



Original Article

Impact of Political Interference on Recruitment Processes and Employee Performance: A Case Study of Federal Polytechnic, Offa

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Citations: Salahu, M.O., Amin, A., & Lambe, E.O. (2025). Impact of Political Interference on Recruitment Processes and Employee Performance: A Case Study of Federal Polytechnic, Offa. *International Journal of Advances in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(4), 184-195.

Received: 2 September 2025 Revised: 24 October 2025 Accepted: 7 November 2025 Published: 30 November 2025

Abstract: Despite civil service reforms aimed at promoting merit-based recruitment, political influence continues to affect hiring decisions in many public institutions, including Federal Polytechnic, Offa. Such interference undermines the integrity of recruitment processes, as external political pressures and patronage networks often determine appointments rather than competence and merit. This study examined the impact of political interference on the recruitment process and employee performance at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The population consisted of 635 staff members, from which a sample size of 240 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula. A total of 227 valid questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-25). The descriptive results revealed that 66.1% of respondents agreed that political interference undermines fairness and credibility in recruitment, while 69.6% believed recruitment processes are manipulated to favor politically connected individuals. Additionally, 64.7% of respondents indicated that political interference reduces transparency and accountability, whereas 83.3% agreed that merit-based recruitment enhances productivity and organizational efficiency. Although teamwork appeared relatively unaffected (63.5% disagreed that politically influenced recruitment disrupts cooperation), political interference was widely perceived as a major factor contributing to institutional inefficiency. The correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between political interference and employee performance. Similarly, the regression analysis indicated that political interference significantly predicts employee performance, explaining approximately 87% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.870$). The study concludes that political interference significantly affects recruitment integrity and employee performance in public tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Political Interference; Public Sector Recruitment; Meritocracy; Organizational Performance.



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1. Introduction

The recruitment and selection of personnel in public institutions are guided by principles of merit, competence, transparency, and fairness to ensure that qualified individuals are employed to deliver effective public service. In many developed countries, the recruitment process is institutionalized through civil service commissions or independent bodies that uphold objectivity and professionalism. The effectiveness of such systems contributes significantly to employee motivation, institutional performance, and national development (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). However, where political influence overrides established procedures, it often undermines organizational efficiency and productivity (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013). In Africa, political interference in recruitment remains a major governance challenge, threatening institutional integrity and performance. The public sector often faces undue political control, with appointments and promotions based on political patronage rather than merit. This practice weakens administrative competence, erodes public trust, and results in low employee morale and inefficiency (Ayee, 2011; Ellis, 2015). Studies conducted in countries such as Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa show that politically motivated recruitment contributes to corruption, poor service delivery, and high staff turnover in public institutions (Munzhedzi, 2016; Nkanbonam, 2019).

In Nigeria, political interference in public service recruitment has become a persistent problem that undermines the principles of fairness, accountability, and professionalism. Despite the establishment of regulatory bodies and civil service reforms aimed at promoting merit-based recruitment, political influence continues to determine who gets employed, particularly in government-owned organizations and educational institutions (Ifaka & Odigie, 2021). This situation has led to the employment of unqualified personnel, limited job satisfaction, low productivity, and weak institutional performance (Ikeanyi et al., 2017; Ezeani, 2006). Consequently, the efficiency of the Nigerian public sector remains below expectations (Usang & Salim, 2016). Polytechnics and other tertiary institutions are not exempt from these challenges. The recruitment of academic and non-academic staff is often influenced by political connections rather than competence and qualifications. This trend has adverse implications for employee performance, institutional reputation, and the overall quality of education (Ikechukwu et al., 2019; Ogunode et al., 2024). When political interference determines staff recruitment, it discourages merit-based competition, lowers morale among qualified employees, and fosters inefficiency and lack of accountability (Uche et al., 2019).

In Federal Polytechnic, Offa, as in many other public tertiary institutions in Nigeria, recruitment and personnel management are critical to achieving organizational goals and ensuring effective service delivery. However, anecdotal evidence and staff perceptions suggest that political interference has affected the fairness and transparency of recruitment processes. Such interference can lead to favoritism, poor staff motivation, and reduced productivity. Against this background, this study examines the impact of political interference on the recruitment process and employee performance in Federal Polytechnic, Offa. Political interference in recruitment within public institutions has also transcended administrative inefficiency to become a latent governance and security risk. In institutions such as Federal Polytechnic, Offa, the infiltration of partisan interests into recruitment processes compromises meritocracy and creates internal divisions, resentment, and distrust among staff. Over time, such institutional instability weakens organizational cohesion and contributes to broader governance insecurity. When employment decisions are politicized, loyalty shifts from the institution to external political patrons, undermining internal control and creating vulnerabilities that threaten both institutional stability and national development (Magbadelo, 2016; Ezeani, 2006).

