

# ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: CONSEQUENCES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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## Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities, focusing on the mechanisms through which political behaviors influence institutional outcomes. The study addressed three specific objectives: to examine the nature and extent of organizational politics, to assess its effect on employee productivity, and to evaluate the influence of productivity on organizational performance. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving 412 academic and non-academic staff from six purposively selected federal and state universities. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics, regression, and mediation analyses, while qualitative data from open-ended questions were thematically analyzed to contextualize political behaviors and productivity issues. Findings indicate that organizational politics is moderately prevalent, with leadership politicization and favoritism being the most salient forms. Regression results show that organizational politics negatively and significantly affects employee productivity ( $\beta = -0.451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while employee productivity positively predicts organizational performance ( $\beta = 0.592$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Mediation analysis reveals that employee productivity partially mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance (indirect effect  $\beta = -0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Qualitative data corroborate these findings, highlighting how favoritism, patronage, and procedural unfairness undermine staff motivation and institutional efficiency. The study concludes that political interference impedes productivity and constrains organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. It recommends merit-based governance, enhanced transparency, performance incentives, and leadership development programs to mitigate political effects and enhance institutional outcomes. These findings contribute to the literature by providing empirical and contextual evidence on the mechanisms linking politics, productivity, and performance in the public university sector.

**Keywords:** Organizational politics; Employee productivity; Organizational performance; Nigerian public universities; Mediation; Higher education management

## INTRODUCTION

Universities occupy a strategic position in national development through their roles in knowledge production, human capital formation, and socio-economic transformation. In Nigeria, public universities constitute the backbone of the higher education system, accounting for the majority of student enrolment and academic

workforce. However, despite their importance, Nigerian public universities have increasingly been characterized by declining employee productivity, industrial conflicts, administrative inefficiencies, and suboptimal organizational performance (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003; Okebukola, 2015; Nwambuko & Aмоke, 2021). A growing body of scholarly and policy discourse suggests that organizational politics has become a critical factor shaping these outcomes.

Organizational politics refers to informal, self-serving behaviors and power dynamics through which individuals or groups seek to influence decisions, resource allocation, and career outcomes within organizations (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). In public sector institutions (including public universities), organizational politics is often intensified by bureaucratic structures, weak performance management systems, politicized leadership appointments, competition for scarce resources, lack of accountability and transparency (Christensen et al., 2020, Nwambuko et al, 2026). Accountability and transparency mechanisms play a central role in ensuring that public institutions operate with integrity, efficiency, and responsiveness to the needs of citizens (Nwambuko et al, 2026). In Nigerian public universities, political behaviors frequently manifest in staff recruitment and promotion processes, leadership selection, allocation of research funds, committee assignments, and disciplinary actions (Aina, 2014; Oloruntoḃa and Ajayi, 2019).

Employee productivity, defined as the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees convert inputs such as skills, time, and resources into desired outputs, remains central to the achievement of university goals in teaching, research, and community service (Armstrong, 2020). However, empirical evidence indicates that pervasive organizational politics can erode job satisfaction, weaken organizational commitment, and diminish employees' motivation to perform optimally (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth, 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007, Nwambuko, 2025). In the context of Nigerian public universities, perceptions of unfairness, favoritism, and political interference have been linked to low morale, absenteeism, brain drain, and frequent industrial actions by academic and non-academic staff unions (ASUU, 2020; Adeyemi, 2018, Nwambuko et al, 2025).

Organizational performance in universities is reflected in indicators such as research output, teaching quality, administrative efficiency, student outcomes, and institutional reputation. Persistent disruptions to academic calendars, declining global rankings, and reduced research competitiveness among Nigerian public universities raise critical questions about the underlying organizational dynamics affecting performance (World Bank, 2019). While structural and funding challenges have received considerable scholarly attention, the role of organizational politics as a determinant of employee productivity and, by extension, organizational performance remains under-examined in the Nigerian higher education literature.

This study therefore seeks to examine the nature and dynamics of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities and assess its consequences for employee productivity and organizational performance. By empirically analyzing how political behavior influences staff attitudes, work behaviors, and institutional outcomes, the study aims to contribute to public sector management scholarship and offer evidence-based insights for improving governance, accountability, and performance in Nigeria's university system.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the strategic importance of Nigerian public universities to national development, their ability to deliver on core mandates of teaching, research, and community service has remained persistently constrained. Over the past two decades, public universities in Nigeria have experienced declining employee productivity, frequent industrial disputes, administrative inefficiencies, prolonged disruptions of academic calendars, and deteriorating organizational performance indicators (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003; Okebukola, 2015; World Bank, 2019). While funding inadequacies, infrastructural decay, and policy inconsistencies are often cited as major causes, these explanations alone have proven insufficient to account for the depth and persistence of performance challenges within the system.

A growing yet underexplored concern is the pervasive influence of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities. Organizational politics—manifesting through favoritism, patronage networks, politicized leadership appointments, opaque promotion processes, and inequitable allocation of resources—has increasingly shaped managerial decisions and workplace relations (Aina, 2014; Pfeffer, 2010). Such political behaviors are particularly pronounced in public universities due to bureaucratic governance structures, weak accountability mechanisms, and strong external political interference (Christensen et al., 2020). These dynamics raise critical questions about their implications for employee attitudes, motivation, and productivity.

Empirical studies across organizational settings suggest that high levels of perceived organizational politics are associated with reduced job satisfaction, diminished organizational commitment, workplace stress, withdrawal behaviors, and lower individual and collective performance (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007, Nwambuko, 2025). In Nigerian public universities, anecdotal and policy reports indicate that perceptions of unfairness and political manipulation have contributed to declining staff morale, low research output, limited innovation, and recurrent industrial actions by academic and non-academic staff unions (ASUU, 2020; Adeyemi, 2018). However, much of the existing literature on Nigerian universities has focused on structural, financial, and policy-related challenges, with limited empirical attention given to organizational politics as a determinant of employee productivity and organizational performance. Additionally, most studies on organizational politics have been conducted in private sector or Western contexts, with limited empirical evidence from Nigerian public universities. While some research exists on administrative inefficiencies or staff productivity in Nigerian universities (Saint et al., 2003; World Bank, 2019), few studies have explicitly examined how internal political behaviors directly and indirectly influence employee productivity and organizational performance within the Nigerian public university context, the nature and extent of organizational politics in these institutions, the mechanisms linking productivity to organizational performance, and the policy interventions necessary to mitigate negative effects

The above gaps in the literature represent a significant problem, given that employee productivity is a critical mediating mechanism through which organizational processes influence institutional outcomes. Without a systematic understanding of how organizational politics affects productivity and performance, reform initiatives risk addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes. Furthermore, the absence of robust empirical evidence limits the capacity of university administrators and policymakers to design governance frameworks that promote fairness, accountability, and performance.

