

EFFECT OF NEPOTISM ON EMPLOYEE EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT: INTERPLAY OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement. The study aimed to provide topical empirical evidence to the relationship between the two constructs. The research was quantitative and implored inferential statistic to analyse data gotten from 359 employees of 12 private radio firms. The findings of the study revealed that nepotism possesses a non-significant negative relationship with emotional engagement. The result of this study also bears practical implication.

Keywords: Emotional, Employee, Engagement, Nepotism, Organizational politics

INTRODUCTION

The questions asked as to whether nepotism can be unequivocally related to affect employees appear arguable (Safina, 2015). The definition of nepotism undermines the question since they are laced with covert sense and subtlety. Indeed, nepotism connotes the interplay of organizational politics resulting in appointing someone to a position mainly in view of their relatedness (i.e., family ties, or bloodline) (Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Bute, 2011). Nonetheless, the nepotistic appointment may not be unequivocally seen as a negative act: the person might be qualified for such responsibility. Among the challenges confronting modern business management are the practices of nepotism, which most ignore the necessities for expertise, professional attitudes, and knowledge (Fisher, 1977). Nepotism mainly relies on organizational political activity rather than the merit-based reference (Yasir et al., 2013).

In developed nations, nepotistic practices are curtailed via legislative policies, while this measure is beneficial to such nations, nepotistic practices continues recurrently in the daily operations of the business environment in developing nations as there are no clear implementation of the policies against such practices (Boadi, 2000; Arasli et al., 2006). Thus, under such an environment, merit-based assessment and appointments seem unpalatable. While studies have explored nepotism with respect to its effect on organizational outcome variables with equivocal results (Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Miller & Le-Breton, 2005; Arasli et al., 2006; Bute, 2011; Daskin, 2013), there is paucity of empirical evidence on the relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement, especially within the study context.

As fierce competition between radio firms is growing and increasing daily (McEwan, 2017), the need for recruiting and appointing professional, appropriate and trained personnel is highly necessary for offering the best possible service and achieving sustainability above competitors. Private radio firm employees are considered as the frontline employees in the radio broadcasting industry and are required to reflect a stable emotional and professional attitude while on duty, and even while working in a high pressured environment (McEwan, 2017).

Today's organizational environment is increasingly becoming volatile due to a paradigm shift towards downsizing, outsourcing, and restructuring (Mason, 2007). Under such environments, gaps in communication, misaligned interest, distrust, and insecurity are the key variables that weaken the bond between employee-organization relationships (Agrawal, 2014). The effect of nepotistic practices on employee engagement in the face of all this requires empirical evidence, hence the need for this study, especially within the Nigerian context where political intrigue is featured in every facet of its existence.

The present study is an empirical attempt to explore the effect of nepotism on employee emotional engagement within the context of private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria. The research hypothesis for this study is:

H₁: There is a relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement.

H₀: There is no relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement.

The remaining section of this study will be under these major sections; literature review, research methodology, findings/results, discussions and conclusion, limitations and directions for further research, appendices, and references.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nepotism

The term "Nepotism" comes from the Italian word "nepotismo," which is based on Latin root "Nepos," meaning nephew or grandson. Nepotism is an owner's or manager's preference for hiring or appointing family members (nepots) rather than unrelated job applicants (Bellow, 2003); therefore perpetuating family involvement over time and across generations (Chrisman., 2003; Chrisman et al., 2012). It is thus the practice of nepotism that facilitates commonly held family goals of passing the firm leadership on to the next generation (Le-Breton & Miller, 2006).

Some studies show that nepotism can be detrimental to the firm itself (Cialdini, 1996; Kets, 1996; Bloom & Van-Rennen, 2007). In spite of a long-standing belief that nepotism is harmful, there have been surprisingly few studies that specifically examine nepotism (Vinton, 1998). What is interesting is that these studies show either positive or negative consequences of potential nepotism. For example, research on altruism in family firms explains how a desire to look after the next generation can reduce firm performance (Schulze et al., 2003). On the positive side, research investigating stewardship in family firms suggests that continuous family ownership can improve firm performance (Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Miller & Le-Breton, 2005).

