INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT: THE BANKING SECTOR PERSPECTIVE.

[1]Okwurume, Clarance Nkasirim Ph.D. and [2]Igwe, Chinyere Emmanuel Ph.D.
[1]Faculty of Administration and Management, Department of Business Administration, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt; [2] Maurison Academy, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
cigwe1865@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the relationship between organizational politics and employee commitment in selected Nigerian banks. Organizational politics was operationalized using two key dimensions, co-worker behavior and dominant group behavior while employee commitment was assessed through affective and normative dimensions. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select ten banks, and data were collected from 92 supervisory and managerial staff. The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient was used to test the study's hypotheses. Findings reveal a significant negative correlation between co-worker behavior and both affective and normative commitment, indicating that increased perceptions of workplace politics reduce employees' emotional and moral attachment to the organization. Additionally, a moderate negative relationship was observed between dominant group behavior and the two commitment dimensions. Based on these results, the study recommends the implementation of fairness, transparency, and equity-based policies to minimize political behavior in the workplace. While organizational politics may be inevitable, management should adopt strategic interventions to mitigate its negative effects, thereby promoting stronger employee commitment and overall organizational performance.

Keywords: *Organizational politics, Employee commitment, Workers' behavior, Perception and commitment.*

INTRODUCTION

Employee commitment has long been recognized as a key determinant of organizational success, particularly in environments where workforce stability and performance drive competitive advantage. Defined as the psychological attachment an employee feels toward their organization, commitment influences turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and discretionary effort (Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, commitment is not formed in isolation; it evolves in response to a range of organizational dynamics, including leadership behavior, reward structures, workplace climate, and political undercurrents. Organizational politics, in particular, has emerged as a complex and often contentious force within the workplace. It refers to informal, often covert, actions aimed at influencing organizational decision-making and resource distribution to serve personal or group interests (Pfeffer, 1992).

Organizational politics is characterized by informal power structures, influence tactics, and self-serving behaviors and has recorded a profound impact on employee morale and workplace relationships (Pfeffer, 2017; Ferris & Kacmar, 2022). Hence, employees frequently navigate these political terrains by engaging in strategic behaviors such as circumventing formal procedures or aligning with influential actors to advance their interests (Sekewael & Wijono, 2023). While such actions may be viewed as adaptive by some, they often undermine trust, transparency, and cohesion within the organization. Scholars argue that political behavior is a natural feature of organizational life (Ferris et al., 2002), others view it as a toxic element that fosters distrust, reduces transparency, and undermines collective goals (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). The perception of such politics has been

shown to erode employee morale, increase stress, and weaken organizational commitment (Hochwarter et al., 2003; Nassar & Abou-Moghli, 2020).

Despite the growing literature on organizational politics and employee attitudes, much of the empirical work has been conducted in Western or Asian corporate contexts (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Miller et al., 2008), with limited focus on African settings, particularly Nigeria. This represents a significant gap, given the distinct organizational cultures, power structures, and socio-economic factors influencing workplaces in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigerian organizations, especially within the banking sector, are often characterized by hierarchical decision-making, centralized authority, and politically embedded HR practices (Akanji, 2016). These features create fertile ground for political behavior, which may profoundly shape how employees perceive fairness, opportunity, and their place within the organization. The banking sector in Nigeria is especially relevant for such an investigation. As a highly regulated, performance-driven industry, Nigerian banks are exposed to internal competition, public accountability, and evolving customer expectations. These pressures may incentivize political tactics such as favoritism, gatekeeping, or procedural circumvention, which in turn influence employees' commitment levels (Olowookere & Adejuwon, 2015). To date, few empirical studies have explored how organizational politics affects employee commitment within Nigerian financial institutions, particularly in the regional hub of Rivers State. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment in quoted banks operating in Rivers State.

Statement of Problem
Employees are widely regarded as the most valuable assets within any organization, not merely because they execute operational tasks, but because their commitment, innovation, and alignment with organizational goals are fundamental to achieving long-term success and sustaining competitive advantage (Sah-Nawaz & Juyal, 2006). In knowledge-driven and service-intensive sectors such as banking, employee commitment plays an even more crucial role. Employee commitment directly influences productivity, customer satisfaction, and organizational resilience. However, recent observations in the Nigerian banking sector indicate a troubling trend concerning employee engagement. Reports highlight increasing levels of disengagement, internal conflicts, and high turnover rates. Such dynamics suggest that many employees are currently lacking a sense of psychological investment, which is critical for fostering commitment and promoting a healthy workplace culture. The decline in employee engagement within Nigerian banks can be attributed to various factors, including organizational politics, favoritism, and informal influences that negatively impact workplace relationships (Pieters, 2018).

Theoretical Framework
This study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which serves as the foundational lens for examining the relationship between organizational politics and employee commitment.

