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Relationship Between Politics Of Human Resource Management And Teachers' Job Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the relationship between politics of human resource management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, while two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 6,795 teachers (2,718 females and 4,077 males) from 260 public secondary schools in Benue State. Using a multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 680 teachers was selected from 26 public secondary schools. The Politics of Human Resource Management Questionnaire (PHRMQ) and the Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ) were validated by three experts, and a trial test was conducted, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.92 and 0.96, respectively. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that politics of staff recruitment and politics of staff placement have high significant negative relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others, that State Ministry of Education and other related authorities should ensure that the recruitment of teachers is strictly based on merit, qualifications, and competency. Independent panels and selection committees should be constituted transparently, with regular monitoring by educational oversight bodies to prevent political interference and favoritism.

Keywords: politics of human resource management, staff recruitment, politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance

INTRODUCTION

Globally, teachers' job performance remains a crucial factor in educational quality and student achievement. Teachers are expected to show professional skills, creativity, and dedication in performing instructional, administrative, and co-curricular duties. However, many teachers worldwide face numerous challenges that hinder effective performance. These include low pay, excessive workload, poor working conditions, limited opportunities for professional growth, and a lack of motivation due to weak support systems (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). In advanced countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, teachers increasingly voice concerns about high-stakes testing, performance pressures, and administrative burdens that distract from classroom focus (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Similarly, in developing regions of Asia and Latin America, underfunded school systems, inconsistent

teacher evaluation policies, and insufficient recognition of teachers' well-being have led to declining morale and job satisfaction (World Bank, 2022). These global issues show that the quality of teachers' job performance is influenced not only by personal dedication but also by institutional and policy environments.

Teachers appear to continue to face systemic barriers that limit their effectiveness across the African continent. Challenges such as poor infrastructure, irregular salary payments, inadequate instructional materials, large class sizes, and lack of in-service training have been widely reported (Tchombe, 2019; Osei, 2021). In many sub-Saharan African countries, such as Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda, teacher absenteeism and low productivity are linked to weak supervision, limited incentives, and poor working conditions (Adebayo & Oke, 2022). In Nigeria, these issues are even more severe, as teachers in public secondary schools often work under stressful conditions marked by overcrowded classrooms, delayed promotions, inconsistent government policies, and poor welfare packages (Okoroma, 2020; Uche & Emeh, 2021). These factors collectively diminish teachers' motivation, commitment, and instructional performance. Notably, many of these challenges stem from the politics of human resource management, where recruitment, posting, promotion, and teacher appraisal are often influenced more by political considerations than by merit or professional standards.

Politics plays a pivotal role in shaping decision-making and administration within educational institutions (Okeke, 2017). It serves as a key mechanism for distributing resources to various ethnic groups in support of their educational goals, often aligning educational systems with broader political agendas. This highlights the profound influence of politics in the education sector, as education not only prepares individuals for political participation but is also enhanced by political efforts to improve quality at all levels. As noted by Okwori and Pinga (2022), political influence extends beyond parties, affecting a range of social spaces, including educational institutions, markets, and industries. In this context, politics is often marked by preferences for certain individuals and policies over adherence to due process, potentially shaping human resource management in favor of those in power. These dynamic underscores the intricate relationship between politics and education, influencing the operation, decision-making, and management of staff within educational institutions. Political interference has been evident in key areas such as recruitment, placement, promotion, appointment of principal officers, and staff salary payments, all of which ultimately impact job performance in public secondary schools.

The politics of human resource management in secondary schools is seen as to how power dynamics, personal interests, and political considerations influence decisions related to managing staff in these institutions. This often manifests in the form of favoritism, nepotism, or the manipulation of recruitment, promotion, and placement processes, where appointments and promotions are sometimes based on political affiliations or ethnic considerations rather than merit (Ugwuanyi & Eze, 2021). For instance, the appointment of principals and senior administrators in public secondary schools may be influenced by political figures or local power brokers rather than by objective criteria such as qualifications and experience. This can lead to disparities in staff motivation, performance and overall school effectiveness. Recent studies such as Musa (2023); Okwori and Pinga (2022); Mbah, Nwangwu and Ugwu (2019) have highlighted the negative impact of political interference on the quality of education in secondary schools.

