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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions of Rivers State Public Service Commissions. Recruitment decisions, selection decisions and placement decisions were used as measures of the HR procurement decisions. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study was 84 employees of four Rivers State Public Commissions. The sample size of 69 was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Crombach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The study finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions of Rivers State Public Service Commissions. The study recommended that management of public organizations should take into cognizance that workplace friendship among employee class and managerial class should not have distorting effect on selection of employee for a particular course or benefit.

Keywords: *Workplace Friendship, Human Resource Procurement Decisions, Recruitment Decisions, Selection Decisions and Placement Decisions*

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INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Procurement refers to the human resource management process of getting the human resources needed by an organization, beginning with confirmation of vacancies and ending with personnel placement. Within the context of an organization, the Human Resource Manager is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the procurement of the needed personnel or employee for the requisite position. This decision over the years have left the organization with basically two outcomes: square pegs in round holes and of course, square pegs in square holes. That is to say, unqualified employees are procured putting organizations in jeopardy and of course, qualified persons also employed putting the organization in good books. These are all from the procurement decision of the manager (Tamunomiebi & Zeb-Obipi, 2013).

Human resource procurement is a practice that has to be owned and driven by the top management in the interests of the key stakeholders, stakeholders which include shareholders, the managing board, the workers, clients and customers unlike the old tradition in which personnel management (Itika, 2011). Bolton (2006) stated that human Resource procurement operates in an environment of increasingly intense scrutiny driven by technology, program reviews, and public and political expectations for service improvements. This type of procurement (especially in Africa) is of particular significance in the public sector and has been used as a policy tool due to the discriminatory and high level of corruption in the country.

Typically, scholars have focused on the negative aspects of organizational politics, seeing it as representative of the dark side of human conduct. Organizational politics has been considered almost synonymous with manipulation, coercive influence tactics, and other subversive and semi-legal actions (Ferris & King, 1991). This depiction led to the assumption that organizational politics contradicts

the common goods of the organization and may damage performance at any level be it individual, team, unit, or system. During the 1990s and into the 2000s, the interest in organizational politics took a more cognitive direction. To date, the cognitive perspective is the dominant approach in the study of organizational politics and has led to an increase in the number of studies on the influence of organizational politics on employees' attitudes, behavior and especially performance in the workplace.

The relationship between organizational politics and employee performance and outcomes is important because it has both theoretical and practical implications. It can potentially help us better understand the meaning of organizational conflict, power, and influence tactics and posit hypotheses regarding their meaning for micro and macro level organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it can point to practical tools for handling workplace politics and minimizing its negative effect on individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole.

Relationships at work are an increasingly important area of interest (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). As scholars have noted, "the bulk of organizing occurs in the context of co-worker relationships" (Sias, 2009: 57). Work relationships represent all interpersonal connections that individuals have with others as they perform their jobs. They are characterized by repeated, patterned interactions over time that has some degree of mutuality (Sias, 2009).

In organizational studies in particular, there is a growing literature on positive relationships at work. Positive relationships at work are "reoccurring connections between two people that take place within the context of work and careers and are experienced as mutually beneficial" (Ragins & Dutton, 2007: 9). Such relationships are often regarded as high quality connections and characterized by three key features: (1) higher emotional carrying capacity

(i.e., individuals in the relationship can express more and a greater range of emotions); (2) greater tensility (i.e., the relationship can endure through hardships); and (3) a capacity for connectivity (i.e., they are generative) (Ragins & Dutton, 2007). Workplace friendships have been positioned as a unique type of positive relationship at work (Colbert, et al., 2016a). Indeed, unlike high quality connections more generally, which are potentially fleeting and not necessarily personalized (Dutton, 2003; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), workplace friendships are relatively persistent and require that individuals treat each other as unique, rather than as merely role inhabitants (Sias & Cahill, 1998). The purpose of the study therefore was to examine the relationship

between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decision organizations Rivers State Public Commissions.