Social Exchange Theory
Social Exchange Theory, (Blau (1964), posits that human relationships and social behavior are fundamentally shaped by an exchange process. This process involves the reciprocal exchange of resources either impersonal (e.g., financial incentives) or socio-emotional (e.g., care, loyalty, or respect) where individuals engage in interactions that generate unwritten and unspecified obligations. These exchanges are not governed by formal contracts or negotiated terms; rather, they depend on the discretion of the benefactor and the norm of reciprocity, a principle emphasized by Gouldner (1960). In other words, when one party provides a benefit without immediate return, it establishes an implicit expectation that the recipient will, at some future point, and, reciprocate. If this reciprocation occurs and continues, it creates a mutual sense of obligation and trust, thereby

strengthening the relationship (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). According to Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) (as cited in Wajda & Angela, 2012), the exchanged resources can range from tangible to intangible forms, which improves both instrumental and emotional bonds. Moreover, Riley (1993) argued that Social Exchange Theory provides a powerful lens through which interpersonal and organizational relationships can be better understood. Ultimately, the theory suggests that people engage in social relationships with rational intent which is to maximize personal benefits such as affection, loyalty, support, and belonging.

Concept of Organizational Politics
Organizational politics refers to behaviors and actions by individuals or groups within an organization that are primarily aimed at advancing personal interests which sometimes, are at the expense of others or even the organization's collective goals. According to Wayne, Liden, Graf, and Ferris (1997), such behaviors are typically self-serving and manipulative and are often characterized by internal competition for resources, influence, promotions, or recognition. These political activities may include and not limited to withholding crucial information, forming strategic alliances, distorting facts, or bypassing established procedures to gain personal advantage. This phenomenon frequently manifests in environments where ambiguity, competition, or resource scarcity exists, thereby triggering power plays, coalition-building, and hidden agendas (Drory & Romm, 1990). Kacmar and Ferris (1991) emphasized that political behavior often emerges when formal authority is limited, and informal influence becomes a tool to achieve desired outcomes. Although often viewed through a negative lens as it is associated with conflict, distrust, and reduced employee morale, scholars have acknowledged that organizational politics can also have constructive dimensions. For example, Saim, Cemberci, Civelek, and Gunel (2015) argue that when navigated ethically, politics can be a strategic tool for negotiation, innovation, and change management. Furthermore, the idea that "man is a political animal," as originally expressed by Aristotle, underscores that political behavior is a natural human trait. This implies that organizational politics is not only inevitable but also deeply embedded in human social interactions (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006).

Co-worker Behaviour
Co-worker behaviors are intentional and strategic, aimed at influencing opinions, building favorable impressions, or gaining advantages in work-related interactions. It is the purposeful behavior aimed at influencing others' perceptions in social and professional environments (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Within organizations, these behaviors are often strategic and situation-specific and often manifest during teamwork, performance evaluations, promotions, or interpersonal conflicts (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; McFarland, Ryan, & Kriska, 2003). These behaviors not only affect interpersonal dynamics but can also significantly influence organizational outcomes like trust, collaboration, and career progression (Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997). Co-worker behavior can be measured through observable impression management tactics in workplace scenarios, such as during team interactions, feedback sessions, interviews, and performance evaluations, using scales like the Impression Management Tactics Scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). McFarland, Ryan, and Kriska (2003) noted that much of the empirical focus has been on how such behaviors manifest in these structured work environments. In this study, co-worker behavior refers to the array of actions and strategies individuals or groups within an organization adopt to shape how others perceive them.

Dominant Group Behaviour
Individuals within organizations often engage in various formal and informal group relationships to fulfill personal, emotional, and social needs. According to Saim, Cemberci, Civelek, and Gunel (2015), formal groups are structured around organizational goals and hierarchies, typically created by management to execute specific tasks. In contrast, informal or dominant groups arise naturally

and are often less structured but can wield substantial political influence within the workplace. Firstly, they act as custodians of shared cultural values and help to preserve a preferred way of life. Also, they offer psychosocial benefits by providing members with social connection, recognition, emotional support, and informal status. While they may not align directly with formal structures, their influence is often subtle but powerful, as they can shape attitudes, resist change, or even guide the informal norms that govern daily operations (Mintzberg, 1983; Mayo, 1933).

Concept of Employee Commitment
According to Meyer (1997), commitment refers to an individual's psychological attachment and sense of obligation to a particular object, ideal, or cause. In organizations, commitment reflects the degree to which an employee identifies with, feels emotionally connected to, and is willing to exert effort on behalf of their employer. It often manifests as a consistent and voluntary alignment with organizational goals, grounded in trust and emotional investment. This study focuses specifically on affective and normative commitment.