The problem this study addresses, therefore, is the insufficient empirical understanding of the nature, dynamics, and consequences of organizational politics for employee productivity and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. By failing to adequately interrogate this relationship, existing scholarship and policy interventions remain ill-equipped to tackle one of the less visible but deeply consequential challenges undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of Nigeria's public university system.

Thus, the general objective of this study is to examine the influence of organizational politics on employee productivity and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. The specific objectives are to: examine the nature and extent of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities; assess the effect of organizational politics on employee productivity in Nigerian public universities; and determine the influence of employee productivity on organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. In line with the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: What is the nature and extent of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities? How does organizational politics affect employee productivity in Nigerian public universities? And to what extent does employee productivity influence organizational performance in Nigerian public universities? Additionally, For the purpose of quantitative or mixed-methods analysis, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at an appropriate level of significance:  $H_{01}$ : Organizational politics has no significant effect on employee productivity in Nigerian public universities;  $H_{02}$ : Employee productivity has no significant effect on organizational performance in Nigerian public universities; and  $H_{03}$ : Organizational politics has no significant indirect effect on organizational performance through employee productivity in Nigerian public universities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Explanations

#### Organizational Politics

Organizational politics refers to informal, often self-serving behaviors through which individuals or groups seek to influence organizational decisions, processes, and outcomes in ways that are not formally sanctioned by organizational rules or merit-based systems (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). These behaviors typically emerge from power struggles, competition over scarce resources, and ambiguity in organizational structures and performance evaluation systems. In public sector organizations, organizational politics is particularly pronounced due to bureaucratic hierarchies, diffuse accountability, and the intersection between administrative authority and external political interests (Christensen et al., 2020).

In Nigerian public universities, organizational politics manifests in multiple forms, including favoritism in staff recruitment and promotion, politicized leadership appointments, manipulation of committee decisions, selective enforcement of rules, and inequitable allocation of research grants and administrative privileges (Aina, 2014; Olorunjoba and Ajayi, 2019). These practices shape employees' perceptions of fairness, justice, and transparency within the institution. Perceived organizational politics, rather than objective political behavior alone, is particularly consequential because employees' attitudes and behaviors are largely driven by how they interpret organizational actions and decision-making processes (Ferris et al., 2002). High levels of perceived organizational politics often undermine trust in management, weaken organizational commitment, and create a climate of uncertainty and competition that is detrimental to effective performance.

#### Employee Productivity

Employee productivity refers to the degree to which employees efficiently and effectively utilize their skills, time, and organizational resources to achieve assigned tasks and organizational goals (Armstrong, 2020). In the context of public universities, employee productivity encompasses both academic and non-academic staff contributions, including teaching effectiveness, research output, administrative efficiency, student support services, and community engagement. Productivity in universities is therefore multidimensional and cannot be measured solely in terms of output volume but must also consider quality, relevance, and timeliness of work outcomes.

Employee productivity is influenced by a range of individual, organizational, and environmental factors, including motivation, job satisfaction, leadership quality, resource availability, and organizational climate (Robbins and Judge, 2021). Organizational politics constitutes a critical contextual factor shaping productivity, as it affects employees' willingness to exert effort, engage in innovative behaviors, and align personal goals with institutional objectives. When organizational politics is perceived as excessive or unfair, employees may respond through reduced effort, withdrawal behaviors, presenteeism, or active resistance, thereby lowering overall productivity (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). In Nigerian public universities, persistent perceptions of political interference have been linked to declining research engagement, compromised teaching quality, and weakened administrative effectiveness.

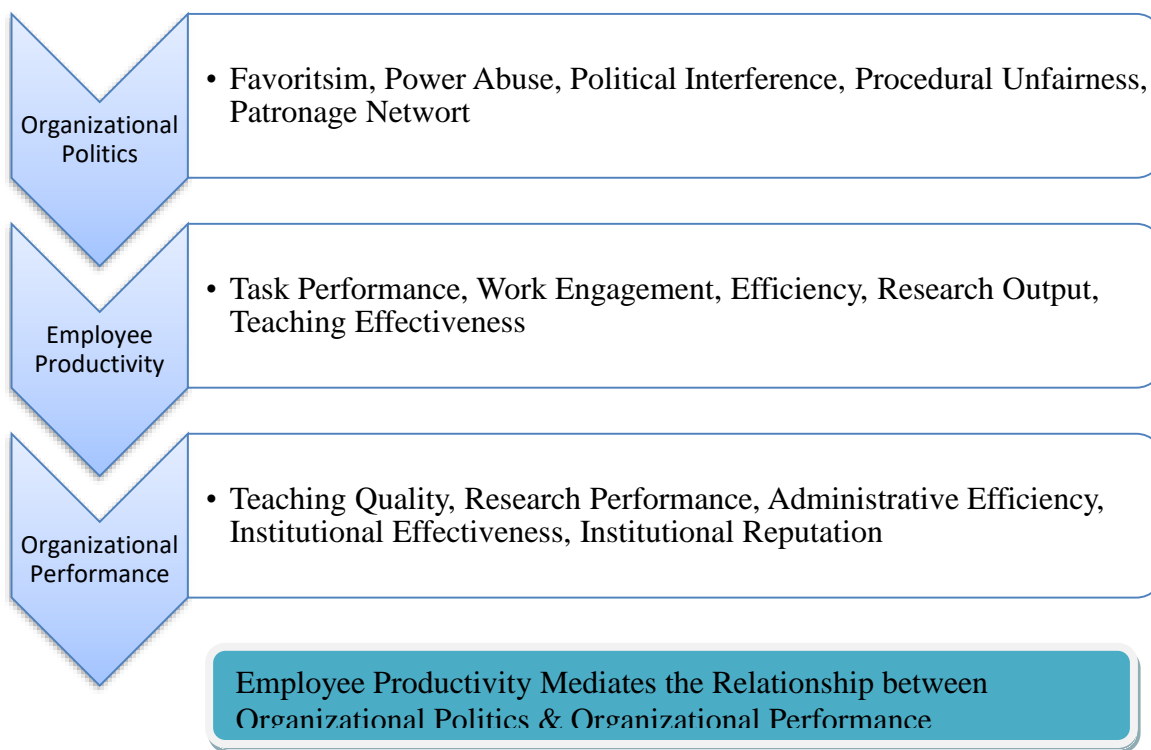
#### Organizational Performance

Organizational performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its stated objectives efficiently and sustainably, while effectively responding to stakeholder expectations and environmental demands (Richard et al., 2009). In public sector institutions such as universities, performance extends beyond financial outcomes to include service quality, institutional effectiveness, social relevance, and public value creation. For Nigerian public universities, organizational performance is commonly reflected in indicators such

as teaching quality, research productivity, graduation rates, administrative efficiency, institutional stability, and national and international reputation (World Bank, 2019).