Despite the literature and historical cases of abuse of nepotistic practice, there are as many arguments for nepotism as there are against; Ford and McLaughlin (1986) explain that there are three main arguments used to defend its practice; the first argument is that nepotism is

good for small family-owned firms as it provides an efficient way to identify dedicated personnel to staff such an organization (Barmash, 1986), the second argument, put forward by Ford and McLaughlin, is that if nepotism is freely practiced “It allows the extension of the talent pool, because if nepotism were banned there would be a large pool of people excluded due to relationship,” this is reiterated by Abdalla et al. (1998) who state that “permitting nepotism allows consideration of all potential employees who might be effective contributors to the organization rather than arbitrarily excluding a large pool simply because they are related by blood or marriage to an existing employee,” the third argument is that nepotism tends to foster a positive family type environment that boosts morale and job satisfaction for all employees (Bellow, 2003).

Ford & McLaughlin (1986) assert that the drawbacks that come with nepotism can be categorized into three broad sections; the first drawback is that such a practice can have an effect on the employee morale, the second is that business and personal affairs get mixed up together, Toy et al. (1988) argue that it could expose family fights, but more importantly, it can deter talented managers from getting to the top because there is no bloodline. Finally, Ichmowski (1988) posits that people never know why they achieve promotions, or why they do not get selected; is it for their merit or their connections. In any case (i.e., whether the argument is for or against nepotism), its effect on employee emotional engagement still needs empirical evidence as there is a paucity of topical empirical evidence.

Employee Emotional Engagement

The emotional engagement deals with how the employee feels about their role and if they possess a positive or negative attitude towards the organization and its leader(s). Emotionally engaged employees feel a sense of pride in their job and organization; hence, possesses a sense of ownership and therefore, likely to stay and deliver optimal performance (Dale, 2012).

Studies show that feeling valued, confident, inspired, enthused and empowered (positive emotions) are the essential emotions that prompt engagement; being “valued” is the trigger to achievement; however, by itself feeling valued does not create engagement; rather it acts as an enabler for the other more positive emotions (Lewis, 2011; Dale, 2012). Feeling valued and feeling confident together empowers people to make decisions about their work and generates enthusiasm. Employees who are emotionally engaged, hence, committed to working, are not just there for the compensation or promotion, they care about the organization and work to further its goals (Bishop et al., 2000; Lewis, 2011; Dale, 2012; Dorothea, 2013).

Employee emotional engagement is the extent to which employees value, enjoy, and believe in their jobs, managers, teams, or organizations. Employee emotional engagement is more than being happy at work; in fact, happiness does not greatly impact engagement, rather, emotionally engagement is demonstrated by how personally connected and committed employees feel to their organization (CLC, 2004; Dale, 2012). It is measurable by an employee's eagerness and willingness to recommend their organization as a place to work and a place to conduct business. Hence, emotionally engaged employees to work effectively, remain with their organization, and function as ambassadors for their organization (Dale, 2012).

Employees with negative emotions are more disengaged than employees with positive emotions, and the three critical negative emotions that drive disengagement are feeling irritation, disinterest (lack of engagement), and discomfort (Lewis, 2011; Dale, 2012). Negative emotions

are more contagious than positive ones; because they are more noticeable, they can flow from the individual employee to impact co-employees and the organization as a whole and spread past the workplace to clients, potential clients and possible future hires (Dale, 2012; Kurnia & Noor, 2016).

Employees emotional engagement is majorly driven by the organization's actions as a whole and the activities of management in particular, hence, when management induce positive emotions to foster a stronger sense of satisfaction; they receive the highest performance when they make employees feel inspired, enthusiastic, happy, and excited (Dale, 2012). Conversely, when management evokes negative emotions in employees, their performance may be below average (May et al., 2004; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Dale, 2012).