Despite regulatory frameworks and civil service reforms intended to safeguard meritocratic recruitment, anecdotal reports and sector studies suggest that political actors still exert influence over hiring decisions in many public institutions (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). At Federal Polytechnic, Offa, stakeholders have expressed concerns that recruitment decisions may be affected by external political pressures and patronage networks. Such interference may compromise the quality of teaching, research, and administrative support, with negative consequences for staff performance and institutional outcomes. This trend poses risks to institutional integrity, reduces morale among qualified staff, and undermines the Polytechnic's mission of delivering quality technical education (Ifaka & Odigie, 2021; Ogunode et al., 2024).

Politically influenced recruitment may lead to the employment of unqualified or less committed personnel, resulting in poor job performance, inefficiency, and reduced accountability. Employees who perceive unfair recruitment practices may also become demotivated, leading to poor teamwork, conflict, and low productivity (Uche et al., 2019). Although several scholars have examined recruitment practices in public institutions (Ikechukwu et al., 2019; Fathmath et al., 2021; Oyadiran, Ishaq, & Agunbiade, 2023), limited attention has been paid to the specific impact of political interference on recruitment at the Federal Polytechnic, Offa. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how political interference in recruitment affects employee performance and institutional stability within Federal Polytechnic, Offa, from a governance and organizational performance perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

This study adopts the Merit System Theory, originally associated with Waldo (2017) and further developed by scholars such as Frederick C. Mosher (2016) and Ingraham and Rosenbloom (1998). The theory emphasizes that recruitment and personnel management in the public sector should be based on merit, competence, and qualifications rather than political affiliation, favoritism, or nepotism. The central assumption of the Merit System Theory is that employment decisions should be determined by competence and professional qualifications. Recruitment processes should therefore be impartial, transparent, and open to all qualified individuals, ensuring equal opportunities for employment within the public service. By promoting merit-based recruitment, the theory argues that public institutions can achieve higher levels of accountability, integrity, and efficiency while also improving employee motivation and job satisfaction. Conversely, when recruitment decisions are influenced by political considerations, these principles are undermined, leading to inefficiency, corruption, and low employee morale within public institutions.

The relevance of the Merit System Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how political interference negatively affects recruitment processes and employee performance. In the context of Federal Polytechnic, Offa, political influence in employment decisions can distort merit-based procedures and result in the selection of unqualified personnel who may lack the competence required to contribute effectively to organizational productivity. The theory therefore provides an analytical framework for examining the extent to which recruitment practices within the institution adhere to the principles of fairness, competence, and accountability. By applying this theoretical lens, the study can assess how political manipulation of recruitment processes influences human resource outcomes and overall institutional performance.

Despite its significance in public administration, the Merit System Theory has also attracted scholarly criticism. Critics argue that the theory places excessive emphasis on formal qualifications and credentials, sometimes at the expense of practical skills and experiential knowledge. Peters and Pierre (2016) contend that meritocratic systems often prioritize academic credentials over actual performance capabilities, thereby narrowing the talent pool and potentially discouraging innovation within public institutions. Similarly, Magbadelo (2016) argues that the rigid application of merit-based criteria in Nigeria's public service may exclude individuals with valuable technical expertise but lacking conventional educational qualifications. In addition, scholars such as Magbadelo (2016) and Ezeani (2006) note that the theory does not adequately account for the political realities of many developing countries where patronage, nepotism, and ethnic considerations often shape recruitment decisions. Adamolekun (1999) further argues that bureaucratic rigidity associated with the merit system can lead to prolonged recruitment processes, limited adaptability to local contexts, and administrative inefficiencies.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the Merit System Theory remains highly relevant for analyzing recruitment practices in public institutions. In this study, the theory provides a framework for evaluating whether the Federal Polytechnic, Offa's, recruitment practices align with meritocratic principles. It also guides the investigation into how political interference may compromise objectivity in hiring decisions and affect employee morale, motivation, and performance. By emphasizing competence-based recruitment and transparent employment procedures, the theory highlights that sustainable institutional performance depends on fair, accountable, and professional personnel management practices. Consequently, the Merit System Theory provides an appropriate conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship among political interference, recruitment practices, and employee performance in public tertiary institutions.

