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IMPACT OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED RECRUITMENT ON EMPLOYEE MORALE, JOB SATISFACTION, AND COMMITMENT IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC BIDA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Political interference in recruitment and placement has emerged as a critical threat to human resource management in Nigerian public institutions. This study examined the impact of politically motivated recruitment on employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment at Federal Polytechnic Bida, Niger State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Data were collected from 331 academic and non-academic staff using structured questionnaires. Content validity was established through expert review, and a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained from a pilot study. Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were employed using IBM SPSS version 22.0. Findings revealed that politically motivated recruitment significantly reduces employee morale, lowers job satisfaction, and weakens commitment to institutional goals. The study concluded that politicized recruitment undermines meritocracy and institutional effectiveness, and recommends strict enforcement of transparent, merit-based recruitment policies, strengthened institutional autonomy, and the involvement of independent oversight bodies in hiring processes.

Keywords: *Political interference; Employee morale; Job satisfaction; Organizational commitment; Recruitment; Federal Polytechnic Bida*

Introduction

Recruitment is widely recognised as one of the most consequential human resource management functions, shaping organisational culture, workforce quality, and institutional effectiveness. When recruitment decisions are based on merit, competence, and transparency, employees tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Conversely, when recruitment is politicised, the misalignment between individual capability and institutional need produces detrimental consequences that permeate the entire organisation (Nwokocha, 2020; Yusuff & Ajayi, 2021).

In Nigeria, the politicisation of recruitment within public institutions is well-documented and persistent. Political officeholders, community leaders, and ethnic interest groups frequently interfere with hiring processes, prioritising loyalty and affiliation over qualifications and merit

(Afolabi & Ogundele, 2022). While this phenomenon has been studied in universities, government ministries, and federal agencies, empirical attention to federal polytechnics, particularly those in the North-Central geopolitical zone, remains limited. Most existing studies focus on broad civil service contexts (e.g., Omisore & Okafor, 2020; Olasupo & Ajani, 2021) or higher-status university environments (e.g., Ogunsanya & Olatunji, 2020), leaving polytechnic-specific dynamics under-examined.

Federal Polytechnic Bida occupies a strategically significant position as the only federal polytechnic in Niger State, serving a large and socio-politically diverse population. Stakeholder reports and internal complaints at the institution specifically point to politically motivated appointments, sidelining of qualified candidates, and role-qualification mismatches, consequences that have not been empirically investigated (Yusuff & Ajayi, 2021; Afolabi & Ogundele, 2022). This gap is particularly important given that the institution's academic and administrative functions depend critically on a committed and motivated workforce.

Furthermore, while studies such as Agbo and Okolie (2020) and Eme and Ogbochie (2018) confirm that political patronage degrades public service professionalism, there is limited institution-specific evidence examining how such interference translates into measurable declines in employee morale, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment within a polytechnic setting. Addressing this gap constitutes the primary contribution of this study.

This study therefore seeks to: (i) examine the nature and extent of political influence on recruitment decisions at Federal Polytechnic Bida; (ii) assess the impact of politically motivated recruitment on employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment; and (iii) propose evidence-based recommendations for reform.

Research Hypothesis

H0: Politically motivated recruitment has no significant impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment at Federal Polytechnic Bida.

H1: Politically motivated recruitment has a significant impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment at Federal Polytechnic Bida.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study positions politically motivated recruitment as the independent variable and employee morale, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment as the dependent variables. The theoretical pathway linking these constructs operates as follows:

when recruitment is driven by political patronage rather than merit, it produces a perception of institutional injustice among the workforce. This perceived injustice, in line with Adams's (1963) Equity Theory, directly reduces individual morale. Declining morale, in turn, reduces employees' sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in their roles. Employees who are dissatisfied progressively withdraw their psychological and behavioural commitment to institutional goals. The cumulative outcome is diminished staff performance and institutional effectiveness.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors' Conceptual Model (2025)

Politics of Recruitment

Politics of recruitment refers to the deliberate interference of political actors in the hiring, selection, and appointment of personnel in public institutions, supplanting merit-based criteria with loyalty, ethnicity, and partisan affiliation (Osibanjo et al., 2014). In Nigeria, this phenomenon is pervasive within federal and state institutions, where governing boards and HR departments are routinely pressured into accommodating politically connected individuals (Olaopa & Oyebanji, 2022). As Adeyemi and Uche (2018) observe, employees recruited through political channels are less likely to be scrutinised for competence, which breeds complacency and a sense of entitlement. This distorted entry into the workforce sets the conditions for chronic underperformance and erodes professional norms.