A Social Exchange Theory Perspective of Organisational Politics and Employee Engagement

Social exchange theory (SET) is a critical model for studying behaviour in the work environment, SET perceives organisational politics (e.g., nepotism) as an interplay of interdependent exchanges; the behavior (e.g., level of engagement) of one party (e.g., employee) is contingent on the actions (e.g., nepotistic activity) of another (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Ying-Ni et al., 2012). Therefore, an offered advantage creates an obligation to reciprocate in kind; this also denotes a high level of unpredictability in emotional engagement as the perception and interpretation of an offer or benefits varies amongst employees (Molm, 2003; Hall et al., 2004; Russell & Marie, 2005). Therefore, the operationalised and covert structure of nepotism and its dispersing value to employees makes it difficult to predict employees emotional level of engagement in a political work context (Shore et al., 2006; Eyvind et al., 2011).

Employee emotional engagement and social exchange share features that are significant to understanding reactions to nepotism; both accept that perception to nepotistic activities is highly subjective in a workplace (Ying-Ni et al., 2012). We propose that nepotism have a direct effect on employee emotional engagement. On the other hand, employee emotional engagement level may be intentionally exercised via the prerogative of employees' discretionary effort. Hence, employees' emotional engagement level may be affected negatively when the discretionary effort is not applied towards perceived nepotistic activity, and vice versa. This theory may be further validated via the result of this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Southeast zone of Nigeria comprises the following 5 states; (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo) (About Nigerians, n.d.), and only four states (i.e., Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Imo state) has private radio broadcasting firms. The population of this study comprises the employees of 12 private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast; these firms were selected based on their popularity within their locality. By delimiting the private broadcasting sector, we avoided the potential for unobserved differences that characterise the government broadcasting industry. The population of the full-time staff in the selected private radio firms was 383; hence a census technique was applied, with questionnaires distributed to a population of 383 employees, and 359 complete responses were retrieved, denoting a response rate of 94% (approximate).

Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using Spearman correlation and linear regression analysis to establish the relationship, and the degree to which the variance in employee emotional engagement can be attributed to nepotism, and finally a statistical power test using SPSS. The participants were assured of complete confidentiality. These steps limited the possibility of their responses been subjected to social desirability or acquiescence biases (Spector, 2006).

Statistical Power Test

A statistical power test was conducted to ascertain the probability of detecting an effect if there is a true effect present to be detected (Cohen, 1988). As can be seen in Table 3 (see appendix); with the sample size ($n=359$), p -value (0.022), and effect size (0.092); there is a 96.7% chance of detecting an effect that is really there.

RESULTS

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The validity of the instrument was established using content validity. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability results are indicated in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for nepotism is regarded as good (0.804). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for employee emotional engagement is also good (0.753); this implies that the instruments are reliable and valid for this study.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Nepotism	0.804
Employee emotional engagement	0.753

Spearman Correlation between Nepotism and Employee Emotional Engagement

Table 2 reflects the Spearman correlation between nepotism and employee emotional engagement. Table 2 shows the result of the bivariate relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement via Spearman correlation. Table 2 shows that there is a relationship ($p < 0.05$) between nepotism and employee emotional within the context of the private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria, and the strength of the association between forming nepotism and employee emotional engagement is weak and negative ($r = -0.109$). Since, $p(0.040) < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is evidence of a negative relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement within the context of the private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria.

Linear Regression Analysis

A linear regression analysis was conducted to predict the influence of nepotism on employee emotional engagement (Table 3). To know how much variance in employee emotional

engagement can be explained by nepotism, a linear regression was performed. As can be seen from Table 3, nepotism contributes 0.6% to the variance in employee emotional engagement. Hence, nepotism has a non-significant effect on employee emotional engagement within the context of private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria.