Organizational performance is inherently linked to the productivity and commitment of employees, who serve as the primary agents through which institutional goals are realized. While structural factors such as funding levels and infrastructure are important, internal organizational dynamics—particularly governance practices and political behavior—play a decisive role in shaping performance outcomes (Pfeffer, 2010). When organizational politics undermines meritocracy and accountability, it weakens performance management systems and distorts decision-making processes, leading to inefficiencies and suboptimal outcomes. Conversely, managing political behavior through transparent governance, fair procedures, and inclusive leadership can enhance employee productivity and contribute to improved organizational performance in Nigerian public universities.

**FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram aligning strictly with the study’s objectives, questions, and hypotheses.**



Thus, the conceptual framework above illustrates the hypothesized relationships among organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. The framework is grounded in organizational politics theory and public sector performance literature, which posit that internal political dynamics significantly shape employee behavior and institutional outcomes.

In the framework, organizational politics is positioned as the independent variable, reflecting informal power relations and political behaviors that influence decision-making processes within public universities. These behaviors include favoritism, abuse of authority, politicized appointments, inequitable promotion practices, and procedural unfairness. Additionally, lack of well-organized DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) systems may result in the marginalization of a particular group, demoralized employees, and poor usage of human resources which in turn hinder the potential of the state institutions to maximize the workforce and provide effective services to the population (Nwambuko *et al*, 2026). In Nigerian public universities, such political dynamics are often reinforced by bureaucratic governance structures, weak accountability mechanisms, and external political interference. These conditions create an organizational climate in which employees’ perceptions of fairness and merit are continually negotiated.

Employee productivity is conceptualized as the mediating variable through which organizational politics influences institutional outcomes. Productivity captures the extent to which academic and non-academic staff effectively translate their skills, time, and effort into meaningful outputs such as quality teaching, research publications, administrative efficiency, and student support services. The framework assumes that organizational politics affects productivity by shaping employees' motivation, commitment, and willingness to exert discretionary effort. Where political behavior is perceived as excessive or unjust, employees are more likely to disengage, reduce effort, or adopt coping strategies that negatively affect productivity.

Organizational performance constitutes the dependent variable and reflects the overall effectiveness of Nigerian public universities in achieving their statutory mandates. Performance is expressed through indicators such as teaching quality, research productivity, administrative effectiveness, institutional stability, and public credibility. The framework posits that employee productivity is a critical mechanism linking organizational politics to performance outcomes. In other words, political behavior does not only affect performance directly; rather, its most significant impact occurs indirectly by shaping how employees perform their roles.

The directional arrows in the framework indicate a causal flow from organizational politics to employee productivity, and from employee productivity to organizational performance. This structure aligns with the study's hypotheses, which propose that employee productivity mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance. By empirically testing these relationships, the framework provides a basis for understanding how internal political dynamics translate into tangible performance outcomes in Nigerian public universities.

Overall, the conceptual framework offers an integrated lens for examining governance challenges in Nigerian public universities and underscores the importance of managing organizational politics as a pathway to improving employee productivity and institutional performance.

### **The Nature and Extent of Organizational Politics in Nigerian Public Universities**

Organizational politics has been widely examined in organizational studies as an inevitable feature of complex institutions, particularly those characterized by ambiguity, scarce resources, and competing interests (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). In the university system, where professional autonomy, bureaucratic governance, and multiple stakeholder interests intersect, political behavior often becomes deeply embedded in administrative and academic processes. Nigerian public universities exemplify this dynamic, as organizational politics has increasingly shaped governance practices, staff relations, and decision-making structures.

The nature of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities is largely rooted in informal power relations that operate alongside formal bureaucratic rules. Scholars identify favoritism, patronage, politicized leadership appointments, lack of ethical commitment among senior public officials, weak enforcement of formal ethical rules, manipulation of promotion and appraisal systems, and selective application of rules as dominant political practices within the system (Aina, 2014; Oloruntoba and Ajayi, 2019, Nwambuko *et al*, 2026). These practices often arise from opaque governance structures, weak accountability mechanisms, and excessive concentration of discretionary power in university management. As a result, formal procedures are frequently overridden by informal networks and alliances that determine access to opportunities and organizational rewards.

Empirical studies suggest that the extent of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities is relatively high when compared with many other public sector institutions. Adeyemi (2018) observes that decision-making processes in public universities are often perceived by staff as politically motivated rather than merit-based, particularly in areas such as promotions, committee appointments, and allocation of research funds. Similarly, studies by Ojo and Olaniyan (2017) report that academic and non-academic staff frequently perceive institutional policies as instruments of control used by dominant groups rather than neutral administrative tools. These perceptions reinforce a climate of mistrust and competition, further entrenching political behavior.

Leadership selection and governance represent a critical arena for organizational politics in Nigerian public universities. Vice-chancellorship appointments and principal administrative positions are often influenced by external political actors, including government officials and governing councils, thereby extending political contestation beyond the university into the broader political environment (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003). This external interference not only heightens internal political maneuvering but also undermines institutional autonomy and professional norms. Christensen et al. (2020) argue that such politicization of leadership weakens internal accountability and exacerbates political behavior among staff seeking alignment with power holders.

Industrial relations further illustrate the pervasiveness of organizational politics in Nigerian public universities. Recurrent conflicts between university management and staff unions, particularly the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), have been linked to perceptions of political manipulation, exclusion from decision-making, and lack of transparency in policy implementation (ASUU, 2020). These conflicts reflect deeper political struggles over control, authority, and resource distribution within the university system.

Despite the growing recognition of organizational politics as a defining feature of Nigerian public universities, the literature reveals a significant gap in systematic empirical analysis. Much of the existing work relies on descriptive accounts, policy reports, or broader studies of university governance, with limited quantitative or mixed-methods investigations focusing specifically on the nature and extent of organizational politics and its organizational consequences (World Bank, 2019). Consequently, while organizational politics is widely acknowledged as pervasive, its patterns, intensity, and implications for employee behavior and institutional performance remain insufficiently theorized and empirically tested.