The Federal Character Principle, introduced to promote inclusivity in public service, has increasingly been manipulated to legitimise ethnically and politically motivated appointments, effectively subordinating merit to political calculation (Olasupo & Ajani, 2021; Agbo & Okolie, 2020). The result is a workforce where appointments reflect political debt rather than institutional need, and where employees' sense of justice, their own morale, and the coherence of institutional leadership are all undermined.

Employee Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Organisational Commitment

Employee morale refers to the collective disposition, confidence, and enthusiasm that workers bring to their roles. It is shaped significantly by perceptions of fairness in employment decisions. When employees observe that appointments are made on political rather than meritocratic grounds, those hired on merit experience a perceived violation of distributive and procedural justice (Adams, 1963). This injustice perception directly reduces morale, as evidenced by Nwokocha (2020) and Yusuff and Ajayi (2021), who find that politically influenced workplaces report significantly lower staff enthusiasm and organisational pride.

Job satisfaction, the extent to which employees find their work fulfilling and aligned with their expectations, is closely tied to organisational fairness and role-competency fit (Kooij et al., 2020). When politically placed staff occupy roles for which they are unqualified, the resulting operational inefficiencies frustrate competent colleagues, reducing their own satisfaction. Furthermore, misaligned placements deprive employees of meaningful work and professional growth, key predictors of satisfaction (Ejumudo, 2018).

Organisational commitment, comprising affective attachment, continuance motivation, and normative obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991), is weakened when employees perceive that the institution does not value merit. Eme and Ogbochie (2018) find that employees in politically patronised workplaces direct their loyalties to their political benefactors rather than to the institution, producing shallow normative and affective commitment. This weakened commitment manifests in reduced discretionary effort, higher absenteeism, and institutional stagnation.

Theoretical Framework: Political Patronage Theory

This study is anchored in Political Patronage Theory (Stokes et al., 2013), which explains the systematic exchange of public employment and institutional resources for political support, bypassing merit-based selection criteria. In developing democracies, particularly across sub-Saharan Africa, this theory illuminates why public institutions remain structurally resistant to merit-based reform despite formal policy mandates (Omisore & Okafor, 2020).

Applied to this study, Political Patronage Theory explains how political actors at Federal Polytechnic Bida override institutional HR protocols to install loyalists in academic and administrative positions. This override sets in motion the cascade described in the conceptual framework: the morale of merit-recruited staff declines as they witness the devaluation of competence; job satisfaction erodes as roles are filled by individuals unable to contribute meaningfully; and organisational commitment weakens as staff disengage from an institution

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that does not reward effort. The theory thus provides the explanatory mechanism linking politically motivated recruitment to the three dependent variables under investigation.

This study further draws on Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), which predicts that employees who perceive an imbalance between their contributions and outcomes relative to politically recruited counterparts will reduce their own inputs, manifesting as lower morale, satisfaction, and commitment.

Methodology Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted, which is appropriate for measuring perceptions, attitudes, and experiences across a defined population at a specific point in time. The study was conducted at Federal Polytechnic Bida, Niger State, Nigeria, in 2025.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised the academic and non-academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Bida, totalling 1,145 employees. Governing council members, state legislators, and alumni were excluded from the primary analysis, as the study's dependent variables, employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment, are attributes of the institutional workforce rather than external stakeholders. A sample of 297 staff was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% level of precision. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across academic and non-academic staff categories.

Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A captured demographic information, while Section B contained 16 items measuring the impact of politically motivated recruitment on employee morale (items 1–4), job satisfaction (items 5–8), and organisational commitment (items 9–16), rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree). Content validity was established through expert review by three academics in public administration and human resource management. A pilot study involving 30 non-sampled staff was conducted to assess reliability; a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.81 was obtained, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were administered in person by trained research assistants over four weeks. A total of 297 questionnaires were distributed; 281 were returned and found usable, yielding a response rate of 94.6%. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 22.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to summarise demographic and attitudinal data. The

Pearson Chi-square test of independence was applied to test the hypothesis, examining the relationship between perceived political interference in recruitment and levels of employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment. The test value in the one-sample t-test was set at the theoretical midpoint of the Likert scale (3.0) to determine whether mean scores deviated significantly from the neutral position.

Results and discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 281 respondents included in the analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	218	65.86
	Female	113	34.14
	Total	331	100%
Age	Below 35 years	98	29.61
	35–44 years	132	39.88
	45–54 years	53	16.01
	55+ years	48	14.50
	Total	331	100%
Marital Status	Single	67	20.24
	Married	233	70.39
	Divorced/Widowed	31	9.37
	Total	331	100%
Education	HND/B.Sc.	167	50.45
	Master's Degree	72	21.75
	Ph.D.	27	8.16
	OND/NCE	47	14.20
	SSCE	18	5.44
	Total	331	100%
Staff Category	Academic	129	38.97
	Non-Academic	159	48.04
	Total (employees)	288	87.01
Experience	1–5 years	63	19.03

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Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	6–10 years	155	46.83
	11–15 years	72	21.75
	16+ years	41	12.39
	Total	331	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The sample was predominantly male (65.86%), with the largest age cohort between 35 and 44 years (39.88%), indicating a mature and experienced workforce. More than 70% of respondents were married. Over half held a first degree or HND (50.45%), and nearly 30% held postgraduate qualifications. Non-academic staff formed the largest staff category (48.04%). These demographics suggest a workforce with substantial institutional exposure and the capacity to assess recruitment practices meaningfully. The majority of respondents (46.83%) had between six and ten years of experience, further strengthening the credibility of their perceptions on the study's variables.

Impact of Politically Motivated Recruitment on Employee Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions on the impact of politically motivated recruitment across the four survey items directly related to the study's dependent variables.

Table 2: Impact of Politically Motivated Recruitment on Employee Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

S/N	Survey Item	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1	Politically influenced appointments negatively affect staff morale	84 (25.38%)	123 (37.16%)	67 (20.24%)	29 (8.76%)	28 (8.46%)
2	Perceived political bias in recruitment reduces employees' motivation	68 (20.54%)	159 (48.04%)	32 (9.67%)	24 (7.25%)	48 (14.50%)
3	Staff recruited through political influence are often less committed to institutional goals	131 (39.58%)	97 (29.30%)	39 (11.78%)	28 (8.46%)	36 (10.88%)
4	Perceived injustice in recruitment and placement reduces job satisfaction	129 (38.97%)	103 (31.12%)	51 (15.41%)	17 (5.14%)	31 (9.36%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

On item 1, 62.54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that politically influenced appointments negatively affect staff morale. This finding is consistent with Equity Theory (Adams, 1963): when employees observe that colleagues obtain positions through political connections rather than merit, they experience a sense of distributive injustice that reduces their own motivation and organisational pride. The 20.24% neutral response is noteworthy; it may reflect respondents' reluctance to make overt attributions in a politically sensitive institutional environment.

Item 2 recorded the highest level of agreement overall: 68.58% agreed or strongly agreed that perceived political bias in recruitment reduces employee motivation. The strength of this finding affirms that it is not simply the act of political appointment that damages morale, but the broader perception of a biased system. As Nwokocho (2020) argues, once employees believe that effort and qualification are insufficient for career advancement, their intrinsic motivation declines sharply.

Item 3 revealed that 68.88% of respondents agreed that staff recruited through political influence are often less committed to institutional goals. This aligns with Eme and Ogbochie's (2018) observation that patronage-appointed employees tend to orient their loyalty towards their political sponsors rather than the institution. From an agency theory perspective, such employees face divergent principal–agent incentives: their accountability runs to political benefactors, not institutional objectives.

