

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS, INTENTION TO LEAVE AND CAREER SUCCESS: A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The aim of this study to examine empirically the relationship between organizational politics, intention to leave organization and career success in Nigeria using both correlation and regression analysis. The sample comprises 80 lecturers in four Federal universities in the South East geopolitical zone. Consistent with theory and many previous works, the results show that organization politics and career success are negatively and highly significantly related. The results also show that intention to leave has a highly significant positive relationship with organizational politics but has a highly significant negative relationship with career success.

Key words: Organizational politics, career success, intention to leave organization

Introduction

An organization represents a market place that attracts different people with different interests but engages in interactions and exchanges that lead to a common goal. People join organizations mainly to achieve some pre-defined career objectives. Thus, a successful career is one which achieves its set objectives. However, politics which are inherent in every organization seem to hinder the individual's ability to achieve its career objectives. Ferri, Russ and Fandt (1989) define organizational politics as any strategic behaviour that is aimed to promoting self-interest at the expense of the overall organizational goal. For a politically-oriented person or group, actions are geared towards using organizational resources to promote self-interest and the interest of friends and associates or other myopic considerations at the expense of the team or the organization. Thus, the specific view sees organizational politics as dysfunctional to the organization (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997). For more details on the specific definitions of organizational politics, see the works of Gandz and Murray (1980) and Kacmar and Ferris (1991).

Organizational politics and its effects deserve much more attention than it has presently received considering its strategic importance in organizations. The literature, starting from the influential work of Ferri, Russ and Fandt (1989), suggests that organizational politics, whether real or perceived, and work outcomes are negatively related. This study, therefore, considers empirically the relationship between organizational politics, intention to leave and career success in Nigeria focusing on the Educational sector. The following hypotheses would guide study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between organizational politics and career success for lecturers in Federal universities in the South East Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between organizational politics and intention to leave organization for lecturers in Federal universities in the South East Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between intention to leave organization and career success for lecturers in Federal universities in the South East Nigeria.

The relevance of this study is twofold. First, the review of extant literature suggests that the relationship between organizational politics and career success has received little attention in Nigeria. Thus, the study contributes to the growing Nigerian literature by considering empirically, the relationship between organizational politics and career success in Nigeria. Second, domiciling the study in the education sector is addition to the literature. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that considers how organizational politics can affect the career of scholars and scientists who are seen as giants in any country.

The remaining part of this study has the following structure. The next section reviews both the theoretical and empirical literature, section 3 describes the data, sample and method of analysis, section 4 contains empirical analysis and the study is concluded in section 5.

Literature Review

The concept of organizational politics and its attendant consequences has received a considerable attention in the literature. Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth (1997) stated that there are both general and specific views to organizational politics. The general view holds that organizational politics is an influence process that determines the work outcomes. This view sees politics as a tool used to shape the functioning of an organization (Pfeffer, 1981).

Thus, it can influence the organization positively or negatively. This explains why many authors have argued that organizational politics can be beneficial or disruptive depending on the prevailing situation in the work place.

However, in specific terms, the influential view by Ferri, Russ and Fandt (1989) that organizational politics is any strategic behaviour that is aimed to promote self-interest at the expense of the overall organizational goal. For a politically-oriented person or group, actions are geared towards using organizational resources to promoting self-interest and the interest of friends and associates or other myopic considerations at the expense of the team or the organization. Thus, the specific view sees organizational politics as dysfunctional to the organization (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997). For more details on the specific

definitions of organizational politics, see the works of Gandz and Murray (1980) and Kacmar and Ferris (1991).

The specific view to organizational politics is receiving more acceptance because it is more direct and applicable to real life situations. It is also consistent with the perception of individuals who participated in previous empirical studies (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997; Drory & Romm, 1988; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Gantz & Murray, 1980).