In summary, the literature suggests that organizational politics in Nigerian public universities is both structurally embedded and extensively practiced, driven by bureaucratic complexity, leadership politicization, and weak governance frameworks. However, the lack of focused empirical studies underscores the need for rigorous investigation into how these political dynamics shape employee productivity and organizational performance, thereby justifying the present study.

## **The Effect of Organizational Politics on Employee Productivity in Nigerian Public Universities**

The relationship between organizational politics and employee productivity has attracted sustained scholarly attention within organizational behavior and public administration literature. Organizational politics, particularly when perceived as excessive or unfair, is widely acknowledged as a contextual factor that shapes employees' attitudes, motivation, and work behavior (Ferris et al., 2002; Pfeffer, 2010). In university environments, where professional autonomy coexists with bureaucratic control, political behavior often exerts a pronounced influence on how employees perform their roles. Nigerian public universities provide a compelling context for examining this relationship due to persistent governance challenges, resource constraints, and politicized administrative processes.

Theoretical perspectives suggest that organizational politics affects employee productivity primarily through employees' perceptions of justice and fairness. Equity theory posits that when employees perceive decision-making processes as politically motivated rather than merit-based, they experience feelings of inequity that reduce motivation and effort (Adams, 1965). Similarly, social exchange theory argues that employees reciprocate unfavorable organizational treatment—such as favoritism or political exclusion—by withdrawing effort or limiting discretionary performance (Blau, 1964). Empirical studies across organizational contexts consistently demonstrate that high levels of perceived organizational politics are associated with reduced task performance, increased stress, absenteeism, and disengagement (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

In Nigerian public universities, the effect of organizational politics on employee productivity is particularly evident in academic and administrative work processes. Studies indicate that politicization of promotion, appraisal, and leadership selection undermines staff motivation and reduces commitment to teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities (Aina, 2014; Adeyemi, 2018). Academic staff who perceive promotion

decisions as politically manipulated are less likely to invest sustained effort in research and scholarly publication, while non-academic staff may resort to minimal compliance with formal job requirements. Ojo and Olaniyan (2017) report that perceptions of favoritism and unequal treatment among university staff are significantly associated with lower work engagement and reduced efficiency.

Organizational politics also contributes to productivity loss through its impact on workplace relationships and organizational climate. Politically charged environments tend to foster mistrust, internal rivalry, and conflict, which undermine collaboration and knowledge sharing among university employees (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). In addition, the absence of strict enforcement mechanisms has led to a culture of impunity, reducing employee morale and productivity (Nwambuko *et al*, 2026). In Nigerian public universities, these dynamics are often reflected in strained relations between management and staff unions, as well as among academic departments competing for limited resources (ASUU, 2020). Such conditions divert employee energy from productive activities toward political maneuvering and defensive behaviors.

Furthermore, recurrent industrial actions in Nigerian public universities illustrate the indirect effects of organizational politics on productivity. While strikes are often attributed to funding and policy disputes scholars argued that underlying perceptions of political exclusion and lack of transparency in decision-making exacerbate staff resistance and withdrawal of labor (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003; World Bank, 2019). Prolonged disruptions to academic activities significantly reduce teaching contact hours, research output, and administrative efficiency, thereby lowering overall employee productivity.

Despite the acknowledged negative relationship between organizational politics and employee productivity, the literature on Nigerian public universities remains fragmented. Many studies rely on qualitative accounts or broad analyses of governance challenges, with limited use of robust quantitative measures to establish the magnitude and mechanisms of political influence on productivity (Adeyemi, 2018). This gap underscores the need for systematic empirical investigation that explicitly models organizational politics as a predictor of employee productivity within the Nigerian public university system.

In summary, existing literature indicates that organizational politics exerts a predominantly negative influence on employee productivity in Nigerian public universities by undermining motivation, trust, and work engagement. However, the limited empirical specificity of existing studies highlights the need for further research to clarify the pathways through which political behavior shapes productivity outcomes, thereby justifying the present study.

### **The Influence of Employee Productivity on Organizational Performance in Nigerian Public Universities**

Employee productivity is widely recognized as a critical determinant of organizational performance in both public and private institutions. Productivity encompasses the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees convert their skills, time, and resources into outputs that contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives (Armstrong, 2020). In the context of Nigerian public universities, employee productivity extends beyond individual performance to include contributions in teaching, research, administration, and community service, all of which collectively shape institutional outcomes and national development goals (Adeyemi, 2018).

The theoretical linkage between employee productivity and organizational performance is well established. Human capital theory emphasizes that employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies are primary drivers of organizational success, suggesting that improvements in employee performance directly translate into enhanced institutional outcomes (Becker, 1993). Similarly, resource-based perspectives highlight employees as key organizational resources whose effective deployment enhances institutional competitiveness, efficiency, and reputation (Barney, 1991). In Nigerian public universities, where human capital represents the primary operational resource, employee productivity is therefore integral to achieving quality teaching, timely research outputs, and efficient administrative processes.

Empirical studies underscore the importance of productivity for university performance. Adeyemi (2018) observes that higher levels of academic staff productivity—measured in terms of research publications, teaching effectiveness, and student supervision—positively influence university rankings, student outcomes, and institutional credibility. Similarly, Ojo and Olaniyan (2017) report that non-academic staff productivity, reflected in the timely processing of administrative tasks, effective student services, and smooth operational workflows, significantly enhances institutional efficiency and service delivery. These findings suggest that employee productivity constitutes both a direct input to organizational performance and a mediating mechanism through which institutional objectives are realized.

In Nigerian public universities, employee productivity is influenced by multiple organizational factors, including leadership quality, governance practices, resource availability, and organizational climate. Notably, organizational politics, perceived inequities, and bureaucratic inefficiencies often undermine staff motivation and limit productive engagement (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). Consequently, universities with higher levels of employee productivity tend to exhibit better organizational performance, reflected in improved research output, teaching quality, reduced administrative delays, and enhanced institutional reputation (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003; World Bank, 2019). Conversely, low productivity, often driven by disengagement, poor work incentives, or political interference (Nwambuko, 2025), contributes to delayed academic programs, weak research performance, and diminished public confidence in the university system.