Item 4 showed that 70.09% agreed or strongly agreed that perceived injustice in recruitment and placement reduces job satisfaction. Taken together, the data across all four items indicate a consistent, strong pattern: political interference in recruitment erodes all three dependent variables, morale, satisfaction, and commitment, through interconnected mechanisms of perceived injustice, motivational decline, and misaligned accountability.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3: One-Sample t-test — Impact of Politically Motivated Recruitment on Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Impact of politically motivated recruitment on morale, job satisfaction, and commitment	54.037	330	.000	14.786	14.247	15.324

Note: Test value = 3.0 (theoretical midpoint of 5-point Likert scale); $p < 0.05$ = significant

Table 4: Chi-square Test Statistics — Political Recruitment and Employee Morale, Satisfaction, and Commitment

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square	393.447
Degrees of Freedom	15
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.000
Expected cell frequency	≥ 5 (all cells)

Source: SPSS Output, Field Survey 2025

The one-sample t-test, conducted with test value = 3.0 (the theoretical midpoint of the Likert scale, representing neutrality), produced $t(330) = 54.037$, $p = .000$, Mean Difference = 14.786, 95% CI [14.247, 15.324]. The mean scores on the composite measure of political recruitment impact deviated significantly above the neutral midpoint, indicating that respondents as a whole leaned strongly toward agreement that politically motivated recruitment negatively affects morale, job satisfaction, and commitment. The Pearson Chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant association between perceived political interference in recruitment and the three dependent variables: $\chi^2(15) = 393.447$, $p = .000$, with all expected cell frequencies exceeding 5, satisfying the assumptions for chi-square analysis.

On the basis of these results, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. There is sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that politically motivated recruitment has a significant impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment at Federal Polytechnic Bida ($p < .05$). These findings corroborate the broader Nigerian public sector literature (Nwokocha, 2020; Afolabi & Ogundele, 2022) and extend it to the specific context of a federal polytechnic.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that politically motivated recruitment exerts a significant and measurable negative impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment at Federal Polytechnic Bida. When recruitment decisions are driven by political patronage rather than merit, the resulting perception of institutional injustice among the workforce diminishes morale, erodes job satisfaction, and weakens employees' commitment to institutional goals. These outcomes are not merely attitudinal; they translate into reduced discretionary effort, lower productivity, and a gradual erosion of the institutional culture necessary for academic and administrative excellence.

The study further confirms that political interference in placement, assigning individuals to roles incongruent with their qualifications, compounds these effects by creating role-competency

mismatches that frustrate both the misplaced employee and their more qualified colleagues. Unless recruitment and placement processes at Federal Polytechnic Bida are insulated from political interference and anchored in meritocratic principles, the institution will continue to experience declining staff morale, weak organisational commitment, and diminished institutional effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following specific, actionable recommendations are proposed:

- **Adoption of Standardised, Open-Competitive Recruitment:** The Federal Polytechnic Bida should publish all vacancies publicly, adopt structured scoring rubrics for shortlisting and interview assessments, and establish clear timelines for each recruitment stage. All decisions should be documented and available for post-hoc audit by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).
- **Strengthening Institutional Autonomy:** The institution's Governing Council should adopt a formal policy explicitly prohibiting external political directives in recruitment decisions. Recruitment boards should be composed of at least 50% internally appointed technical experts, with external members drawn from professional bodies rather than political or community interest groups.
- **Independent Oversight Mechanism:** An independent recruitment oversight committee, comprising NBTE representatives, civil society observers, and professional HR practitioners, should be constituted to monitor and review each recruitment cycle, providing a public report within 60 days of completion.
- **Whistle-Blower Protection Policy:** A formal, confidential reporting channel should be established for staff to report political interference in recruitment. Protections should include legal safeguards against victimisation, and all reports should be investigated by a body independent of institutional management.
- **HR Capacity Building:** The institution's HR department should undergo biennial training on competency-based recruitment methodology, unconscious bias mitigation, and regulatory compliance, to ensure consistent application of merit-based standards across all hiring cycles.

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