2.2. Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between political interference and recruitment practices in public institutions, particularly within developing countries where governance structures are often vulnerable to political influence. Ikechukwu et al. (2019) investigated political interference in the recruitment and selection of academic staff in federal polytechnics in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The findings revealed that political interference often leads to the appointment of unqualified individuals to academic positions, thereby undermining meritocracy and lowering educational standards. The study emphasized that the quality of graduates is closely linked to the competence of academic staff and that political involvement in recruitment contributes to declining institutional performance. The authors recommended that tertiary institutions discourage political interference and adopt transparent, merit-based recruitment systems to ensure that only qualified academic personnel are appointed, thereby enhancing institutional credibility and improving academic outcomes.

Similarly, Anayochukwu and Ani (2021) examined the impact of political interference on personnel management in local governments across Nigeria using a quantitative research design. Their findings indicated that constitutional ambiguities within Nigeria's federal system enable state officials to exert excessive control over local government administration. This political influence significantly undermines effective personnel management, contributing to inefficiency and poor organizational performance within local government structures. The study recommended strengthening institutional frameworks to safeguard local government autonomy, promote merit-based recruitment and promotion, and ensure transparent human resource management practices free from political manipulation.

In another study, Ifaka and Odigie (2021) explored the effect of political interference on bureaucratic performance in Nigeria using a mixed-method research design. The study revealed that approximately 86% of employees recruited into the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC) were selected through politically influenced processes rather than merit-based criteria. This level of political involvement was found to significantly limit the organization's ability to attract and retain skilled personnel, thereby weakening bureaucratic effectiveness and institutional credibility. The researchers recommended insulating recruitment and selection processes from political influence by involving private-sector consultants, host community representatives, and civil society organizations in these processes. They also advocated for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate transparent recruitment processes and ensure equal opportunities for all candidates.

Beyond Nigeria, similar concerns about political influence in recruitment have been observed in other public service systems. Fathmath et al. (2021) examined the impact of political influence on recruitment and selection practices within the Maldives' Civil Service using a quantitative research design. The study found that political leaders often use their authority to influence recruitment decisions by favoring friends, relatives, or loyal associates. Such practices undermine fairness and transparency in recruitment and negatively affect employee satisfaction and public service quality. The authors concluded that merit-based recruitment systems and stronger institutional safeguards are necessary to minimize political interference. They recommended that human resource practitioners, policymakers, and civil service administrators strengthen institutional mechanisms that promote transparency and fairness in recruitment processes.

Furthermore, Oyadiran, Ishaq, and Agunbiade (2023) examined the effects of recruitment and selection processes on organizational performance, focusing on the role of job analysis, interviews, hiring policies, and testing procedures. The study relied on secondary data and found a significant positive relationship between effective recruitment and selection practices and organizational performance. The authors concluded that organizations that adopt structured and merit-based recruitment practices are more likely to achieve higher productivity and efficiency. Consequently, they recommended that management prioritize competence-based recruitment rather than relying on personal relationships or social affiliations in employment decisions. The empirical studies demonstrate that political interference in recruitment processes undermines meritocracy, weakens institutional performance, and reduces the effectiveness of public institutions. They also highlight the importance of transparent, merit-based recruitment systems in promoting employee competence, organizational efficiency, and improved public service delivery.

3. Materials and Methods

This study is designed as a cross-sectional survey. The study population consisted of 635 staff members from various administrative and service units of the Federal Polytechnic, Offa. These units included the Senior and Junior Establishment, Admission Office, Student Affairs, Certificate Office, Research and Development, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Examinations and Records, Internal Quality Control, Bursary, Public Relations, Pension Office, Legal Unit, Staff Training and Development, Polytechnic Consult, Entrepreneurship Unit, Academic Planning Office, Works and Security, Health Services, Rector, and Council Affairs. From this population, a sample of 240 respondents was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula, which is widely used to select representative samples in social science research. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. Of the 240 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 227 valid responses were collected, yielding a high response rate. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. This scale enabled the researcher to assess respondents' perceptions regarding political interference in recruitment and its effect on employee performance. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. The calculated sample size was therefore approximately 240 respondents, which was adopted for the study.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability Testing

Table 1. Result of Reliability Testing

Test	Statistics
Cronbach's Alpha	0.965
Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	0.964
N of Items	11