However, for empirical studies, there is more emphasis on the perceived organizational politics than the actual politics. This is because of the obvious fact that people are more concerned with their opinions and perceptions rather than the objective reality, especially in the context of work outcomes (Ferris, et al., 1993). Thus, perceived organisational politics has been considered as a key determining factor for both career success and intention to leave organizations (Abubakar, Chauhan, & Kura, 2014).

Empirically, the link between perceived organizational politics and work outcomes has attracted many scholars, starting from the influential work of Ferri, Russ and Fandt (1989). Although, the theoretical literature has documented a negative relationship between the two variables, the empirical evidence has remained inconclusive.

Judge and Bretz (1994) investigate the relationship between political influence behavior and career success in US using regression and correlation analysis. The study identifies two forms of career success; extrinsic and intrinsic career success. While extrinsic career success is measured as salary, job level, number of promotions with current employer, and number of promotions in career except those with the current employer, intrinsic career success is measured as job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The study also subdivides influence behaviour into supervisor-focused tactics and job-focus tactics. The study is based on qualitative data collected through mailed questionnaire. The results show evidence that political influence behaviour as a significant predictive power for both intrinsic and extrinsic career success. The results further indicate that job-focused tactics, manifesting a strategy of self-promotion, has a negative relationship with career success. Contrarily, supervisor-focused tactics, manifesting a strategy of ingratiation, shows a positive relationship with career success.

Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth (1997) reported two studies that considered the effects of organizational politics and organizational support on employees' work behaviours. In the first study, a sample of 69 full-time employees was used to investigate the effect of organizational politics and organizational support on job satisfaction, job involvement, intention to turnover, organizational commitment and organizational citizen behaviour. The results show empirical support for the view that work outcomes are negatively related to organizational politics but are positively related to organizational support. In the second study, a sample of 185 undergraduate students who are employed on part-time basis was used to investigate how organizational politics affect work stress variables; job tension, somatic tension, general fatigue, and burnout. The results show that both organizational politics and organizational support can predict each of the work stress variables.

In Israel, Vigoda (2000) use both multiple and hierarchical regressions to examine the effect of perceived organizational politics on job attitudes and several other work outcomes. The evidence obtained indicate that perception of organizational politics is negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while it is positively related to intention to leave and negligent

behaviour. There is also a weak negative relationship between perceived organizational politics and employees' performance.

Boudreau, Boswell and Judge (2001) use data from both American and European executives to examine the effects of personality on executive career success. The study focuses on examining both the direct and mediating effects of several human capital and motivation variables derived from prior studies. The results show, amongst others those motivational variables, though, can predict career success, rarely mediate the relationship between personality and career success for both America and Europe samples.

In U. S., the study by Aronow (2004) seeks to examine the extent to which organizational politics affect the work of the internal human resource experts in the professional services sector in four cities; namely, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois. The quantitative research approach was employed using focus group and interviews. Among the significant findings that are evident in the study is that the effectiveness of the human resource expert depends on his ability to influence highly skilled, fact-based technicians which also depends on his ability to demonstrate character.

Meisler and Vigoda-Gadot (2014) investigate the empirical relationship between perceived organizational politics and emotional intelligence as well as their interaction in the context of work outcomes in Israel. Based on the sample comprising 368 employees, the study tests the mediating effect of perceived organizational politics on the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction on the one hand, and on the link between emotional intelligence, turnover intentions and negligent behaviour on the other hand. They find that perceived organizational politics plays a mediate role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and work outcomes. Meisler (2014) obtains similar evidence using structural equation modeling. Using data obtained from a sample of 368 employees, he examines the link between emotional intelligence, political skill and job satisfaction. He also examines the mediating effect of political skill on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. He finds evidence of a positive effect of emotional intelligence on both political skill and job satisfaction, and that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction is mediated by political skills.

Using correlation and regression analysis, Kaya, Aydin and Ayhan (2016) examine whether perceived organizational politics affect perceived organizational justice and employee turnover. The sample comprises 259 individuals from both private and public sector in Turkey validated using confirmatory factor analysis. They find that organizational politics correlates positively and significantly with intention to leave, and that perceived organizational justice has a negative relationship with intention to leave.