Affective Commitment
Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to an organization. Employees with high affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to, driven by genuine feelings of belonging and loyalty. This form of commitment fosters active participation, internalization of organizational goals, and a readiness to make personal sacrifices for the collective interest (Meyer, 1997; Linda, Robert, & Stephen, 2011; Abbas & Awan, 2017). Such employees often view the success of the organization as a personal achievement, thereby demonstrating high levels of engagement and low turnover intent.

Normative Commitment
Normative commitment, on the other hand, is rooted in an individual's sense of moral obligation to remain with the organization. It reflects a belief that staying is the "right thing to do," especially after the employee has received substantial organizational support. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) explained that normative commitment arises from the norm of reciprocity, a social expectation that favors and support should be returned. When organizations offer career development, recognition, or support, employees may feel ethically bound to reciprocate with loyalty and continued service (Aqal & Sonia, 2012).

Relationship between Co-worker Behavior, Dominant Group Behavior and Employee Commitment
The relationship between organizational politics and employee commitment has attracted increasing scholarly interest, with findings revealing both negative and nuanced impacts. Khurram et al. (2014) conducted a field survey in a public sector organization to assess how commitment mediates the relationship between politics and job involvement. Their findings indicated that organizational politics exerted a negative influence on both job performance and commitment. Similarly, Aqsa, Amir, and Waqar (2013), found a negative impact of politics on work engagement, but paradoxically, a positive association with organizational commitment. Quaiser and Sajid (2017), reported that organizational politics had a positive correlation with performance, possibly due to adaptive behaviors like networking and strategic compliance that help employees thrive in politicized environments. Despite these mixed results, several scholars emphasize the damaging effects of political behavior on organizational loyalty. Bhattarai (2022) highlighted that environments characterized by favoritism and power struggles can erode employee morale and foster disengagement and turnover intentions. Yaseen (2020) added that while self-promotion may offer short-term survival in political climates, it often leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced commitment over time. Hence, this study hypothesizes that:

H_{01}: There is no relationship between co-worker behavior and affective commitment.
H_{02}: There is no relationship between co-worker behavior and normative commitment.
H_{03}: There is no relationship between dominant group behavior and affective commitment.
H_{04}: There is no relationship between dominant group behavior and normative commitment.
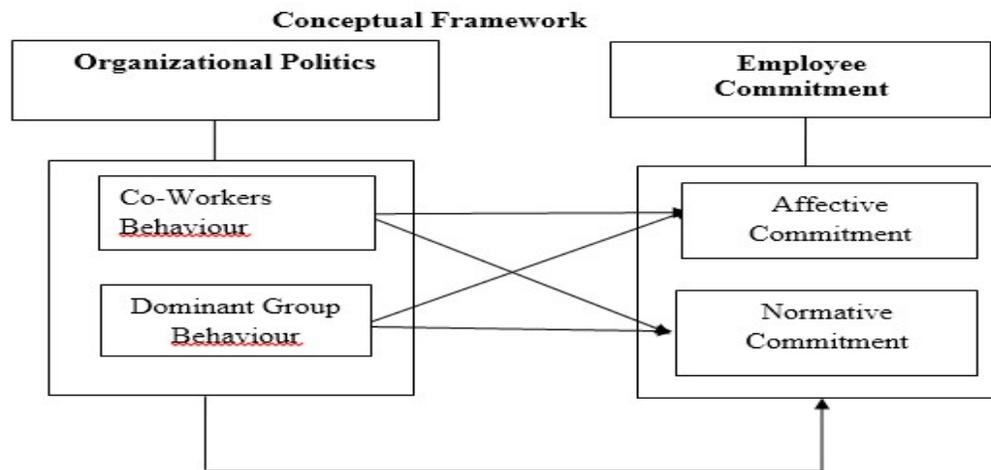

Figure 1.1: Showing the conceptual frame work of this study

(**Source:** Conceptualized by Researchers and Adapted from Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and Meyer & Allen's (1991).

METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study consisted of management and supervisory staff drawn from 16 quoted banks listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, as identified in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Bulletin. These banks operate multiple branches within Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study employed a convenience sampling technique and selected 10 out of the 16 banks for participation. The accessible population comprised 120 managerial and supervisory staff. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table was utilized, resulting in a required sample of 92 participants. Out of the 92 distributed questionnaires, 80 were successfully retrieved and deemed usable, representing a response rate of approximately 87%. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.87. These values fall within the acceptable threshold for internal consistency, as noted by Quaiser and Sajid (2017). To measure the study's constructs, a total of eight items were used four items for organizational politics adopted from Kacmar and Ferris (1991) and four items for employee commitment adapted from Meyer and Allen (1991). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing respondents to express the extent of their agreement with each statement.