This study was further guided by the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between workplace friendship and recruitment decisions in Rivers State Public Commissions?
- What is the relationship between workplace friendship and selection decisions in Rivers State Public Commissions?
- What is the relationship between workplace friendship and placement decisions in Rivers State Public Commissions?



Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions

Source: Author’s Desk Research, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Friendship

Workplace friendship has been drawing the attention of, and broadly discussed by scholars (Berman, West & Richter, 2002) as it promotes organizational and employee outcomes and helps achieve goals. Employees may need work-related knowledge, information, and skills to accomplish their missions and goals or emotional support to relieve work stress, and workplace friendship can provide both

instrumental support (Berman *et al.*, 2002) and emotional support (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Employees may also scramble for resources to ensure self-interests, and organizational politics thus arise as resources are limited (Drory & Romm, 1990). Therefore, employees will begin with political behavior in order to seek resources and to ensure self-interests (Ferris, Russ & Fandt 1989; Drory and Romm, 1990). Politics is a social influence process (Ferris *et al.*, 1989), and political behavior is the

maximization of short- or long-term interests through strategic planning to seek self-interests by sacrificing that of others (e.g. colleagues).

According to Pfeffer (1992), organizational politics is an attempt that individuals exploit to accomplish their expected outcomes by obtaining resources or securing power. In this respect, organizational political behavior is mostly converted and subjected to the differences in perception (Sussman 2002), perceptions of organizational politics (POPs) refers to actions taken by employees who are perceived to be self-interested (Mayes & Allen, 1977); while workplace friendship is the voluntary and reciprocal relations within the organization (Wright, 1978) where collegial support is shared and obtained through interpersonal interaction (Kram & Isabella, 1985). In a political work environment, POPs influences the work attitude, organizational coherence and collegial relationships of employees (Ferris, *et al.*, 1996); and it is the cause of interpersonal or inter-team confrontations and competitions.

At the same time, research provides insights into how the individuals involved in workplace friendships can garner instrumental and emotional support (Kram & Isabella, 1985), share high quality information (Sias, Smith & Avdeyeda, 2005). Individuals frequently become friends with each other at work (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). Being friends with those one works with has the potential to benefit both the friendship and the work relationship (Bridge & Baxter, 1992). Meta-analysis has shown that merely having a job designed with the opportunity to make friends (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) is positively related to outcomes like increased job satisfaction and decreased absenteeism (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Because workplace friendships often blossom in organizational contexts, both task- and non-task-related interactions (Tschan, Semmer, & Inversin, 2004) serve as the basis for their formation. For example, friendship is often mentioned as a likely

product of an informal mentoring relationship (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Human Resource Procurement Decisions

The investments in human capital have been drawn on human capital theories which examine conditions under which such investments are profitable. The concept of human capital theory as specified by Romer (1990) defines it as the amount of total stock of human capital that an organization, country or economy has. Fitz-enz (2000) defines human capital as the traits one brings to the job: intelligence, fulfilling work energy, a generally positive attitude, reliability and commitment. The economy with a larger stock of human capital will experience a faster rate of growth. Thus, Human Capital Theory concentrates on the direct economic effects of human capital investments in particular.

Staffing is defined as the process of attracting, selecting, and retaining competent individuals to achieve organizational goals (Ployhart, 2006). While advocates of the contingency approach (Schuler & Jackson, 1987) believe that in order to be successful, the organization's HR policies must be consistent with the other aspects of the organization. Baird and Meshoulam (1988) suggest that human resource practices must fit the organization's stage of development (external fit) which implies informal, more flexible styles of FIRM amongst start-up firms and more formal and professionalized systems as the firms mature and increase the number and range of employees. Internal fit ensures that individual HR policies are designed to fit in and support each other. "Best-fit model" suggests that HR strategy becomes more effective when it is designed to fit certain critical contingencies in the firm's specific context. According to the configurational approach, the human resource system of the organization must develop a horizontal (internal consistency of the organization's human resource policies or practices) as well as a vertical (congruence of the human

resource system with other organizational characteristics) fit (Wright & McMahan, 1992).

