libraries in Oyo state or

library of managers of the various types of libraries within the state viz: National library (1); School library (1); Public library (3); Special library (10); Academic library (13). The head of libraries lead in their respective organizations or institutions in implementing appropriate strategies, services and programs that have been agreed to by their respective institutions. perception Each question that receives a score of plus one shows a tendency towards playing office politics or grabbing for power. The scoring provides a rough index of individual tendencies toward being an office politician. The higher the score the more political each one is dealing at work. While the lower the score the less inclined each one is toward political manoeuvering

Limitations of study

This study focused on only the heads of libraries that are available. So the results may not be generalisable to all the heads of library in Oyo State. Ibadan, Oyo and Ogbomoso the largest geographical distributions of the libraries in the State. Interviews were limited to the heads of library within the aforementioned geographical distribution.

Presentation of results

There were 15 total responses on an overall out of the twenty six targeted audience. It was discovered that only five respondents scored above 50 while others are below.

Table 1: explores the perception value and use of office politics among library managers. The questionnaire asked the library managers to rate mostly true or mostly false their perception, value and use of office politics, in the positive sense.

Table 1: Perception, Value and use of office politics

Perception, value and use of office politics e.g. as a librarian 1 seldom talk my profession/association	Library managers	Percentage (%)
Mostly True	12	80.0
Mostly False	3	20.0

From the result, on perception, value and use office politics, it implies that the majority (80%) heads of the library (library managers)has very little interest in political participation or are not politically inclined. The research revealed, from Table 1, that the value, and perception and use of office politics among library managers is low.

Table 2

Evidence and perception of resultant effect on library management	Library managers	Percentage (%)
Mostly True	1	6.7
Mostly False	14	93.3

From Table 2, 93.3% of the library managers, filled mostly true while 6.7% filled mostly false. This implies that the perception and resultant effect on library management is evident probably in the observable low level of library development and high government apathy to librarianship in Oyo State.

Table 3

General trend of office politics(participation) in library management	Library managers	Percentage (%)
Mostly True	13	86.7
Mostly False	2	13.3

The result of the general trend of office politics (participation) among library managers shows that 86.7% accepted that there is low trend of office politics while 13.3% agreed otherwise.

Discussion of findings

From Table 1, the result, it implies that the heads of the library (library managers) has very little participation in the political activity in their system. This supports Goulding, Walton & Stephens (2012) advocacy for library manager's political sensitivity, which is crucial in a leader, time was when politics was not really part of the job description of the chief librarian; 'librarians were above politics'. Increasingly, however, he insists that library leaders need a broad range of competencies, including an understanding of political dynamics as they strive to maintain 'credibility as a non-politicized individual in a politicized environment' (p.52).

Findings from Table 2, shows low perception and impact on libraries. This could be as a result of lack of strategic planning, according to Douglas (2006), Library even when engaged in strategic planning often skirt around anything political in academe, preferring to place their faith in 'rational 'order of organizational goals, objectives and strategies. Such an approach will not have lasting success if it ignores the pluralistic character of modern universities in which different campus groups use various forms of political power to pursue what each considers best for itself as well as for the institution. This cuts across all types of libraries

The results from Table 3 show that the general trend of office politics in library management is low. The library managers were straight arrow managers on the overall. They are not perceived as office politician, and may neglect cultivating key people for career advancement but honesty is their best policy. According to Goulding, Walton & Stephens (2012), which said perhaps the problem is that many librarians do not understand what leadership involves and the kinds of skill and competencies needed for success in library leadership roles.

In the overall, the administrative lifestyle of the library managers is evident as un-political. When leaders, including library managers lack the necessary skills, such as cognitive traits, political socialisation. cooperative activity, political environment etc this may result in lack of interest in participation and therefore low development of libraries.

Conclusion

As noted by Goulding, Walton and Stephen (2012), library manager's disposition to work politics is an essential skill to be developed. The importance of engagement with key decision makers was strongly emphasized. Moreover, they recounts that these kinds of influencing skills are becoming vital, however, as attention perhaps inevitably turns to how to lead libraries through increasingly difficult times. The index of this study is to the fact that office politics is an unavoidable business. More so, there are the ugly, the bad and the good aspect of office politics, the library managers should see the need to explore the good aspect of the office politics to improve the administrative style of their respective institutions.

Recommendations

i.   The library managers must be sensitive to acquire good office politics skills and use it to influence their institution's chief executive for library development.

ii. The library managers should of necessity be spending much time with people (develop a collaborative

relationship) at all levels of their organisation finding out what would make them important.

iii. The library managers must persuasively give support or contribute to situations in their respective institutions where everybody gets to win. This will bring the needed recognition and accolades for winning administrative styles.

iv. The library managers must be ready as a good ambassador of the profession, to participate in professional association and always exhibit a sense of belonging to the same.

v. Library managers must be able to build alliances across all authority and partners within the sector they operate, be on the same team with all in the work environment, once it is the good side of politics

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