Results Discussion of Findings
Demographic Analysis of Respondent

Variables	N	Percentages (%)
Ages		
21-30	10	13
31-40	37	46
41-50	23	28
51 and above	10	13
Job Title		
Management staffs	51	64
Supervisory staffs	29	36
Gender		
Male	33	42
Female	47	58
Experiences		
1-5yrs	25	31
6-10yrs	36	36
11-20yrs	10	13
21 and above	9	11
Education		
BSc / HND	40	50
MSc/MBA	33	41
PHD/DBA	7	9

Source: Researchers' Desk.

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 80 respondents across key variables such as age, gender, job title, work experience, and educational background. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (46%) fell within the 31–40-year age group, followed by 28% aged 41–50. Both the 21–30 and 51+ age categories accounted for 13% each. Regarding gender, 47 respondents (58%) were female, while 33 respondents (42%) were male, indicating a slightly female-dominated sample. For organizational roles, 64% of respondents held management-level positions, while 36% occupied supervisory roles. In terms of work experience, 36% of participants had 6–10 years of experience, 31% had between 1–5 years, 13% had 11–20 years, and 11% had over 21 years of experience. Educationally, the sample was relatively well-qualified. Half of the respondents (50%) held a Bachelor's degree or Higher National Diploma (BSc/HND), 41% possessed a Master's degree (MSc/MBA), and 9% held doctoral qualifications (PhD/DBA).

Test of Hypotheses

**Hypotheses
1**

Table 1: Relationship between co-workers and affective commitment

Correlations

			Co-workers Behaviour	Affective Commitment
Spearman's rho	Co-workers Behaviour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.760**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	80	80
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	-.760**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis above showcased a nexus value of -0.760 and a significant p-value = .000< 0.05) indicating a negative, but significant relationship between co-worker's behavior and affective commitment.

**Hypothesis
2**

Table 2: Relationship between co-worker's behavior and normative commitment

Correlations

			Co-workers Behaviour	Normative Commitment
Spearman's rho	Co-workers Behaviour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.867**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	80	80
	Normative Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	-.867**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table connotes a correlation between co-workers' behavior and normative commitment as it indicates a negative rho-value of -0.867 and P<0.05. This therefore means that there is a negative, but significant relationship between co-worker's behavior and normative commitment.

Hypothesis 3
Table 3: Relationship between dominant group behavior and affective commitment

Correlations			Dominant Group Behaviour	Affective Commitment
Spearman's rho	Dominant Group Behaviour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.583**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	80	80
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	-.583**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This study analysis reveals a negative, but moderate relationship between dominant group and affective commitment where rho value = -0.583, and P<0.05.

Hypothesis 4
Table 3: Relationship between dominant group and normative commitment

Correlations			Dominant Group behaviour	Normative Commitment
Spearman's rho	Dominant Group behaviour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.674**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	80	80
	Normative Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	-.674**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis above denotes a negative, but moderate relationship between dominant group behavior and normative commitment where Rho- value = -0.674, and P<0.05.

Discussions of Findings
The results of this study reveal a significant negative correlation between organizational politics and employee commitment. It suggests that as perceptions of organizational politics increase, employee commitment tends to decline. This finding aligns with prior research conducted by Rehan, Asma, Faisal, and Awais (2013); Nidhi and Prerna (2015); Drory (1993); Khurram et al. (2014); Chang, Rosen, and Levy (2009); and Abbas and Awan (2017). These studies similarly found that political behavior within organizations undermines trust, fosters dissatisfaction, and ultimately weakens the emotional and normative bonds employees hold toward their organizations.

However, it is noteworthy that Lasun and Nwosu (2011) reported a positive relationship between organizational politics and commitment. This suggests that in some contexts, employees may

engage in political behavior as a strategy for advancement, thereby reinforcing their attachment to the organization. This discrepancy indicates the complex and context-dependent nature of organizational politics, where outcomes may vary based on organizational culture, leadership style, and perceived fairness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational politics, while inherent in all workplaces, poses a substantial challenge to fostering strong employee commitment. Left unchecked, political behavior creates a conflict of interest among employees, damages interpersonal trust, and can lead to reduced morale, job dissatisfaction, and ultimately diminished performance and productivity. Furthermore, environments characterized by perceived injustice and favoritism are likely to experience increased deviant behaviors and higher turnover intentions. Conversely, when organizations promote transparency, equity, and procedural fairness, employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, dedication, and a willingness to contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives. A climate of justice reduces political maneuvering and encourages cooperative work relationships. Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Organizations should establish clear, objective policies for promotions, appraisals, and rewards to limit political manipulation and favoritism.
2. Managers and supervisors should ensure open and honest communication between management and employees to reduce suspicion and build trust.
3. Firms should train leaders to model ethical behavior and discourage political gamesmanship by upholding fairness and impartiality.
4. Management should address grievances promptly and fairly to prevent the buildup of resentment that fuels political behavior.

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