Johnson (2001) states that if people are culturally aligned to the business; hire them before someone else does - even if the firm does not have a job for them. A proactive approach helps. Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod (2001) propose the development and communication of the employee value proposition (EVP) to attract and retain talented employees. In cultivating a high performance workforce, both assessment of employees to ensure the best match to the job and the company as well as assimilating them to ensure successful integration into the workplace, the culture of the organization and specific roles and responsibilities are equally important (Morgan, 2004).

The “war for talent” has focused on acquiring and assimilating “the best”. Human resources play a significant role in reaching organization effectiveness and performance (Huselid, 1995). Talent has become the key differentiator for human capital management and for leveraging competitive advantage (Bhatnagar, 2004). With better talent procurement, employee engagement improves and so does the productivity. Maximizing team engagement, motivation, and retention through due diligence in talent acquisition is vital in today's highly competitive environment. Only a talent resourcing process, which is well-defined and well-executed from start to finish yields consistent, compliant results - and is a competitive advantage in the war for talent (Ronn, 2007).

Measures of Human Resource Procurement Decisions

Recruitment Decisions

Taylor (2008) posits that recruitment involves actively soliciting applications from potential employees which is considered a positive activity that requires employers to sell themselves in the relevant labour markets so as to maximize the pool of well-qualified candidates from which future employees can be

chosen. Etomi (2002) defined recruitment as the process of attracting a sufficient number of individuals with the right profile in terms of qualifications, experience, skills and other relevant attributes to indicate their interest in working for the organization. As provided for under the Public Officers Ethics Act (2003) of the laws of Kenya, it is the responsibility of public officers to ensure that selection of new staff is done on the basis of integrity, competence, qualification and suitability or elected in fair elections. Etomi (2002) stated that employee selection is concerned with identifying the candidates from the recruitment pool who best meet organizational requirements for employment, it is also the process through which those who are recruited are winnowed down to the few who are hired. While recruitment is a positive activity, by contrast selection is viewed as a negative process or activity in so far as it involves picking out the best of the bunch and turning down the rest presenting human resource managers with some ethical dilemma.

Selection Decisions

The dynamic business environment has transformed the Selection Decisions from the traditional technical and operational function to a more strategic role hence the technical team that evaluates and selects from a pool of competitors. If at all the firms competitiveness is to be enhanced, the ultimate choice on the selected supplier should not merely consider the price of say goods and services but also incorporate the Total Costs involved. Competitive selection initiatives if adopted can help in achieving efficiency and effectiveness in procurement thereby increasing its performance (Demio, Moore & Badolato, 2002). Lysons and Farrington (2006) concur that the selection process typically involves the following phases namely: identify or re-evaluate needs; define or evaluate users' requirements; decide to make or buy; identify type of purchase; conduct market analysis; identify possible suppliers; pre

screen possible suppliers; evaluate the remaining supplier base; choose supplier; deliver product/service; post purchase/make performance evaluation. It is important however to note that supplier selection practices need to take into account crucial principles if at all the organization is to derive improved procurement performance from this exercise.

Placement Decisions

Employee placement is the process of assigning a new employee to a position within his or her sphere of authority where the employee will have a reasonable chance for success (Dessler, 2008). Kumar and Sharma (2001) define placement as the determination of the job to which an accepted candidate is to be assigned. Employee placement is important in an organization because it affects the employee's performance. Employee performance in any organization is reflected in the effectiveness and efficiency with which goals and objectives are achieved (Sousa, Aspinwall, Sampaio & Rodrigues, 2005). Excellent employee performance means that the employee will carry out duties efficiently and effectively to meet agreed job objectives (Baldwin, 2008). To harness excellent employee performance, organizations ought to institute practices to manage employees well. The ability to effectively manage employee performance can lead to increased profit margins, cost savings, customer satisfaction, growth, or market share (Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Every organization requires the best talent induction and placement procedure to survive and remain ahead in business to achieve success in a competitive industry the newly employed member of staff who is unfamiliar with the working environment must be given proper orientation on how the organization does its things, he needs to know the organizational culture before resuming fully. Hence, media organizations recruiting and selecting qualified employees is not the overall solution to organization survival but lies in purposefully placing of the