Construct	Category	Nepotism	Employee Emotional Engagement
Nepotism	Spearman's rho	1	-0.109
	Sig. (2 tailed)	-	0.040
	N	359	359
Employee emotional engagement	Spearman's rho	-0.109	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.040	-
	N	359	359

Variable	Nepotism					
	R	R ²	F	β	T	P
Employee emotional engagement	0.077	0.006	2.132	-.077	-1.460	0.145

R, R-value; R², R-squared value; F, F-value; β , beta-value; P, significance

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of nepotism on employee emotional engagement. The finding from the inferential analysis indicated that nepotism had an insignificant negative relationship with employee emotional engagement in selected private radio firms in Southeast Nigeria. Notwithstanding the result, employees been human are not all affected at the same level; hence the application or non-application of discretionary effort may differentiate the level of employee emotional engagement from one employee to the other; with ripple down effect on organizations goals.

Significant emphasis has been placed on the need to understand the dimensions of organisational political activities (i.e., nepotism) (Witt et al., 2000; Vigoda-Gadot, 2000). This study reveals interesting findings; first, our finding linked nepotism with employee emotional engagement within the context of the private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria, and found a non-significant negative relationship, indicating that nepotism does not significantly influence an employee level of emotional engagement. This offers support to literature, by elaborating on its strength and direction of such correlation; hence, this study gave empirical support on the relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement in selected private radio firms in Southeast Nigeria. This finding also aligns with several previous studies (Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Bute, 2011; Isaed, 2016).

Beyond the bivariate relationship, our finding also contradicts the core of the social exchange theory (Russell & Marie, 2005; Hall et al., 2004) connoting that employees emotional

engagement level is mostly influenced by their interpretation and perception of the advantages offered in a nepotistic environment. The result of this study also bears practical implications; for optimal sustainability of organisational goals; especially within the private radio firms in Southeast Nigeria, hence, executives should curtail nepotistic activities in their firms.

CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the paucity of empirical knowledge on the relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement. Specifically, the study found a non-significant negative relationship between nepotism and employee emotional engagement in selected private radio firms in Southeast Nigeria. From a practical viewpoint, the result of the study holds implication for private radio firms; nonetheless its implications for other industries would require an empirical study.

LIMITATION AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has acknowledged the following limitations; firstly, the scope of the study with respect to the geographic area and industry may compromise the external validity and applicability of its result; therefore, there is need to be careful in generalizing the findings to other geography and industry. Also, a common-method variance may influence the results, due to the census technique utilized and the self-administration of the questionnaire. Despite the acknowledged limitations, the study holds significant implications for radio firms that desire sustainable posterity. Also, there is a need to explore this relationship in other countries and industry, which will aid in an extensive comparative study, as well as meta-analysis.

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Appendix 1 NEPOTISM SCALE						
	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Employees are promoted or rewarded only because of personal ties					
2.	This organization uses discrimination in the recruitment and advancement process Family and acquaintances' disagreements become business problems in organizations allowing nepotism					
3.	Organization executives permitting employment of acquaintances have difficulty in employing and retaining high quality employees who are not acquaintances					
4.	Organizations permitting employment of executives' relatives have difficulty to fire or demote them if they prove inadequate					

Appendix 2 EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT SCALE					
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am enthusiastic in my job					
2. I am interested in my job					
3. I am proud of my job					
4. I feel positive about my job					
5. I am excited about my job					

Appendix 3 STATISTICAL POWER TEST							
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Dependent Variable: Employee Emotional Engagement							
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F^a	Sig.	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power^b
Concept Model	521.63 ^a	19	27.455	1.8	0.022	34.207	0.967
Intercept	25233.44	1	25233.44	1.65E3	0.00	1654.701	1.0
Nepotism	521.636	19	27.455	1.8	0.022	34.207	0.967
Error	5169.596	339	15.25				
Total	95527.0	359					
Corrected Total	5691.231	358					

a R Squared=0.092 (Adjusted R Squared=0.041) b Computed using alpha=0.05