Effectiveness of human resource policies and challenges in managing office politics in Nigeria

Obinna Solomon Eboh[1]*, Ekwutosi Theresa Ezeanolue[1], Chinelo Patience Ohanyere[1], Victor Benjamine Anaekwe[2]

[1]Department of Business Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

[2]Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

*Corresponding author, email: ebohobinna1652@gmail.com

Abstract
The study employed a survey research design to gather quantitative and qualitative data from employees of a Bottling Company in Nigerian on the impact of personnel resource management on office politics. The population comprised over 3,000 staff across departments, with focus on Lagos and Ogun plants. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 150 was determined, while 80 conveniently accessible participants completed structured questionnaires. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Chi-square in SPSS (v23). Instrument validity was confirmed through expert review, and reliability (r = 0.68) indicated consistency. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained. Findings revealed that human resource policies were effective in managing office politics, as all mean scores exceeded (2.50). Transparency in decision-making (2.71), employee engagement (2.60), fair appraisal systems (2.52), conflict resolution (2.80), and training programs (2.69) were all accepted as effective measures. Challenges identified included resistance from top management (2.60), limited resources (2.62), cultural and hierarchical barriers (2.70), distrust in HR processes (2.72), and inconsistent policy application (2.59). The Chi-square result (χ^2 = 5.079, p = 0.046) indicated a significant relationship between HR management practices and the management of office politics in the bottling company. The study concluded that effective HR policies enhance workplace fairness and cohesion, while challenges must be strategically addressed to strengthen organizational harmony.

1. Introduction

Workplace politics continues to create invisible tensions in organisations, resulting in stress, dissatisfaction, mistrust, reduced commitment, and higher turnover intentions among employees. While human resource policies are designed to guide behaviour, shape fairness, control ambiguity, and promote ethical organisational operations, many organisations still report escalating internal rivalry, partiality, biases in reward systems, and manipulative power games despite having policies in place. Office politics refers to the informal power dynamics, influence tactics, hidden alliances, and strategic behaviours individuals or groups use within organisations to gain advantages, protect interests, or secure access to scarce resources such as recognition, promotion, or decision influence (Daud et al, 2013). It involves manipulation, impression management, favouritism, lobbying, and sometimes unethical practices driven by personal or group motives rather than organisational goals. This raises questions on whether HR policies are sufficiently effective in reducing the toxic effects of office politics or whether deeper structural, cultural, and managerial issues weaken their implementation (Muiruri, 2023; Malik et al., 2024).

Human resource policies are formal guidelines, rules, standards, and procedures established by an organisation to regulate employee behaviour, align workforce practices with organisational goals, and ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency in managing people. These policies guide processes such as recruitment, performance appraisal, training, compensation, promotion, discipline, workplace ethics, conflict management, and employee welfare (Aguinis et al, 2022). They serve as a framework that shapes expected conduct, clarifies rights and responsibilities, reduces ambiguity, minimises bias, and protects both employees and management. Recent literature shows

that HR policies work best when they are clear, integrated, open to consistent communication, and aligned with transparent processes that leave little room for hidden influence (CIPD, 2024).

Policies such as structured recruitment, promotion standards, grievance redress mechanisms, performance appraisal guidelines, behavioural codes, ethical standards, and anti-discrimination procedures have contributed to decreasing ambiguity in role expectations and reducing the likelihood of manipulative behaviour from dominant actors (SHRM, 2022). However, meaningful results only emerge when policies are matched with active managerial competence, continuous monitoring, emotional intelligence training, and leadership commitment. Procedural fairness alone cannot reduce political behaviour if employees do not trust managers' intentions or if managers apply policies unevenly, selectively, or defensively.

Studies also highlight the conditional nature of HR policy effectiveness. High performance human resource systems enhance productivity only in organisations where employees perceive lower levels of internal political tensions, meaning that even well-crafted policies may backfire in politically intense environments (Chang & Pak, 2024). The perception of politics is psychological and subjective, so even when structures appear objective on paper, employees may still believe decisions are shaped by hidden alliances or personal interest. When this perception becomes dominant, HR loses moral legitimacy, and formal rules gradually lose influence (Malik et al., 2024).

Managing office politics through HR processes remains very complex because politics is deeply embedded in competitive environments, power distribution, and access to scarce opportunities. In many organisations, formal systems and informal networks exist side by side and workers often trust informal channels more due to hierarchy avoidance and fear of retaliation when using official mechanisms (Muiruri, 2023). Another challenge arises from managerial capability deficiencies. Many managers are not trained to detect early signs of political manoeuvring, interpret subtle relational cues, or confront political actors without escalating conflict (CIPD, 2024). This skill gap weakens policy enforcement and results in a silent normalisation of unhealthy political behaviour.