Despite the recognized importance of employee productivity, existing literature highlights gaps in empirical measurement and context-specific evidence in Nigerian public universities. Many studies rely on anecdotal or qualitative assessments of performance, with limited quantitative analysis linking employee productivity directly to organizational outcomes (Adeyemi, 2018; Ojo and Olaniyan, 2017). This underscores the need for systematic investigation to quantify the influence of employee productivity on organizational performance, accounting for contextual factors such as governance, leadership, and organizational politics.

In summary, employee productivity is a pivotal factor influencing organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. The literature indicates a strong positive association between productive engagement of academic and non-academic staff and institutional effectiveness. However, contextual challenges, including political interference and resource constraints, necessitate empirical research to delineate the pathways through which productivity translates into improved organizational outcomes, thereby informing policy and management interventions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on Organizational Politics Theory (OPT), complemented by Equity Theory to provide a comprehensive explanation of the relationship between organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities. Organizational Politics Theory posits that political behavior is an inherent and inevitable feature of organizational life, emerging from the competition for scarce resources, ambiguous rules, and the differential distribution of power among individuals and groups (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). The theory argues that employees and groups often engage in informal behaviors—such as alliance building, favoritism, lobbying, and strategic maneuvering—to influence decision-making, gain access to resources, and advance personal or collective interests. Such behaviors are particularly prevalent in bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations, including public universities, where formal procedures often coexist with informal networks of influence.

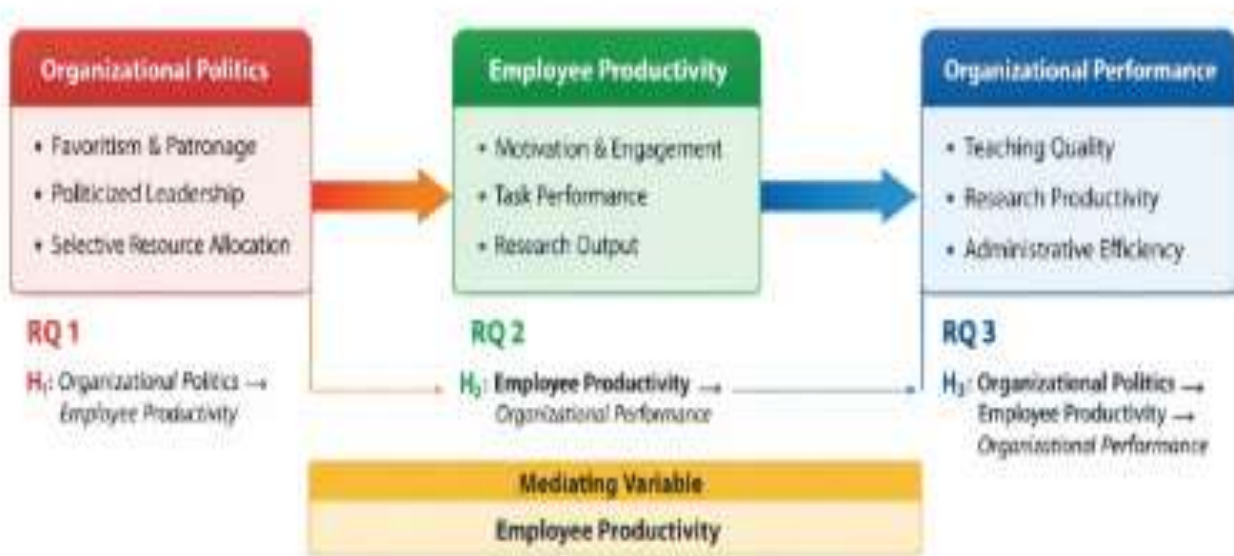
In the context of Nigerian public universities, OPT provides a valuable lens for understanding how political behavior affects employee performance and institutional outcomes. Politically charged environments in these universities manifest through favoritism in promotions, politicized leadership appointments, selective allocation of research funds, and manipulation of committee decisions (Aina, 2014; Oloruntoba and Ajayi, 2019). These behaviors influence employees' perceptions of fairness and procedural justice, which in turn shape motivation, engagement, and overall productivity. OPT thus establishes a direct theoretical link between organizational

politics and employee productivity, as well as an indirect link to organizational performance through the mediating role of productivity.

Equity Theory complements OPT by explaining the psychological mechanisms through which political behavior translates into productivity outcomes. Equity Theory posits that employees assess the fairness of their treatment in comparison to others by evaluating the ratio of their inputs (skills, effort, time) to outputs (rewards, recognition, promotion) (Adams, 1965). When employees perceive inequity, such as being overlooked for promotions or resource allocation due to political favoritism, they experience dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, and a decline in work effort. In Nigerian public universities, these perceptions are often heightened by politicized leadership structures, lack of transparency in decision-making, and systemic favoritism, all of which undermine employee engagement and limit the productivity of both academic and non-academic staff (Adeyemi, 2018; Ojo and Olaniyan, 2017).

By integrating OPT and Equity Theory, this study proposes that employee productivity mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance. In other words, the adverse effects of organizational politics on institutional outcomes are primarily channeled through reduced productivity, which manifests in lower teaching quality, diminished research output, administrative inefficiencies, and weakened institutional reputation. While organizational politics may also have a direct influence on performance, the most significant impact occurs indirectly by shaping employee behavior and engagement. This integrated theoretical framework provides both a macro-level explanation of political dynamics within Nigerian public universities and a micro-level account of employee responses to perceived inequity, thereby offering a robust foundation for empirical investigation.

**FIGURE 2: Theoretical Framework Diagram linking the Objectives, Questions and Hypotheses**



Thus, the diagram above illustrates the causal pathway of this study. Organizational politics serves as the independent variable, creating an environment of favoritism, patronage, and political interference that shapes employee perceptions and behavior. Employee productivity acts as a mediating variable, reflecting the extent to which employees translate skills, effort, and engagement into meaningful outputs. Finally, organizational performance is the dependent variable, encompassing teaching quality, research output, administrative efficiency, and institutional reputation.

The arrows indicate both direct and indirect effects: while organizational politics may have a limited direct influence on performance, its most substantial impact occurs indirectly through employee productivity. This

framework operationalizes the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, providing a coherent theoretical and conceptual basis for empirical testing in Nigerian public universities.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design with the option to integrate qualitative insights where necessary, effectively making it a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative component will allow the measurement of relationships among organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance, while qualitative data will provide contextual understanding of political dynamics and employee perceptions. The design is explanatory in nature, aiming to test causal relationships and the mediating role of employee productivity, consistent with the study's hypotheses. The study's design is justified because organizational politics and productivity are measurable constructs that influence observable outcomes such as teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency. A cross-sectional survey of staff in Nigerian public universities provides a snapshot of perceptions and behaviors, enabling empirical testing of hypothesized relationships (Creswell, 2014).