The politics surrounding staff recruitment in public secondary schools has increasingly impacted teacher morale and job performance. The politics of staff recruitment involves the influence of political considerations in the hiring process, where appointments may favor political loyalty or affiliations over merit and qualifications (Abdullahi & Yusuf, 2023). This practice can undermine the integrity of recruitment systems and compromise organizational efficiency. In many cases, political considerations such as favoritism, patronage, and the enforcement of ethnic or regional quotas overshadow merit-based recruitment processes (Oni, 2019). This often results in the hiring of individuals based on political affiliations rather than their qualifications, which undermines the overall competence and effectiveness of the teaching workforce. When recruitment decisions are influenced by political loyalty rather than merit, it fosters an environment where connections hold more weight than competence, which can diminish the quality of education and impede professional growth.

Government officials and politicians often play a significant role in the recruitment of teachers in secondary schools, particularly in public school systems where hiring decisions are influenced by political and bureaucratic structures. In many countries, especially in developing regions, political patronage and favoritism affect teacher recruitment, often leading to the appointment of individuals based on political loyalty rather than merit (Adeyemi & Uko, 2021). Government officials, including representatives of the education ministry and local government administrators, are typically responsible for overseeing the recruitment process, ensuring compliance with policy guidelines, and allocating teaching positions based on regional or national needs. However, studies indicate that political interference can sometimes undermine transparency in recruitment, as appointments may be influenced by political affiliations rather than objective criteria such as qualifications, experience, and teaching competencies (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2022). This practice can negatively impact the quality of education; as less competent individuals may be hired over more qualified candidates due to political considerations. As a result, teachers face challenges such as unequal access to opportunities, decreased morale and inadequate working conditions, all of which contribute to suboptimal job performance in public secondary schools.

The politics surrounding staff placement in public secondary schools has had a substantial impact on the job performance of teachers. The politics of staff placement involves the use of political influence to determine the assignment of employees to specific roles, often prioritizing political loyalty or connections over merit and qualifications (Okoroafor & Ibrahim, 2023). Such practices can undermine institutional effectiveness and lead to dissatisfaction among staff members. Placement decisions are often influenced by factors beyond professional merit, such as political affiliations, personal connections, or ethnic and regional preferences (Okwori & Pinga, 2022). This politicization can lead to the assignment of individuals to positions for which they are ill-suited, resulting in a misalignment of skills and responsibilities. For instance, a teacher trained in science may be assigned to manage administrative duties due to political favoritism, while a less-qualified but politically connected individual takes up a teaching role. This mismatch not only affects the teacher's performance but also hinders the smooth functioning of academic activities and the overall productivity of the school. The perception of unfair placement practices can also create a demoralizing work environment, as teachers who are bypassed for roles they are qualified for may feel undervalued and demotivated. This, in turn, can lead to lower job satisfaction, reduced commitment to their roles, and diminished enthusiasm for contributing to school success. Furthermore, such political dynamics in placement decisions ripple outward, affecting the quality of education delivered to students (Ugwuanyi & Eze, 2021).

Today, the politics of placement has garnered attention as a significant factor influencing teachers' job performance. Research suggests that political considerations in teachers' placement decisions may not only lead to mismatches between skills and roles but also contribute to a culture of favoritism and nepotism, potentially undermining the overall effectiveness of teaching departments (Smith & Brown, 2017). Such politicized placement practices may result in the assignment of roles based on personal or political affiliations rather than merit, raising concerns about the alignment of staff expertise with institutional needs. This misalignment can adversely affect the job performance of teachers and compromise the quality of education in the state.

The growing intrusion of political influence into the management of human resources in public secondary schools, particularly in Benue State, Nigeria, is a deeply worrisome development that threatens the core of educational quality and institutional integrity. This trend, as observed by Igwe (2022), leads to disillusionment among staff who perceive such appointments as unjust, resulting in low morale, job dissatisfaction and weakened commitment to school goals. Ugwuanyi and Eze (2021) further highlight that the promotion of underqualified individuals due to political favoritism not only undermines effective school leadership but also hampers the motivation and professional development of teachers. In Benue State, there is mounting evidence that these practices are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern that includes politically motivated decisions in teacher recruitment and placement. This pervasive political interference compromises the integrity of the school system, discourages innovation, and ultimately diminishes the quality of education delivered to students, with long-term consequences for the region's educational development. In Benue State and across Nigeria, these politically driven decisions