In Nigeria, Abubakar, Chauhan and Kura (2014) use a sample comprising 175 registered nurses in public hospitals to examine the relationship between perceived organizational politics, organizational trust, perceived human resource management practices and employee turnover using multiple regression analysis. They find that perceived organizational politics has a significant positive relationship with turnover intentions, and that turnover intentions is negatively related to both organizational trust and perceived human resource practices.

Methodology

Data and Sample

We use cross-sectional data comprising 80 lecturers (30 Senior Lecturers, 18 Lecturer 1, 22 Lecture 2 and 10 Assistant Lecturers) in four Federal Universities in South East Nigeria. The Universities are Federal University of Technology Owerri, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. 20 lecturers were purposely selected from each of these universities and the instrument for data collection is a well-structured questionnaire titled Organizational Politics Career Success Intention to Leave Questionnaire. The main variables are measured on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

A demographic breakdown shows that 70% of the respondents are male, 95% are either married or widowed, 52% are in 45 – 54 years age bracket, 39% are in 35 – 44 years age bracket, the rest are in 55 years or above age bracket. Average work experience is 14 years and number of promotions received is 3 on average. The highest qualification is Ph.D. while the lowest is master's degree.

Measures

- **Perception of Organisational Politics (POP):** This is an interval variable measured on a five-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to rate each item in this scale from strongly disagree which is assigned 1 to strongly agree which is assigned 5. The POP scale was originally developed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991) but we slightly modified it to suit our study purpose. Accordingly, higher rating means higher perception of organisational politics. Based on the Cronbach Alpha method, the scale is reliable ($\alpha = 0.82$).
- **Career Success (CS):** This is an interval variable measured on a five-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to rate each item in this scale from strongly disagree which is assigned 1 to strongly agree which is assigned 5. The scale, which includes 5 statement items, is a modified intrinsic career success scale used by Seibert and Kraimer (2001). Based on the Cronbach Alpha method, the scale is reliable ($\alpha = 0.77$).
- **Intention to Leave Organisation (ILO):** This is an interval variable measured on a five-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to rate each item in this scale from strongly disagree which is assigned 1 to strongly agree which is assigned 5. The scale is adopted from Kaya, Aydin and Ayhan (2016) with a slight modification. Based on the Cronbach Alpha method, the scale is reliable ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Method of Data Analysis

The descriptive analysis is based on means and standard deviations while the empirical analysis was based on both correlation and regression analysis. The hypotheses are tested based on the popular student t-test.

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Analysis of the Responses

Tables 1 show the descriptive analysis of the item responses for each of the study variables. As we can see, the top three rated items in the perception of organizational politics

scale are $POP2$ ($\bar{x} = 4.45, \sigma = 0.45$), $POP2$ ($\bar{x} = 4.12, \sigma = 0.51$) and $POP5$ ($\bar{x} = 4.10, \sigma = 0.54$) with relatively low standard deviations. This shows that organizational politics is present in the Nigerian Federal universities. However, the ratings in the career success scale indicates that although, participants have made progress toward meeting their life goals since they join their current organization ($\bar{x} = 3.60, \sigma = 0.57$) and their lives have significantly improved ($\bar{x} = 3.60, \sigma = 0.57$) They, however, strongly agree with low variability that what they have achieved so far mainly results from personal efforts ($\bar{x} = 3.62, \sigma = 0.55$). They neither agree nor disagree that their current jobs are close to ideal ($\bar{x} = 3.33, \sigma = 0.59$). For the items in ILO scale, it appears that the participants are not willing to quit their current employment if a better job is offered despite the perceived organizational politics.