Hybrid work and digital communication systems have increased complexity in monitoring behaviour, creating more informal spaces where covert influence networks silently operate beyond physical supervision, making political behaviour harder to detect and control (SHRM, 2022). In many Nigerian organisations, cultural norms and power structures sometimes override HR policies, particularly where powerful individuals are protected, causing political behaviour to become normalised rather than discouraged (Ohanyere et al., 2025a). Some studies also show that employees with strong political skills are even rewarded as valuable negotiators in complex organisational systems, which implies that completely suppressing informal influence may hinder adaptive performance in ambiguous work environments (Chang & Pak, 2024; Ohanyere et al., 2025b; Anaekwe et al., 2025).

The literature converges that strengthening HR policies requires stronger cultural commitment, active communication, consistent enforcement, trustworthy leadership modelling, and cultivating psychological safety. The study is justified because office politics continues to undermine productivity, employee morale and organisational trust in Nigeria, despite the existence of HR policies meant to regulate behaviour (Malik et al., 2024). Many organisations have documented procedures, yet political behaviours persist due to weak enforcement, cultural tolerance of informal influence, and limited managerial capability (Muiruri, 2023). Empirical studies in Nigeria remain limited and do not adequately explain why HR policies remain ineffective or how context-specific cultural norms shape outcomes. More recent evidence recommends evaluating policy effectiveness in different labour contexts due to contextual variation (CIPD, 2024), making this investigation necessary.

The research questions of this study are (1) how effective are human resource policies in managing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria and (2) what challenges do HR departments face in addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study tests the null hypothesis (H0) which states that human resource management practices have no significant impact on addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) which states that human resource management practices have a significant impact on addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria.

2. Method

The study adopted a survey research design, which allowed the researcher to collect opinions and perceptions from a cross-section of employees. This design was chosen because it is suitable for describing human behavior and obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey method provided a systematic means of gathering information from participants through structured questionnaires aimed at assessing the impact of personnel resource management on office politics. The population of the study comprised all employees of a Bottling Company, including staff from departments such as human resources, production, finance, logistics, administration, and sales. Both junior and senior staff were involved to ensure balanced representation. The company's workforce is estimated at over 3,000 employees across Nigeria; however, due to time and financial constraints, the study focused on selected plants in Lagos and Ogun States, where most operations are concentrated.

A sample size of 150 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error to ensure statistical significance. The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across departments and job levels. Stratification was done according to department and job role, after which random sampling was applied to eliminate bias. In some instances, a convenience sampling technique was used to select accessible respondents, resulting in 80 participants who were willing and available to complete the questionnaire. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: demographic information and questions aligned with the study objectives. Respondents indicated their level of agreement using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data came from the administered questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, internet sources, and government publications.

For data analysis, mean scores, standard deviation, and frequency percentages were computed, while the Chi-square test in SPSS version 23 was employed to test hypotheses. The cut-off mean score for decision-making was set at 2.5, with scores above 2.5 considered acceptable. Validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review by the project supervisor, who verified that the items adequately covered the study objectives. Reliability was established using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.68, indicating satisfactory reliability. Ethical approval was obtained from the department, and informed consent was secured from all participants before data collection.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Question 1: How effective are human resource policies in managing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria?

To address Research Question 1, respondents' assessments of the effectiveness of human resource policies in managing office politics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent on how effective are human resource policies in managing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	X	S. D	DECISION
1	HR policies promote transparency in decision-making to reduce favoritism and bias.	2.71	.883	Accepted
2	Employee engagement programs under HR policies effectively minimize political behaviors.	2.60	.780	Accepted
3	Performance appraisal systems implemented by HR departments are perceived as fair and unbiased.	2.52	.681	Accepted
4	Conflict resolution mechanisms provided by HR policies resolve workplace disputes efficiently.	2.80	.828	Accepted
5	Training and development programs under HR policies enhance employees' interpersonal and professional skills to manage political behavior.	2.69	.728	Accepted

(Field Survey, 2024)

From Table 1, the responses derived as described in the table on how effective are human resource policies in managing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria, the table shows that all the items (item1-item4) with mean score of 2.71, 2.02, 2.52, 2.80 2.6 and 2.69 were all accepted

respectively. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item4) respectively had mean scores of 2.50 and above.