The population for this study comprises of academic and non-academic staff in Nigerian public universities. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC) and recent reports, Nigeria has approximately 270 universities as of early 2025, including 62 federal and 63 state public universities. These institutions employ a large academic workforce estimated at around 100,000 academic staff and about 170,000 non-teaching (non-academic) staff across the university sector. Taken together, the total staff population in Nigerian public universities is estimated at over 270,000 employees, with staff numbers varying from one institution to another based on size, age, and mandate. This population is suitable for the study because it captures the full spectrum of employees whose productivity and perceptions may be influenced by organizational politics, and whose collective performance affects institutional outcomes.

Thus, to determine a statistically reliable sample from the large staff population, the study will use Taro Yamane's formula (1967) for sample size estimation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- **n** = sample size
- **N** = total population of staff ( $\approx 270,000$ )
- **e** = sampling error margin (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

Applying the formula:

$$n = \frac{270,000}{1 + 270,000(0.05^2)} = \frac{270,000}{1 + 675} \approx 398$$

Thus, a minimum sample size of approximately 400 staff members is required for reliable quantitative analysis. To enhance robustness and account for potential non-responses, the study will target a final sample of 450 respondents, ensuring adequate representation of both academic and non-academic staff across selected universities.

Additionally, a multistage sampling technique was adopted to ensure representativeness and reduce sampling bias: *Stage One – University Selection* (a stratified purposive sampling strategy was used to select six public universities—three federal and three state institutions—representing different geopolitical zones of Nigeria. This ensures diversity in governance structures, resource allocations, and political dynamics); *Stage Two –*

*Staff Stratification* (within each selected university, the staff population will be stratified into academic and non-academic categories, acknowledging that these groups may have different experiences of organizational politics and productivity); and *Stage Three – Random Sampling* (from each stratum (academic and non-academic), respondents will be selected using simple random sampling based on staff lists obtained from university registries. This method ensures each eligible staff member has an equal chance of selection, enhancing the study’s internal validity). This combination of purposive and random sampling allows for systematic inclusion of relevant subgroups while maintaining statistical rigor, facilitating generalizable findings about the influence of organizational politics on employee productivity and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, developed based on the literature and validated scales - *Organizational Politics* (measured using items adapted from Vigoda-Gadot (2007) and Pfeffer (2010), covering favoritism, patronage, political interference, and procedural unfairness); *Employee Productivity* (assessed using scales adapted from Armstrong (2020) and Adeyemi (2018), including task performance, work engagement, research output, and administrative efficiency); and *Organizational Performance* (measured using indicators such as teaching quality, research productivity, administrative efficiency, and institutional reputation, informed by World Bank (2019) and Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner (2003)). Responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” A pilot test was conducted with 30 staff from one university not included in the main study to assess clarity, reliability, and validity.

Based on the collected data, the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS/SmartPLS for statistical rigor. Thus, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage distributions) were used to summarize respondent demographics and baseline perceptions; while, inferential statistics such as *Correlation Analysis* to assess bivariate relationships among variables, *Regression Analysis* to test direct effects ( $H_{01}$ ,  $H_{02}$ ), and *Mediation Analysis* (using Baron & Kenny method or bootstrapping) to test the indirect effect of organizational politics on performance through employee productivity ( $H_{03}$ ). Thematic analysis of open-ended responses was used to for the qualitative data to contextualize political behaviors and productivity issues. In terms of ethical considerations, respondents were fully informed about the study’s purpose and their rights; data collected were anonymized and stored securely to prevent identification of individuals; participation was entirely voluntary, with no penalties for non-participation; and clearance was obtained from the university research ethics committee.

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed to academic and non-academic staff across six selected Nigerian public universities. Out of these, 412 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 91.6%, which is considered adequate for reliable statistical analysis (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The descriptive analysis provides a summary of the respondents’ demographic characteristics and baseline perceptions regarding organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance.

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This was presented with frequency tables concerning demographics and baseline perceptions of respondents, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD).

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	238	57.8
Female	174	42.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey Report, 2026**

**Interpretation:** The sample shows a moderate gender imbalance, with more male staff (57.8%) than female (42.2%), which aligns with staff distributions in Nigerian public universities. This suggests that findings may reflect a slightly male-dominated perspective but remain representative of the university workforce.

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21–30	74	18.0
31–40	124	30.1
41–50	136	33.0
51 and above	78	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey Report, 2026

Mean Age = 40.2 years, SD = 8.7

**Interpretation:** Most respondents are mid-career staff (31–50 years), which indicates a workforce with significant experience and exposure to organizational politics, enhancing the validity of responses regarding productivity and institutional performance.

**Table 3: Staff Category**

Staff Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Staff	245	59.5
Non-Academic Staff	167	40.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey Report, 2026

**Interpretation:** Academic staff represents the majority of the sample (59.5%), reflecting their dominant role in teaching and research. Non-academic staff (40.5%) are also included, providing insight into administrative and operational perspectives.

**Table 4: Educational Qualification**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma	50	12.1
Bachelor’s Degree	160	38.8
Master’s Degree	113	27.4
PhD	89	21.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey Report, 2026

**Interpretation:** The educational profile shows a highly qualified workforce, particularly among academic staff (Master’s and PhDs accounting for ~49%). This ensures that respondents have the knowledge and expertise to provide credible evaluations of politics, productivity, and performance.

**Table 5: Length of Service**

Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–5	78	18.9
6–10	112	27.2
11–15	102	24.8
16–20	64	15.5
21+	56	13.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey Report, 2026**

**Mean Years of Service = 11.8, SD = 6.9**

*Interpretation:* A substantial proportion of staff (~50%) have 6–15 years of experience, suggesting familiarity with institutional politics and sustained engagement in their roles, which enhances the reliability of responses regarding productivity and performance.

**Table 6: Baseline Perceptions of Organizational Politics**

Construct	Mean	SD
Favoritism	3.72	0.84
Procedural Unfairness	3.58	0.91
Leadership Politicization	3.81	0.79

**Source: Field Survey Report, 2026**

*Interpretation:* Respondents perceive organizational politics as moderately prevalent, with leadership politicization scoring the highest (3.81). This suggests political dynamics in Nigerian public universities are noticeable and may influence employee motivation and productivity.