Table 1 presents the results of the reliability test conducted to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument used in this study. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha, a commonly used statistical measure of the consistency and stability of questionnaire items. The results show that the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.965, while the Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items is 0.964, for a total of 11 items included in the measurement scale. These values indicate a very high level of internal consistency among the items used to measure the constructs in this study. According to widely accepted reliability standards in social science research, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable, 0.80 or above is regarded as good, and values above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability. Therefore, the obtained value of 0.965 suggests that the questionnaire items are highly reliable and consistently measure the underlying variables related to political interference in recruitment and employee performance. The minimal difference between the Cronbach's Alpha (0.965) and the standardized alpha (0.964) further confirms the measurement scale's stability, indicating that responses are not significantly affected by variations in item scaling. The reliability results also indicate that the questionnaire items are strongly correlated and effectively capture the study's intended constructs. With 11 measurement items, the instrument demonstrates sufficient internal consistency, indicating that respondents interpreted and answered the questions consistently. Consequently, the research instrument can be considered reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis. The high reliability coefficient enhances the credibility of the collected data and supports the validity of subsequent findings and interpretations regarding the impact of political interference on recruitment processes and employee performance at the Federal Polytechnic, Offa.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Result of Descriptive Statistics for Political Interference in Recruitment Process

Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total
Political interference affects the fairness and credibility of recruitment and selection decisions.	27 (11.9%)	47 (20.7%)	3 (1.3%)	94 (41.4%)	56 (24.7%)	227 (100%)
Political office holders often influence the appointment of administrative and academic staff.	32 (14.1%)	51 (22.5%)	2 (.9%)	85 (37.4%)	57 (25.1%)	227 (100%)
Recruitment exercises in the Polytechnic are often manipulated to favour politically connected individuals.	24 (10.6%)	43 (18.9%)	2 (.9%)	103 (45.4%)	55 (24.2%)	227 (100%)
The institution's recruitment policy is not strictly merit-based or competence-driven.	34 (15%)	47 (20.7%)	4 (1.8%)	90 (39.6%)	52 (22.9%)	227 (100%)
The recruitment process lacks transparency due to external political pressure.	32 (14.1%)	39 (17.2%)	9 (4%)	99 (43.6%)	48 (21.1%)	227 (100%)

Note: () indicates percentage.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on respondents' perceptions of political interference in the recruitment process at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The analysis is based on responses from 227 respondents, measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The results provide insight into how staff members perceive the influence of political actors on recruitment practices within the institution. Regarding the statement that political interference undermines the fairness and credibility of recruitment and selection decisions, most respondents agreed. Specifically, 94 respondents (41.4%) agreed, and 56 respondents (24.7%) strongly agreed, indicating that 66.1% believe political interference undermines fairness in recruitment. Conversely, 27 respondents (11.9%) strongly disagreed, 47 (20.7%) disagreed, and 3 (1.3%) remained undecided. This finding suggests that a significant proportion of staff perceive political involvement as a factor that compromises the integrity of the institution's recruitment processes.

Similarly, responses to the statement that political officeholders often influence the appointment of administrative and academic staff reveal a similar pattern. A total of 85 respondents (37.4%) agreed, and 57 respondents (25.1%) strongly agreed, representing 62.5% of the respondents who believe that political office holders frequently influence recruitment decisions. In contrast, 32 respondents (14.1%) strongly disagreed, 51 (22.5%) disagreed, and 2 (0.9%) were undecided. These results indicate that more than half of the respondents acknowledge political influence in staffing decisions at the Polytechnic. The third item examined whether recruitment exercises in the Polytechnic are manipulated

to favor politically connected individuals. The findings show strong agreement with this statement: 103 respondents (45.4%) agreed, and 55 respondents (24.2%) strongly agreed, for a total of 69.6%. Meanwhile, 24 respondents (10.6%) strongly disagreed, 43 (18.9%) disagreed, and 2 (0.9%) remained neutral. This result suggests that a large proportion of employees perceive recruitment processes as being influenced by political patronage, which may undermine the principles of merit and competence.

Regarding the statement that the institution's recruitment policy is not strictly merit-based or competence-driven, 90 respondents (39.6%) agreed and 52 respondents (22.9%) strongly agreed, for a total of 62.5% who perceive weaknesses in the merit-based nature of the recruitment policy. On the other hand, 34 respondents (15%) strongly disagreed, 47 (20.7%) disagreed, and 4 (1.8%) were undecided. This finding indicates that many staff members believe recruitment decisions may not always prioritize competence and qualifications, potentially affecting institutional effectiveness. Finally, responses to the statement that the recruitment process lacks transparency due to external political pressure further reinforce the perception of political interference. The results show that 99 respondents (43.6%) agreed, and 48 respondents (21.1%) strongly agreed, representing 64.7% of the respondents who believe that political pressure reduces transparency in recruitment processes. Conversely, 32 respondents (14.1%) strongly disagreed, 39 (17.2%) disagreed, and 9 (4%) were undecided. This finding indicates that many staff members perceive external political pressure as a factor that compromises transparency and accountability in recruitment practices.