employee at a right job in the organization. Fundamentally a wrongly mismatch talent will further compound the woes of the firm regardless of qualifications, skills and competence of the employee.

Induction and placement practices differ from one organization to another, below are some basic steps that are being adopted by most media organizations:

- Employees are given the organization hand book to study.
- Employees are taken round the business premises and departments during which there is an exchange of pleasantries between their superiors, colleagues and subordinates.
- Employees are given job schedule and at last placed on their working desk.

Finally, talent attraction (human resources procurement) function which cannot be totally neglected by the media industry is a very important dimension that will assist organization to achieve higher market share, product innovation, and increase the revenue. How does organizational politics impact on human resource procurement decisions? This will guide us to our next discussion.

Workplace Friendship and Human Resource Procurement Decisions

The concept of workplace friendship still faces definitional problems. Lin (2010) defines workplace friendship as "the close human relationship that employees who work in an organization build up". Earlier, Song (2006) took inspiration from Hays (1988) and Jehn and Shah (1997) and defined workplace friendship as "a voluntary interdependent relationship in the workplace between two persons to facilitate social-emotional goals of the participants with different types or degrees of intimacy, companionship, mutual assistance and amiable relationship." While acknowledging the plethora of definitions, it is clear that workplace friendship can either hinder or help the formal organizational goals

(Nielsen, Jex & Adams, 2000) including service recovery performance. Majority of adult people spend a large part of their lives at work and therefore friendship between co-workers usually foster. Such friendship may be linked to critical work-related performances including organizational commitment, job involvement and job satisfaction (Riordan & Griffeth, 1995).

Workplace friendship is found to benefit both the individual worker and the organization (Rawlins, 1992). From the individual standpoint, workplace friendship provides emotional advantages (Kram & Isabella, 1985), improved job performance (Zetlin, 1991), enhanced career development and working environment (Yager, 1997). From the firm's viewpoint, favorable outcome can result from favorable workplace friendship (Morrison, 2004; Jehn & Shah, 1997) including encouraging employee retention (Riordan & Griffeth, 1995), organizational productivity and institutional capacity (Crabtree, 2004; Ellingwood, 2001)

In spite of this favorable impact of workplace friendship, Song (2006) identified several reasons why these positive effects have been overlooked. These were listed as the negative effects of workplace including gossip, sexual harassment, fleeting loyalty to the organization, favoritism and organizational politics. Sias *et al.* (2004) argued that despite the negative impact of workplace friendship, the subject is still important, not just because of its benefits to both the individual and the firm, but more importantly because of its association with job performance. By implication, workplace friendship is expected to correlate with service recovery performance.

Many reasons have been adduced for the study of work place friendship (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000). The key reason is the relationship between workplace performance and work-related performance. According to Riordan and Griffeth (1995), there is a

positive correlation between friendship, job satisfaction and performance resulting in less employee job turnover. Neilson *et al.* (2000) also found a close relationship between workplace friendship and organizational performance. Indeed, workplace friendship is considered a significant factor in the study of employee relationship in the workplace (Lin, 2010). It is still debatable whether workplace friendship influences job performance or the other way round as mixed results have been produced (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000).