Tables 1: The Descriptive analysis of the responses

Item	Description	\bar{x}	σ
POP1	Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here in terms of appointments	3.45	0.77
POP2	There are groups or cliques who hinder the effectiveness around here	4.10	0.54
POP3	There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them	3.85	0.72
POP4	People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others or losing their jobs	4.45	0.45
POP5	I have seen people deliberately distort information requested by others for purposes of personal gain	4.12	0.51
CS1	In most ways, my present job is close to ideal	3.30	0.59
CS2	Since I joined this organization, I have made progress toward meeting my life goals.	3.60	0.57
CS3	My achievements so far are mainly through personal effort	4.80	0.24
CS4	So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	3.46	0.53
CS5	My life has significantly improved since I joined this organization	3.62	0.55
ILO1	I often think about quitting	2.11	0.84
ILO2	I intend to quit my present job	2.42	0.60
ILO3	I am actively searching for an alternative to my present job	2.31	0.64
ILO4	Next year I will probably look for a new job outside this organization	2.54	0.67
ILO5	I may likely join a private organisation where politics is less perceived	1.45	0.96

Simple Correlation and Regression Analysis

Perceived Organizational Politics and Career Success

Table 2 presents the results of the bivariate correlation and simple regression analysis for the relationship between perceived organizational politics and career success. As this table shows, the coefficient of -0.673 with a zero p-value indicates that POPS and CSS are negatively and highly significantly related. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.712, p\text{-value} = 0.000$) also indicates that there is a strong negative association between perceived organizational politics and career success. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between organizational politics and career success is strongly rejected. This implies that perceived organizational politics interferes with career success in the Nigerian federal universities. There is no meaningful career success in an organization where the perceived

favoritism rather than merit determines who gets what in terms of appointment. This evidence is consistent with several previous studies including Judge and Bretz (1994) and Vigoda (2000).

Table 2: Regression and Correlation results for POPS and CSS

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-value
Constant	3.206	10.061	0.000
POPS	-0.673	-5.986	0.000
Pearson r	-0.712	p-value (Pearson)	0.000

Perceived Organizational Politics and Intention to Leave

Table 3 presents the results of the bivariate correlation and simple regression analysis for the relationship between perceived organizational politics and intention to leave. As this table shows, the coefficient of 0.726 with a zero probability indicates that POPS has a highly significant positive relationship with ILOS. Similarly, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.798$, p -value = 0.0000) shows that career success and intention to leave organization are positively correlated and this relationship is highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between organizational politics and intention to leave organization is strongly rejected. Higher perceived organizational politics bolsters the intention to leave the organization. Thus, people feel safe and are make significant progress in organizations with less perceived politics. This finding is consistent with the previous work of Kaya, Aydin and Ayhan (2016).

Table 3: Regression and Correlation results for POPS and ILOS

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-value
Constant	0.626	8.001	0.000
POPS	0.726	15.182	0.000
Pearson r	0.798	p-value (Pearson)	0.000

Intention to Leave and Career Success

Table 4 presents the bivariate correlation results for the relationship between intention to leave organization and career success. The Pearson coefficient of -0.595 shows that CSS and ILO move in opposite direction while the p-value of 0.000 indicates that the relationship between them is highly significant. Thus, the people with more successful careers have less intention to leave their present organizations and vice versa. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between intention to leave and career success is strongly rejected. Thus, the result supports the view by Kaya, Aydin and Ayhan (2016) that employees are less likely to leave organizations in which justice is entrenched.

Table 4: Bivariate correlation between ILOS and CSS

Correlation		ILOS	CSS
ILOS	Pearson r	1	-0.595
	p-value	–	0.000
CSS	Pearson r	-0.595	1
	p-value	0.000	–

Conclusions

This study examines empirically the relationship between organizational politics, intention to leave organization and career success in Nigeria using both correlation and regression analysis. The sample comprises 80 lecturers in four Federal universities in the South East geopolitical zone. Consistent with theory and many previous works, the results show that organization politics and career success are negatively and highly significantly related. The results also show that intention to leave has a highly significant positive relationship with organizational politics but has a highly significant negative relationship with career success.

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