Table 3. Result of Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total
Employees recruited through political influence often lack the required skills and qualifications for their positions.	14 (6.2%)	45 (19.8%)	3 (1.3%)	95 (41.9%)	70 (30.8%)	227 (100%)
Merit-based recruitment promotes higher productivity and organizational efficiency.	17 (7.5%)	15 (6.6%)	6 (2.6%)	96 (42.3%)	93 (41%)	227 (100%)
Political interference in recruitment reduces staff morale and motivation in the workplace.	32 14.1(%)	43 (18.9%)	2 (.9%)	94 (41.4%)	56 (24.7%)	227 (100%)
The presence of politically recruited employees affects teamwork and cooperation among staff.	46 (20.3%)	98 (43.2%)	9 (4%)	62 (27.3%)	12 (5.3%)	227 (100%)
Political interference in recruitment leads to poor service delivery and institutional inefficiency.	25 (11%)	46 (20.3%)	3 (1.3%)	98 (43.2%)	55 (24.2%)	227 (100%)
Minimizing political influence in the recruitment process will enhance employee commitment and performance at the Polytechnic.	23 (10.1%)	45 (19.8%)	3 (1.3%)	95 (41.9%)	61 (26.9%)	227 (100%)

Note: () indicates percentage.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics on respondents' perceptions of employee performance regarding political interference in recruitment at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The analysis is based on responses from 227 respondents, measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The results highlight how political influence in recruitment may affect employee competence, productivity, morale, teamwork, service delivery, and overall institutional performance. Regarding the claim that employees recruited through political influence often lack the required skills and qualifications for their positions, most respondents agreed. Specifically, 95 respondents (41.9%) agreed, and 70 respondents (30.8%) strongly agreed, representing 72.7% of respondents who believe that politically influenced recruitment may result in the employment of individuals who lack the necessary competencies. In contrast, 14 respondents (6.2%) strongly disagreed, 45 (19.8%) disagreed, and 3 (1.3%) remained undecided. This finding suggests that a significant proportion of staff perceive politically influenced recruitment as a factor that may compromise the quality of personnel within the institution.

Regarding the claim that merit-based recruitment promotes higher productivity and organizational efficiency, the responses overwhelmingly support this assertion. A total of 96 respondents (42.3%) agreed, and 93 respondents (41.0%) strongly agreed, for a total of 83.3%. Meanwhile, 17 respondents (7.5%) strongly disagreed, 15 (6.6%) disagreed, and 6 (2.6%) were undecided. This finding indicates a strong consensus among respondents that merit-based recruitment plays a crucial role in improving productivity and efficiency within the Polytechnic. The third item examined whether political interference in recruitment reduces staff morale and motivation in the workplace. The results show that 94 respondents (41.4%) agreed and 56 respondents (24.7%) strongly agreed, indicating that 66.1% of respondents believe that political interference negatively affects employee morale and motivation. Conversely, 32

respondents (14.1%) strongly disagreed, 43 (18.9%) disagreed, and 2 (0.9%) remained neutral. This result suggests that perceptions of unfair recruitment practices may discourage employees and weaken their motivation to perform effectively. Regarding the claim that the presence of politically recruited employees affects teamwork and cooperation among staff, the results show a different pattern. Most respondents disagreed: 98 (43.2%) disagreed, and 46 (20.3%) strongly disagreed, for a total of 63.5%. Meanwhile, 62 respondents (27.3%) agreed, 12 (5.3%) strongly agreed, and 9 (4%) were undecided. This finding suggests that although political interference may affect recruitment practices, many respondents do not believe it significantly disrupts teamwork and cooperation among staff members.