3.2. Research Question 2: What challenges do HR departments face in addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria?

In response to Research Question 2, the challenges encountered by HR departments in addressing office politics are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent on what challenges do HR departments face in addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	X	S. D	DECISION
1	Resistance from top management limits the implementation of HR policies addressing office politics.	2.60	.782	Accepted
2	Limited resources and budget constraints hinder HR departments' ability to enforce policies effectively.	2.62	.759	Accepted
3	Cultural practices and hierarchical structures discourage reporting of political behaviors.	2.70	.683	Accepted
4	Employees lack trust in HR processes and grievance handling mechanisms.	2.72	.781	Accepted
5	Inconsistent application of HR policies creates loopholes that perpetuate office politics.	2.59	.701	Accepted

(Field Survey, 2024)

From Table 2, the responses derived as described in the table on What challenges do HR departments face in addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria, the table shows that all the items (item1-item4) with mean score of 2.60, 2.62, 2.70, 2.72 and 2.59 were all accepted respectively. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item4) respectively had mean scores of 2.50 and above.

3.3. Testing Hypothesis

This section examines the hypothesis on whether human resource management practices significantly impact the addressing of office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria. The null hypothesis (H_0) states that human resource management practices have no significant impact on addressing office politics, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) posits that human resource management practices have a significant impact.

The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique at a 0.05 level of significance. The summary of the chi-square test results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the Chi-square test if Human resource management practices have significant impact on addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria.

Variables	Observed F	Expected F	Df	χ^2	P-value
Yes	42	10.0	1	5.079	0.046
No	20	10.0			
Undecided	15	10.0			
Total	77				

At 0.05 level of significance

Table 3 shows that the p-value (.046) is less than the significance level set for the analysis (p<0.05). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states human resource management practices has no significant impact on addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria is rejected. While alternate hypothesis which states that human resource management practices have significant impact on addressing office politics in a bottling company in Nigeria is accepted (p = .046< 0.05).

3.4. Discussion

The results of the study revealed that human resource (HR) policies are effective in managing office politics within the bottling company. Findings in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed HR policies promote transparency in decision-making (mean = 2.71) and ensure fairness in performance appraisal systems (mean = 2.52). This finding agreed with Raza et al, (2023), who found that

transparent HR practices reduce favoritism and enhance trust in decision-making processes. Similarly, employee engagement programs and conflict resolution mechanisms were perceived as effective, which aligns with Lee et al, (2019), who observed that participatory HR initiatives reduce internal conflicts and power struggles. In contrast, Oki (2025) reported that many Nigerian firms still struggle to institutionalize fairness in HR policies, particularly in appraisal and reward systems, due to entrenched hierarchical cultures.

Training and development initiatives under HR policies also improved employees' interpersonal and professional competencies (mean = 2.69), supporting the view of Bak et al, (2020) that continuous learning fosters cooperation and mitigates political rivalry. In a related study, Opara (2023) emphasized that capacity-building programs enhance emotional intelligence and help staff navigate workplace politics ethically. Hence, the current result reinforces the notion that a well-structured HR framework contributes positively to employee behavior and organizational harmony.

Regarding challenges, Table 2 revealed that HR departments face multiple barriers, including resistance from top management (mean = 2.60), limited resources (mean = 2.62), and employees' lack of trust in grievance handling (mean = 2.72). These findings agreed with Girling (2018), who noted that managerial interference often weakens HR authority in enforcing anti-politicking policies. In contrast, O'Grady (2019) reported that organizations with decentralized structures experience fewer constraints because HR units enjoy greater autonomy. Moreover, cultural and hierarchical barriers were found to discourage employees from reporting political misconduct (mean = 2.70), a finding that supports Oti (2020), who observed that in Nigerian organizations, socio-cultural norms often inhibit open confrontation of unethical behaviors.

The hypothesis testing using Chi-square analysis ($p = 0.046 < 0.05$) confirmed a significant relationship between HR management practices and the reduction of office politics. This finding agreed with Singh and Choudhary (2018), who demonstrated that consistent HR implementation significantly moderates internal conflicts and promotes organizational justice. Collectively, the results underscore that effective HR policies if supported by management commitment, adequate resources, and cultural sensitivity serve as vital tools for mitigating office politics and sustaining organizational cohesion.