have been linked to a notable drop in academic standards, as unqualified or politically connected individuals are given preference over competent teachers. This situation has fostered an environment where teachers feel demotivated and disengaged, leading to a lack of innovation, commitment and overall job satisfaction. As educational standards continue to decline, it becomes increasingly clear that the politicization of human resource management may be a significant factor behind this troubling trend. Given the severity of the issue, the researcher finds it imperative to investigate the relationship between the politics of human resource management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary education in Nigeria, which is designed to equip students with practical and academic knowledge, foster critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills for personal and national development and serve as a bridge to higher education and professional training, laying the foundation for future careers and lifelong learning, appears to have been significantly impacted by the pervasive influence of politics within and around Benue State. Today, the increasing politicization in Nigeria, particularly in Benue State, driven by its diverse cultural, religious and linguistic makeup, appears to have severely impacted the management of human resources, particularly in staff recruitment and placement of principal officers which may have significantly impacted on the job performance of secondary school teachers.

In public secondary schools in Benue State, the established recruitment processes, including advertising positions, accepting applications, conducting interviews and selecting candidates based on qualifications, appear to have been frequently disregarded. Instead, unqualified individuals, often political allies or relatives of influential figures, are appointed, significantly eroding the competitive academic environment. This practice may not only compromise academic integrity but also hinder the recruitment of skilled staff essential for advancing the mission of secondary education.

In recent years, a concerning trend seems to have emerged in which staff recruitment and placement are increasingly driven by the interests of political officeholders and their associates. This alarming situation appears to have compromised the integrity of the academic system, allowing unqualified individuals to infiltrate educational institutions, thereby threatening to further degrade educational standards in Benue State and across Nigeria. Acknowledging the detrimental effects of these political influences on human resource management and their implications for teachers' job performance and the quality of education in secondary schools, this study aims to investigate the relationship between the politics of human resource management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The pupose of the study was to investigate the relationship between politics of human resource management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
2. Explore the relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 6,795 teachers (2,718 females and 4,077 males) from 260 public secondary schools in Benue State. Using a multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 680 teachers was selected from 26 public secondary schools. Data were collected using Politics of Human Resource Management Questionnaire (PHRMQ)" and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.92 and 0.96. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions. Simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study. A total of 680 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, out of which 654 (96%) were properly completed and returned, while 26 (4%) were returned but not completed. The incomplete questionnaires were largely attributed to the busy schedules of some staff, who intended to complete them but were unable to do so due to time constraints. The data were analyzed and interpreted based on the questions raised and the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Answers to Research Questions

Here, the research questions raised in Chapter One are answered. The decision rule was that if r calculated lies between 0-0.25= very weak positive correlation, 0.25-0.50= weak positive correlation, 0.50-0.75= strong positive correlation, 0.75-0.99 = very strong positive, but the value of r must always be less than -1 ≤ r ≤ +1. It is expressed in minus r less than or equal to plus r. The range of values for r is from -1 to 1.

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria?*

Table 1: PPCM Analysis of the Relationship between Politics of Staff Recruitment and Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	N	Mean	Std	(r)
Politics of Staff Recruitment	654	14.3532	4.41794	.982[a]
Teachers' Job Performance	654	45.1086	13.28468	

Table 1 presents the relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The data indicate that politics of staff recruitment had a mean score of 14.3532 and a standard deviation of 4.41794, while the teachers' job performance had a mean score of 45.1086 and a standard deviation of 13.28468. The correlation coefficient was .982, which implied that politics of staff recruitment has a strong positive relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria?*

Table 2: PPCM Analysis of the Relationship between Politics of Staff Placement and Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	N	Mean	Std	(r)
Politics of Staff Placement	654	12.7080	4.09744	.943
Teachers' Job Performance	654	45.1086	13.28468	

Table 2 presents the relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. The data revealed that politics of staff placement had a mean score of 12.7080 with a standard deviation of 4.09744, while teachers' job performance had a mean score of 45.1086 and a standard deviation of 13.28468. A correlation coefficient of .943, which indicates a strong positive relationship between the politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 3: *Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Politics of Staff Recruitment and the Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools*