Furthermore, responses to the statement that political interference in recruitment leads to poor service delivery and institutional inefficiency indicate strong agreement. Specifically, 98 respondents (43.2%) agreed, and 55 respondents (24.2%) strongly agreed, for a total of 67.4% who believe that politically influenced recruitment negatively affects service delivery and institutional efficiency. On the other hand, 25 respondents (11%) strongly disagreed, 46 (20.3%) disagreed, and 3 (1.3%) were undecided. This result implies that political interference may weaken the institution's ability to deliver quality services effectively. Finally, respondents were asked whether minimizing political influence in the recruitment process would enhance employee commitment and performance at the Polytechnic. The results show that 95 respondents (41.9%) agreed, and 61 respondents (26.9%) strongly agreed, representing 68.8% of respondents who believe that reducing political interference would improve staff commitment and performance. In contrast, 23 respondents (10.1%) strongly disagreed, 45 (19.8%) disagreed, and 3 (1.3%) remained undecided. This finding suggests that many employees perceive merit-based recruitment as essential for strengthening commitment, motivation, and overall performance within the institution.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Table 4. Result of Correlation Analysis between Political Interference and Employee Performance

Variable(s)	Employee Performance	
	Pearson Correlation	0.933**
Political Interference	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	227

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship between political interference in recruitment and employee performance at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. Pearson's correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of the association between the two variables, based on responses from 227 respondents. The results indicate a very strong positive correlation between political interference and employee performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.933. This value suggests a strong relationship between the two variables, implying that political interference in recruitment is closely associated with variations in employee performance within the institution. The correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by the significance level (p -value) of 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.01 (two-tailed). This means the relationship observed is unlikely to have occurred by chance and is statistically significant at the 1% level, providing strong confidence in the relationship between the variables. With a sample of 227 respondents, the correlation results provide strong empirical evidence that political interference in recruitment processes is closely linked to employee performance outcomes within the institution. The findings suggest that political interference in recruitment is an important factor influencing employee performance within Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The strong correlation highlights the potential impact of recruitment practices on workforce effectiveness, organizational productivity, and institutional performance. These results underscore the need for transparent, merit-based recruitment systems to ensure qualified personnel are employed, thereby enhancing employee performance and institutional effectiveness.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Result of the effect of Political Interference on the employee performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	(Constant)	1.012	0.067				15.076

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Political Interference	0.715	0.018	0.933	38.866	0	0.679	0.751
R		.933a			Sum of Squares	184.967	
R Square		0.870			df	1	
Adjusted R Square		0.870			Mean Square	184.967	
Std. Error of the Estimate		0.350			F	1510.601	
Durbin-Watson		0.921			Sig.	.000b	

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Table 5 presents the results of the regression analysis examining the effect of political interference on employee performance at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The analysis used linear regression to determine the extent to which political interference in recruitment predicts variations in employee performance. The results show a strong relationship between political interference and employee performance, as indicated by the correlation coefficient $R = 0.933$. This value suggests a very strong association between the independent variable (political interference) and the dependent variable (employee performance). The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.870, indicating that approximately 87.0% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by political interference in recruitment processes. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.870 further confirms the model's strength and stability, suggesting that its explanatory power remains high even after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors. This result implies that political interference is a significant factor influencing employee performance within the institution.

The regression coefficient results also indicate that political interference has a positive, statistically significant effect on employee performance, with an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.715 and a standard error of 0.018. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.933) indicates that political interference has a very strong predictive influence on employee performance. The t-value of 38.866 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000 indicates that the relationship between political interference and employee performance is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis of no relationship between political interference and employee performance can be rejected. Furthermore, the constant value of 1.012 suggests that when political interference is held constant, employee performance would still maintain a baseline level of 1.012 units. The 95% confidence interval for the political interference coefficient is 0.679 to 0.751, indicating that the true population value of the coefficient lies within this interval with high confidence. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, it further confirms the predictor variable's statistical significance.

The regression model is also statistically significant, as indicated by an F-statistic of 1510.601 and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that the model provides a good fit for the data and that political interference significantly explains variations in employee performance. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate (0.350) suggests that the model's predictions are relatively accurate with minimal error. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 0.921 indicates some positive autocorrelation in the residuals; however, it does not substantially undermine the model's overall reliability. In general, the results demonstrate that political interference in recruitment has a strong, statistically significant effect on employee performance at the Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The model's high explanatory power suggests that recruitment practices influenced by political considerations play a critical role in shaping workforce effectiveness, institutional productivity, and organizational outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of minimizing political interference in recruitment processes and strengthening merit-based hiring systems to enhance employee performance and institutional efficiency.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide substantial empirical evidence that political interference significantly affects recruitment practices and employee performance at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The descriptive statistics indicate that 66.1% of respondents agreed that political interference undermines fairness and credibility in recruitment processes. This finding supports Magbadelo's (2016) argument that the politicization of recruitment in public institutions distorts administrative professionalism and weakens the integrity of the civil service. When recruitment decisions are influenced by political actors rather than objective and merit-based criteria, the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability are compromised, thereby undermining institutional governance. Similarly, the study found that 62.5% of respondents acknowledged that political officeholders influence staff appointments. This finding aligns with the work of Fakorede et al. (2025), who noted that political actors often exploit recruitment exercises to reward loyalists and political allies rather than selecting the most qualified candidates. Such practices reduce the overall competence and

effectiveness of public institutions. In addition, the finding that 69.6% of respondents believed that recruitment exercises are manipulated to favor politically connected individuals corroborates the study of Okeke-Uzodike and Subban (2015), who reported that favoritism and patronage in recruitment contribute to inefficiency, low morale, and poor service delivery in public organizations.