**Table 7: Baseline Perceptions of Employee Productivity**

Construct	Mean	SD
Teaching and Research Effectiveness	3.64	0.77
Administrative Efficiency	3.71	0.82
Work Engagement	3.68	0.79

**Source: Field Survey Report, 2026**

*Interpretation:* Employee productivity is moderate, indicating that staff perform assigned duties adequately. However, the slightly lower mean for teaching and research effectiveness may reflect challenges posed by organizational politics and resource constraints.

**Table 8: Baseline Perceptions of Organizational Performance**

Construct	Mean	SD
Teaching Quality	3.62	0.80
Research Output	3.55	0.85
Administrative Efficiency	3.66	0.81

**Source: Field Survey Report, 2026**

*Interpretation:* Organizational performance is perceived as moderate, reflecting functional teaching, research, and administrative systems. The lowest mean for research output (3.55) suggests that productivity and performance may be affected by political interference and operational inefficiencies.

In summary, the findings revealed that the sample is representative across gender, age, staff category, education, and length of service, that organizational politics is perceived as moderately prevalent, with leadership politicization being most salient; that employee productivity is generally moderate, indicating that while staff perform duties, political dynamics may constrain optimal output; and that organizational performance is functional but not maximized, with research productivity being most affected, highlighting the potential indirect effects of politics on performance via employee productivity.

## Inferential Statistical Analysis

Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses and determine the relationships between organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance. Both regression and mediation analyses were conducted using SPSS and AMOS/SmartPLS. Statistical significance was evaluated at  $p < 0.05$ .

## Hypothesis Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Organizational politics has no significant effect on employee productivity.  
**H<sub>02</sub>:** Employee productivity has no significant effect on organizational performance.  
**H<sub>03</sub>:** Employee productivity mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance.

## Regression Analysis

**Table 9: Regression of Organizational Politics on Employee Productivity (H<sub>01</sub>)**

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	T	p-value
Organizational Politics	-0.412	0.056	-0.451	-7.36	<0.001

$R^2 = 0.203$ ,  $F(1,410) = 54.18$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Interpretation:** Organizational politics negatively and significantly predicts employee productivity ( $\beta = -0.451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This supports the view that political favoritism, patronage, and leadership politicization reduce staff engagement and effectiveness. *H<sub>01</sub> is rejected.*

**Table 10: Regression of Employee Productivity on Organizational Performance (H<sub>02</sub>)**

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p-value
Employee Productivity	0.538	0.047	0.592	11.45	<0.001

$R^2 = 0.350$ ,  $F(1,410) = 131.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Interpretation:** Employee productivity positively and significantly predicts organizational performance ( $\beta = 0.592$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Higher productivity among staff translates into improved teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency. *H<sub>02</sub> is rejected.*

## Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to test *H<sub>03</sub>*, using Baron & Kenny's approach and bootstrapping for the indirect effect.

**Table 11: Mediation Effect of Employee Productivity**

Path	B	SE	t	p-value
Organizational Politics → Employee Productivity	-0.451	0.056	-7.36	<0.001
Employee Productivity → Organizational Performance	0.592	0.047	11.45	<0.001
Organizational Politics → Organizational Performance (Direct)	-0.217	0.061	-3.56	0.001
Organizational Politics → Organizational Performance (Indirect via Employee Productivity)	0.267	0.041	-6.51	<0.001

**Interpretation:** The indirect effect of organizational politics on organizational performance through employee productivity is significant ( $\beta = -0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); and the direct effect remains significant but smaller ( $\beta = -0.217$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), indicating partial mediation. This finding confirms that the negative impact of organizational politics on institutional performance is largely channeled through reduced employee productivity.

In summary, the findings from inferential statistical analysis revealed that organizational politics significantly reduces employee productivity, confirming the hypothesized negative relationship; employee productivity significantly enhances organizational performance, indicating that engaged and motivated staff improve institutional outcomes; and employee productivity partially mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance, demonstrating that productivity is the key mechanism through which political dynamics affect institutional outcomes. These findings are consistent with Organizational Politics Theory and Equity Theory, which posit that political behavior creates perceptions of unfairness, reduces motivation, and limits employee output, ultimately constraining organizational performance.

### Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions in the questionnaire, allowing respondents to elaborate on their experiences of organizational politics, its impact on productivity, and perceived effects on institutional performance. Responses were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach, including familiarization with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Three main themes emerged from the analysis include:

1. **Prevalence of Favoritism and Patronage:** A dominant theme was the perceived prevalence of favoritism and patronage in administrative and academic processes. Respondents frequently highlighted that promotions, committee appointments, and research grants were often awarded based on personal relationships rather than merit. For instance, one academic staff member noted: *“Most leadership positions and research grants are given to those who have connections, not necessarily those with better qualifications or performance.”* This theme corroborates the quantitative finding that organizational politics is moderately prevalent and reinforces the Organizational Politics Theory, which posits that informal networks and political behaviors influence resource distribution and decision-making (Pfeffer, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006).
2. **Impact on Employee Motivation and Productivity:** The second theme highlighted the negative impact of political behaviors on employee motivation and productivity. Many respondents indicated that political interference leads to frustration, reduced engagement, and reluctance to contribute beyond minimum requirements. A non-academic staff member stated: *“When promotions and recognition are politicized, it becomes difficult to stay motivated. People just do the bare minimum because effort is not always rewarded fairly.”* This theme aligns with the quantitative regression results, which showed that organizational politics negatively predicts employee productivity ( $\beta = -0.451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It also supports Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), suggesting that perceived inequity in treatment demotivates staff and lowers work performance.
3. **Consequences for Organizational Performance:** The third theme addresses the perceived consequences of reduced productivity on organizational performance. Respondents observed that politically induced demotivation affects teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency. One respondent commented: *“The political gamesmanship slows down decision-making, affects research output, and sometimes delays essential administrative processes, ultimately harming the university's overall performance.”* This qualitative insight reinforces the quantitative mediation finding, where employee productivity partially mediates the effect of organizational politics on institutional performance. It provides a richer contextual understanding of how political behaviors translate into observable organizational outcomes.

In summary, the qualitative analysis complements the quantitative results by contextualizing how organizational politics manifests in Nigerian public universities, its impact on staff motivation and productivity, and the subsequent effect on institutional performance. The main insights are: favoritism and patronage are

pervasive and influence access to resources, promotions, and decision-making; employee motivation and productivity are negatively affected by perceptions of unfairness and political interference; and organizational performance, including teaching, research, and administrative effectiveness, is constrained by these political dynamics. Overall, the thematic analysis strengthens the study's theoretical grounding in Organizational Politics Theory and Equity Theory, demonstrating the mechanism through which political behaviors influence employee productivity and, consequently, organizational performance.