4. Conclusion

The study on the effectiveness of human resource policies and challenges in managing office politics in Nigeria revealed that well-structured HR policies play a critical role in promoting fairness, transparency, and professionalism within organizations. Findings showed that HR strategies such as transparent decision-making, fair performance appraisals, and effective conflict resolution mechanisms contribute significantly to minimizing political behaviors and improving workplace harmony. However, challenges such as management resistance, limited resources, cultural influences, and employees' lack of trust in HR processes hinder the full implementation of these policies. The Chi-square analysis confirmed that human resource management practices significantly influence the reduction of office politics ($p = 0.046$), emphasizing the strategic value of HR functions in organizational governance. It was concluded that addressing office politics requires consistent policy enforcement, management support, and employee engagement initiatives. Organizations should also invest in training and open communication systems to foster trust and inclusivity. Strengthening HR capacities and ensuring the fair application of policies will enhance organizational integrity, productivity, and employee satisfaction, ultimately leading to a more cohesive and goal-driven workplace environment in Nigerian organizations.

Author Contributions

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Aguinis, H., Jensen, S. H., & Kraus, S. (2022). Policy implications of organizational behavior and human resource management research. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 36*(3), 857–878. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2020.0093

Anaekwe, V. B., Okoye, N. S., Okoye, E., & Ohanyere, C. P. (2025). Manpower planning and organizational performance: A study of Anambra State Ministry of Environment, 2018–2022. *Humanities Horizon, 2*(3), 143–155. https://doi.org/10.63373/3047-8014/37

Bak, D., Chávez, K., & Rider, T. (2020). Domestic political consequences of international rivalry. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 64*(4), 703–728.

Chang, H., & Pak, J. (2024). When HRM meets politics: Interactive effects of high-performance work systems, organizational politics, and political skill on job performance. *Human Resource Management Journal, 34*(4), 1112–1133.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2024). *CIPD Good Work Index 2024: Summary report.* https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2024-pdfs/8625-good-work-index-2024-summary-report-1-web.pdf

Daud, Z., Isa, M. F. M., Nor, W. S. W. M., & Zainol, Z. (2013). Office politics: The reduction of employees' need for power. *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 4*(11), 29–35.

Girling, J. L. (2018). *Interpreting development: Capitalism, democracy, and the middle class in Thailand* (No. 21). Cornell University Press.

Lee, J. W., Zhang, L., Dallas, M., & Chin, H. (2019). Managing relational conflict in Korean social enterprises: The role of participatory HRM practices, diversity climate, and perceived social impact. *Business Ethics: A European Review, 28*(1), 19–35.

Malik, L. R., Sharma, D., Ghosh, K., & Sahu, A. K. (2024). Impact of organizational politics on employee outcomes: A systematic literature review. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 35*(4), 714–765.

Muiruri, Z. K. (2023). Organizational politics and employee's performance: A theoretical review. *Open Journal of Business and Management, 11*(4), 1387–1401.

O'Grady, W. (2019). Enabling control in a radically decentralized organization. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management, 16*(2), 224–251.

Ohanyere, C. P., Eboh, O. S., & Theresa, E. E. (2025a). Impact of motivation and job satisfaction on employees' performance at Central Bank of Nigeria, Awka Branch. *Ecobankers: Journal of Economy and Banking, 6*(2), 65–85.

Ohanyere, C. P., Gloria, N. E., Okeke, C. F., & Eboh, O. S. (2025b). Sustainable entrepreneurship and profitability of manufacturing firms in Anambra state. *INJOSEDU: International Journal of Social and Education, 2*(7), 2336–2350.

Oki, O. J. (2025). The impact of inclusive HR policies on organisational efficiency in Nigerian faith-based institutions. *African Journal of Management and Business Research, 20*(1), 356–375.

Opara, G. (2023). Leadership emotional intelligence and institutional planning in public universities. In *3rd International Conference on Institutional Leadership and Capacity Building in Africa* (p. 327).

Oti, O. E. (2020). *The challenges of ethical behaviour in realizing positive organizational ethical practice in Nigeria* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Raza, M., Khokhar, M. F., Zubair, M., & Rubab, M. (2023). Impact of transparent communication in HR governance: Fostering employee trust and engagement. *Bulletin of Business and Economics, 12*(3), 558–566.

Singh, T., & Choudhary, S. (2018). Organisational justice, experiencing interpersonal conflict and employee engagement: A moderated mediation analysis. *Journal of Organisation and Human Behaviour, 7*(1), 1–10.

Society for Human Resource Management. (2022). *2022–2023 state of the workplace report.* SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/research/2022-2023-State-of-the-Workplace-Report.pdf