The results also indicate that 62.5% of respondents perceived that recruitment policies are not strictly merit-based or competence-driven, which supports the argument of Nkgapele and Mofokeng (2024) that political pressures often compromise meritocratic recruitment systems and lead to the appointment of individuals who lack the necessary qualifications and competencies. Furthermore, the study found that 64.7% of respondents agreed that recruitment processes lack transparency due to political influence. This finding reflects the broader governance challenges faced by many public institutions in Nigeria. According to Sanusi and Martadha (2012), political interference weakens institutional accountability and creates opportunities for corruption, favoritism, and mediocrity within public organizations. The lack of transparency in recruitment processes discourages qualified candidates from seeking employment opportunities in public institutions and reduces public confidence in administrative systems. These findings support the principles of Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which emphasizes merit-based recruitment, professional competence, and a clear separation between politics and administration as essential components of efficient public management. However, the situation observed in the institution indicates a deviation from these bureaucratic principles. As noted by Usang and Salim (2016), political interference in recruitment often results in inefficiency and limits institutions' capacity to achieve their organizational objectives effectively.

The study's findings also have significant implications for employee performance. The descriptive analysis revealed that 72.7% of respondents agreed that employees recruited through political influence often lack the required skills and qualifications for their positions. This result is consistent with the findings of Okeke-Uzodike and Subban (2015), who emphasized that political favoritism in recruitment compromises the quality of personnel because individuals are selected based on political loyalty rather than professional competence. The presence of inadequately qualified personnel can weaken organizational performance and hinder the achievement of institutional goals. In contrast, the study shows strong support for meritocratic recruitment systems, as 83.3% of respondents agreed that merit-based recruitment promotes higher productivity and organizational efficiency. This finding aligns with Weber's (2009) bureaucratic model, which advocates for meritocracy, competence, and rational procedures in public administration. According to Magbadelo (2016), institutions that adhere to merit-based employment systems tend to experience higher productivity, accountability, and institutional performance.

Moreover, the study indicates that 66.1% of respondents believe that political interference reduces staff morale and motivation in the workplace. This finding corroborates the work of Ikeanyibe et al. (2017), who argued that unmerited appointments often demoralize competent staff members and create resentment within the workplace. When employees perceive that recruitment decisions are influenced by political favoritism rather than merit, it creates a sense of injustice and reduces their motivation to perform effectively. Similarly, Usang and Salim (2016) observed that political interference in recruitment contributes to job dissatisfaction, poor work ethics, and reduced motivation among dedicated employees, thereby weakening organizational performance. Interestingly, the study found that teamwork was less affected by politically influenced recruitment, with 63.5% of respondents disagreeing that politically recruited employees disrupt cooperation among staff. This suggests that, despite political interference in recruitment processes, employees may still maintain professional relationships and collaborate effectively in fulfilling institutional responsibilities. This finding resonates with Sanusi and Martadha (2012), who argued that strong organizational culture and effective leadership can help mitigate the divisive effects of politically motivated recruitment on workplace harmony.

Beyond descriptive findings, the correlation analysis further strengthens the evidence of a strong relationship between political interference and employee performance. The results show a very strong positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.933$, $p < 0.01$) between political interference and employee performance. This statistically significant relationship indicates that variations in recruitment practices influenced by political factors are closely associated with changes in employee performance within the institution. The significance level ($p = 0.000$) indicates that the relationship between the two variables is highly significant and unlikely to be due to chance. This finding reinforces the arguments of Magbadelo (2016) and Usang and Salim (2016) that political interference in public-sector recruitment can significantly shape organizational outcomes, particularly employee effectiveness and institutional productivity. The regression analysis provides further insight into the magnitude of the effect of political interference on employee performance. The results indicate a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.870, suggesting that 87% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by political interference in recruitment practices. This high explanatory power demonstrates that political interference is a major predictor of employee performance within the institution. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.715$) and the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.933$) indicate that political interference has a strong, statistically significant influence on employee performance. The t-value of 38.866, with a p-value of 0.000, further confirms that the relationship between political interference and employee performance is statistically significant.