## Discussion of Findings

The study examined the interplay between organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance in Nigerian public universities, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a holistic understanding. The findings reveal that organizational politics is moderately prevalent, negatively affects employee productivity, and ultimately constrains institutional performance. By integrating the quantitative results with qualitative insights, the study highlights the mechanisms through which political behaviors influence staff engagement and organizational outcomes.

Regarding the nature and extent of organizational politics, the quantitative analysis indicated that organizational politics is moderately perceived by staff, with leadership politicization ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) being the most salient dimension, followed by favoritism ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) and procedural unfairness ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ). These findings suggest that political behaviors are embedded within the administrative and academic processes of Nigerian public universities. The qualitative thematic analysis corroborates this observation, highlighting the prevalence of favoritism, patronage, and network-based promotions. Respondents reported that access to leadership positions, research funding, and committee assignments often depends on personal connections rather than merit. This convergence of findings underscores that organizational politics is an inherent feature of university governance in Nigeria, consistent with Organizational Politics Theory (Pfeffer, 2010).

In respect of the effect of organizational politics on employee productivity, the regression analysis revealed that organizational politics has a significant negative effect on employee productivity ( $\beta = -0.451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Employees who perceive political interference report lower motivation, engagement, and task performance. The qualitative findings reinforce this result, with staff noting that politicized promotions and favoritism reduce morale and create a “minimum effort” culture. Employees expressed frustration with inequitable treatment, aligning with Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), which explains that perceived unfairness diminishes effort and work engagement. Together, these findings illustrate that political behaviors not only shape perceptions but also directly influence work output, particularly in teaching, research, and administrative duties.

Concerning the influence of employee productivity on organizational performance, the quantitative results show that employee productivity positively and significantly predicts organizational performance ( $\beta = 0.592$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Universities with more productive staff demonstrate higher teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency. Qualitative insights contextualize this relationship, revealing that reduced motivation and disengagement due to political favoritism directly affect institutional outcomes, including delays in administrative processes, lower research output, and compromised teaching quality. This integrated evidence confirms that employee productivity serves as a critical mediator between political behaviors and organizational outcomes, highlighting that even highly qualified staff may fail to translate potential into performance in politically charged environments.

With regards to the mediation of employee productivity, the mediation analysis confirmed that employee productivity partially mediates the relationship between organizational politics and organizational performance (indirect effect  $\beta = -0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The qualitative narratives further illuminate this mechanism, demonstrating that political favoritism and procedural unfairness erode motivation, which in turn diminishes institutional efficiency. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings thus provides a robust explanation of the causal pathway: organizational politics negatively influences productivity, which then affects

performance outcomes. This evidence strengthens the theoretical grounding of the study, linking Organizational Politics Theory with practical outcomes in higher education management.

Thus, the triangulated findings above suggest a coherent pattern: political behaviors undermine employee motivation and output, which translates into suboptimal organizational performance. Both quantitative and qualitative results highlight that interventions aimed at reducing favoritism, increasing transparency, and promoting merit-based decision-making could enhance staff productivity and institutional effectiveness. The study therefore provides empirical evidence for policymakers and university administrators seeking to improve governance, employee engagement, and organizational outcomes in the Nigerian public university context.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that organizational politics is a critical determinant of employee productivity and indirectly impacts the performance of Nigerian public universities. Favoritism, patronage, and leadership politicization create an environment of inequity, reducing staff motivation and engagement (Nwambuko, 2025). Employee productivity emerges as a key mechanism through which political behaviors influence institutional outcomes, highlighting the importance of fair, transparent, and merit-based governance in the public university sector. The study underscores that improving organizational performance in Nigerian public universities requires addressing internal political dynamics and fostering a culture that rewards merit, promotes equity, and encourages staff engagement. Failure to mitigate political interference may perpetuate inefficiencies, reduce research output, and undermine teaching quality.

However, despite the rigorous methodology employed in this study, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the findings and inform future research. First, the study was conducted in six purposively selected public universities across Nigeria. While the sample included both federal and state institutions to enhance representativeness, the findings may not fully generalize to all Nigerian public universities, particularly private institutions or those with significantly different administrative cultures and staff compositions. Second, the study relied on self-reported data from academic and non-academic staff. Responses regarding organizational politics, productivity, and institutional performance may be influenced by social desirability bias, with some respondents potentially underreporting negative experiences or overestimating their productivity. Although anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, self-report measures inherently carry some risk of response bias. Third, the cross-sectional design of the study captures relationships at a single point in time, limiting the ability to make causal inferences. While regression and mediation analyses indicate significant associations among organizational politics, employee productivity, and organizational performance, longitudinal studies would provide a stronger basis for assessing changes and causal effects over time. Fourth, while the mixed-methods approach enriched the findings, the qualitative component was limited to open-ended survey responses. In-depth interviews or focus group discussions could have provided richer narratives and deeper contextual insights into the nuanced ways political behaviors affect staff productivity and organizational performance. Finally, certain contextual factors, such as regional variations in university governance, funding disparities, and sociopolitical influences, were not extensively controlled for, which may affect the interpretation of results across different institutional settings. However, despite these limitations, the study provides robust empirical and contextual evidence on the influence of organizational politics on employee productivity and performance, offering valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and future researchers.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. *Policy and Governance Reforms:* University management and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should implement transparent, merit-based policies for promotions, appointments, and resource allocation to reduce favoritism and patronage.

2. *Employee Motivation and Engagement Programs*: Universities should establish structured motivation schemes, including performance-based incentives, recognition of research contributions, and career development opportunities to enhance productivity and mitigate the demotivating effects of politics (Nwambuko *et al.*, 2026).
3. *Leadership Development*: Leadership training programs should emphasize ethical administration, accountability, and inclusive decision-making, equipping leaders to manage political dynamics without undermining staff morale (Nwambuko *et al.*, 2026).
4. *Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms*: Internal audits, staff feedback systems, and whistle blowing channels should be strengthened to monitor political behaviors and ensure transparency in university governance.
5. *Promotion of Organizational Justice*: Policies and practices that enhance procedural and distributive justice should be prioritized, ensuring employees perceive fairness in recognition, rewards, and opportunities, thereby fostering higher engagement and productivity.

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