From the foregoing discussion, this study thus hypothesizes that:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and recruitment decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and selection decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and placement decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study was 84 employees of four Rivers State Public Commissions. The sample size of 69 was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics with the aid of SPSS 23.0. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Tests of Hypotheses

The tests of hypotheses was bases on the level of probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ($p < 0.05$). significance 0.05 adopted as a criterion for the

Table 1: Correlations Matrix between Workplace Friendship and Human Resource Procurement Decisions

			Workplace Friendships	Recruitment Decisions	Selection Decisions	Placement Decisions
Spearman's rho	Workplace Friendships	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.896**	.718**	.494**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	62	62	62	62
		Recruitment Decisions	Correlation Coefficient	.896**	1.000	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	
	N	62	62	62	62	
Selection Decisions	Selection Decisions	Correlation Coefficient	.718**	.794**	1.000	.560**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	62	62	62	62
		Placement Decisions	Correlation Coefficient	.494**	.474**	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
	N	62	62	62	62	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data 2019 and SPSS output version 23.0

Table 1 illustrated the test for the two previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results showed that for

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and recruitment decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between workplace friendship and recruitment decisions. The rho value 0.896 indicated this relationship and it was significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a very strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between workplace friendship and

recruitment decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and selection decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between workplace friendship and selection decisions. The rho value 0.718 indicated this relationship and it was significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between workplace friendship and selection decisions in work organizations.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and placement decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between workplace friendship and placement decisions. The rho value 0.494 indicated this relationship was significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represented a moderate correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between workplace friendship and placement decisions in public organizations in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The tests of hypotheses examined the relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions. Hence it was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions. These hypotheses were tested using the Spearman rank order correlation technique. The study findings revealed a positive significant relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions in Rivers State Public Service Commission. This finding agreed with previous various studies that had examined the harmful effects of political behavior on employees' performance levels (e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). This behavior has negative aspects such as ingratiation conduct (Liden & Mitchell, 1988), which lead to a rise in stress and pressure at work (Ferri, Russ & Fandt, 1996), unfairness in evaluating employees' performance (Tziner, Latham, Price & Haccoun, 1996), and the formation of negative attitudes towards work among employees with different statuses (Drory, 1993). The image arising from these studies corresponds largely to the perceptions of the organizations' members with regard to this phenomenon. A study conducted by

Gandz and Murray (1980) found that employees usually consider organizational politics to be an unfair, evil, irrational and unhealthy behavior but at the same time as a necessary skill for those who want to get ahead and be promoted in the workplace. These findings were later supported by Voyer's (1994) study regarding human resource management, Ferris and King (1991) found that the use of influence in the organization is positively related to the managers' positive attitude toward his/her employees (i.e., the more an employee uses influence in the organization, the more his/ her performance is appreciated). They suggest that in essence, it introduces a serious bias into human resource management functions and potentially damages the selection, evaluation, and promotion processes.

Nonetheless, organizational politics also has some meaningful positive outcomes. Based on Gandz and Murray (1980) and Bacharach (2005), many of the organizations' members also believe that political behavior is necessary in many cases, especially if someone has an interest in advancing in the organization (promotion) and being acknowledged by his co-workers and employers as a good employee or as a talented manager. In fact, some aspects of "good" politics in leaders' behavior, in general managerial decisions and in human resource processes may lead to constructive outcomes for the employer, the employees and the organization as a whole. For example, Dipboye (1995: 55) argues that at times, "decision makers resort to political behavior in which they deconstruct human resource management procedures" (i.e., staffing, appraisal, compensation, training) "to provide support, justice, and empowerment".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study basically aimed at determining the relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions in Public organizations in Rivers State. From the data

generated and analyzed, it was empirically discovered that there is a significant relationship between workplace friendship and human resource procurement decisions in Public organizations in Rivers State. Based on results and the findings of the present study, the study concluded that workplace friendship increases as human resource procurement decisions also increases among of Public organizations in Rivers State.

The study thus concluded that management of organizations should take into cognizance that workplace friendship among employee class and managerial class should not have distorting effect on selection of employee for a particular course or benefit. The study clearly proved that if workplace friendships are kept professional, the effectiveness and efficiency of work will indeed be professional.

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