Predictors	R	R^2	df	F	β	(t)	P
Constant	.982	.965	1,652	18124.065		-3.327	.001
Politics of Staff Recruitment					.982	134.626	.000

The result from Table 3 indicated highly significant negative relationship between politics of staff recruitment and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria [R=.982, R^2=.965, F (1,652) =.18124.065; p<.05]. The result showed that politics of staff recruitment accounted for 96.5% of the total variance in teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. Therefore, 3.5% could be accounted for by other variables not entered in the present study. The result also revealed that politics of staff recruitment have a highly significant negative relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria (β=.982, t=-134.626, p<.05).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 4: *Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Politics of Staff Placement and Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools*

Predictors	R	R^2	df	F	β	(t)	P
Constant	.943	.888	1,652	5190.107		-2.138	.033
Politics of Staff Placement					.943	72.042	.000

The result from Table 4 indicated significant negative relationship between politics of staff placement and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools [R=.943, R^2=.888, F (1, 652) =.5190.107; p<.05]. The result showed that politics of staff placement accounted for 88.8% of the total variance in teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. Therefore, 11.2% could be accounted for by other variables not entered in the present study. The result also revealed that politics of staff placement have a highly significant negative relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria (β=.943, t=-72.042, p<.05).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the relationship between politics of human resource management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's variables.

The first finding revealed that politics of staff recruitment have a highly significant negative relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is justified because political interference in staff recruitment often leads to the employment of less qualified or less competent teachers based on favoritism rather than merit, which can reduce motivation, professionalism, and overall job performance in public secondary schools. This finding aligns with the study of Abdu (2013), who found that politics has a significant influence on staff recruitment in secondary schools, as many teachers are employed based on godfatherism and political affiliations rather than merit, thereby limiting opportunities for the most qualified individuals who lack political connections to secure employment. Similarly, Alabi (2015) reported that politics significantly influences the employment of staff in colleges of education, as political actors often exploit appointments for personal gains and political gratification, a practice that creates unhealthy competition for positions, fosters deep-rooted hostilities, and generates conflicts within the institutions. The researcher contends that

such political interference systematically undermines meritocracy, diminishes teacher motivation, and adversely affects overall job performance in public secondary schools.

The second finding revealed that politics of staff placement have a highly significant negative relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is justified because political interference in staff placement often results in teachers being posted to schools or positions that do not match their specialization or competence, which can reduce their effectiveness, morale, and overall job performance. This finding corroborates the work of Abubakar and Yusuf (2022), who reported that politically motivated staff placement, where administrative roles are assigned based on favoritism rather than merit, harms teachers' job performance, as staff placed in positions for which they lack expertise experience reduced productivity and increased job dissatisfaction. Similarly, Okeke and Eze (2020) found that political interference in staff placement often leads to mismanagement of resources and conflicts within academic departments, negatively affecting job performance, as academic staff appointed to leadership positions through political influence reported higher stress levels and lower productivity compared to those appointed based on merit. The researcher posits that political interference in staff placement systematically undermines meritocracy, disrupts organizational harmony, and significantly diminishes teachers' job performance in public secondary schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that politics of human resource management has a significant and far-reaching negative impact on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria, particularly in critical areas such as staff recruitment and placement. The persistence of practices such as favoritism, godfatherism, nepotism, sectionalism and religious or ethnic considerations continues to undermine meritocracy, reduce teacher motivation, weaken school leadership and generate conflicts within the school system. If urgent and decisive measures are not implemented to minimize political interference, these practices will further erode teachers' effectiveness, diminish educational quality, lower student outcomes and compromise the capacity of public secondary schools to fulfill their mandate of providing quality education.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The State Ministry of Education and other related authorities should ensure that the recruitment of teachers is strictly based on merit, qualifications, and competency. Independent panels and selection committees should be constituted transparently, with regular monitoring by educational oversight bodies to prevent political interference and favoritism.
2. School administrators and the State Ministry of Education should establish clear policies and guidelines for staff placement that match teachers' qualifications, expertise and experience with available positions. Periodic supervisory reviews should be conducted to ensure adherence to these placement policies, thereby reducing the negative impact of political favoritism.

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