The overall regression model was also found to be statistically significant ($F = 1510.601$, $p < 0.05$), indicating a good fit for explaining the relationship between political interference and employee performance. These findings are

consistent with the theoretical assumptions of the Merit System Theory, which argues that recruitment based on political considerations undermines competence, efficiency, and accountability in public institutions. When recruitment processes deviate from meritocratic principles, the likelihood of hiring unqualified personnel increases, ultimately affecting employee performance and organizational productivity. In addition, the study revealed that 67.4% of respondents agreed that political interference contributes to poor service delivery and institutional inefficiency, supporting Adeniyi's (2022) findings that politically influenced personnel often lack the discipline and commitment necessary for effective performance. Furthermore, 68.8% of respondents indicated that minimizing political influence in recruitment would enhance employee commitment and performance, highlighting the importance of administrative autonomy and transparency in human resource management.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the impact of political interference on recruitment processes and employee performance at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The findings reveal that political interference remains a significant factor in the institution's recruitment practices. The descriptive results indicate that most respondents perceive that political actors influence recruitment decisions, manipulate recruitment processes to favor politically connected individuals, and undermine the fairness, transparency, and meritocratic principles that should guide public-sector employment. Such practices weaken the credibility of recruitment systems and compromise institutional integrity. The study further demonstrates that political interference has notable implications for employee performance. The findings show that politically influenced recruitment often results in the appointment of individuals who may lack the qualifications and competencies required for their positions. As a result, employee morale, motivation, and organizational efficiency may be negatively affected. In contrast, respondents strongly agreed that merit-based recruitment enhances productivity, efficiency, and institutional performance. The results emphasize the importance of transparent, competence-based recruitment systems in promoting effective human resource management in public institutions.

The correlation and regression analyses further reinforce these findings. The correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between political interference and employee performance, indicating that recruitment practices influenced by political factors are closely associated with variations in staff performance. Similarly, the regression analysis demonstrated that political interference significantly predicts employee performance, accounting for a substantial proportion of the variance observed in organizational outcomes. These findings suggest that political interference in recruitment is not merely an administrative concern but a critical factor affecting institutional productivity and service delivery. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support the assumptions of the Merit System Theory, which emphasizes merit-based recruitment, professional competence, and administrative neutrality in public-sector personnel management. The results confirm that deviations from meritocratic recruitment principles, particularly through political interference, undermine the effectiveness and performance of public institutions. Consequently, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how political influence in recruitment affects employee performance within a public tertiary institution in Nigeria.

6.1. Research Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focused on a single institution, Federal Polytechnic, Offa, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other public institutions or tertiary education systems in Nigeria and beyond. Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions or biases. Third, the study examined only selected variables related to political interference and employee performance, while other factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and institutional policies may also influence employee performance. Future studies could expand the scope by including multiple institutions, employing mixed-method approaches, and incorporating additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

6.2. Policy Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces the relevance of the Merit System Theory in explaining the relationship between recruitment practices and employee performance in public institutions. The results highlight the need to strengthen meritocratic principles in public sector recruitment systems to ensure fairness, transparency, and administrative professionalism. From a practical and policy standpoint, the study underscores the importance of insulating recruitment processes from political interference in order to improve institutional performance. Policymakers and institutional authorities should strengthen regulatory frameworks and enforce strict compliance with merit-based recruitment policies in public tertiary institutions. Governing councils, human resource departments, and relevant government agencies should establish transparent recruitment procedures that emphasize competence, qualifications, and equal opportunities for all applicants. Additionally, the use of digital recruitment platforms and independent recruitment oversight mechanisms

could enhance transparency and reduce opportunities for political manipulation. Furthermore, promoting institutional autonomy and accountability in recruitment decisions will help ensure that public institutions recruit qualified personnel who can contribute effectively to organizational goals. By minimizing political interference and strengthening merit-based employment practices, public tertiary institutions can enhance employee commitment, improve service delivery, and achieve sustainable institutional development.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.O.S., and A.A.; methodology, M.O.S.; software, M.O.S.; validation, A.A. and E.O.L.; formal analysis, A.A.; investigation, M.O.S., and A.A.; resources, M.O.S.; data curation, A.A. and E.O.L.; writing—original draft preparation, M.O.S., and A.A.; writing—review and editing, M.O.S., A.A., and E.O.L.; project administration, A.A.; funding acquisition, A.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank Kwara State Polytechnic, Nigeria, for its support of this research and publication. The authors would also like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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