



INFLUENCE OF PATRONAGE ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ELDORET, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Lack of career advancement in most institutions of higher learning is an area of great interest and concern. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the influence of patronage on career development among administrative staff in public universities. A case study research design was adopted for the study. A census sampling technique was employed where the entire target population of 134 was used. However, 130 questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Questionnaires containing closed ended questions with the help of Likert scales were used. Data analysis was done using descriptive and Spearman correlation. Presentation of the findings was in form of tables and graphs. Results indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that patronage (ethnicity, tribalism, favoritism and biasness) was practiced at UOE. The study further revealed that patronage had a negative significant association ($p < 0.05$, $r = -.977$) with career development. The study has recommended among other things, that institutions of higher learning should adopt flexible structure and systems to reduce the effect of patronage on career development of their employees.

Key words: patronage, career development, Administrative staff and Public Universities

Introduction

Globalization has significantly impacted the management and operations of universities across the world. Mwanje (2010) reported that most employees in their place of work have undergone various trainings and workshops in their line of profession but they have remained stagnant with little evidence of career progression. Studies have shown that one of the major determinants of employee career development is organizational politics which refers to behaviors that occur on an informal basis within an organization and involve intentional acts of influence that are designed to protect or enhance individuals' professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible (Porter, 1981; Drory, 1993). One of the catalysts of organization politics is patronage which Martin (2006) expansively considered as covering all forms of bias and discrimination, is pervasive in organizations and professions, including academia.

Four key types of academic patronage operate through decisions made, processes used, assistance given to individuals and personal interactions. The concept patronage to refer to favoritism based on attributes not connected with merit or performance. The person favored can be a relative, friend, spouse, protégé or student, or share the same gender, ethnicity, social class, age, religion, political views or other beliefs. Most attention in academic studies is given to specific types of discrimination, especially those based on gender and ethnicity (Martin, 2006).

Ramachander (2013) reported that favored employees are promoted unduly, get advances not because of quality of work but because they are preferred by the boss, superior may discuss top official secrets with them and may overlook the mistakes made by such employees. This state of affairs contributes to a high turnover (Burt, 1992). Recently, Caroline (2015) observed that hardworking employees leave their organizations especially when they perceive that their hard work will not be recognized, hence the organization is bound to lose quality employees because of favoritism.

Despite the increased research on political patronage over the years, studies on patronage in an academic environment have been inadequate and limited. The limited research that has been done on patronage in an academic environment is predominantly in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa (Budhwar & Debrah, 2013), very little research has been done in Africa. As far as we know, no similar research has been done in

Kenya. Therefore, this study is aimed at determining the influence of patronage on career development.

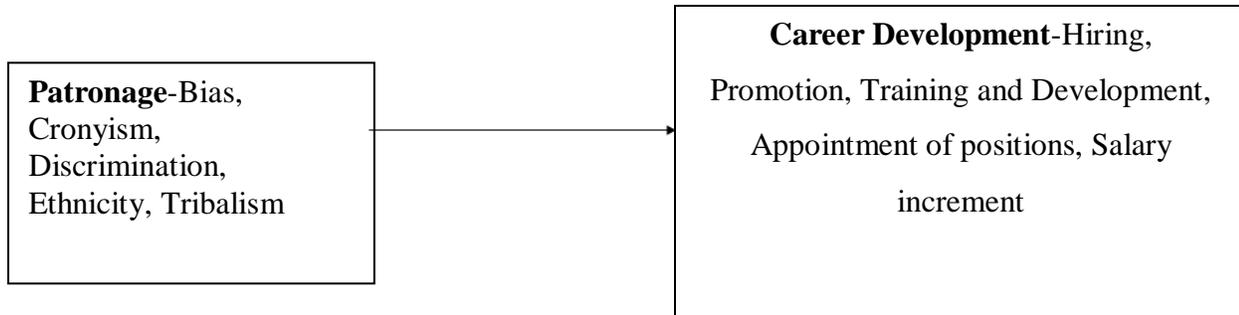


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research methodology

Study area

The study was carried out at U.OE in Eldoret town Kenya. The institution was chosen in this study since several both students' and employees' strikes have been reported most recently.

Research Design

The study adopted a case study research design. This enabled the researcher do a detailed analysis of the University of Eldoret and the major issues under investigation. A case study research design was appropriate for the study because it allows for the collection of comprehensive and detailed information as well as generalization of information generated from a sample to represent the overall target population.

Target Population

The target population for the study comprised of 134 permanent administrative of the University of Eldoret in Eldoret town who were drawn from different departments.

Sampling Design and Procedures

When sample size determination was done using the formula of Israel (1992) below, a sample size of 128 administrative staff was arrived. Since this figure was close to the entire target population (134), the researcher chose to adopt census technique where the entire target population was used to obtain the required information for the study.

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

Where n is the optimum sample size, N the total number of administrative staff and e the probability of error (in this study 0.05 for 95% confidence level was used).

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

A structured questionnaire with the help of Likert scales was used as data collection instrument for the study. It was developed through the guidance of the study's objectives and research questions. They contained closed ended questions which were accompanied by a list of possible alternatives from which the respondents were expected to choose answers that best describe their situation

Validity & Reliability

Validity therefore refers to the extent to which an instrument can measure what it ought to measure. It refers to the extent to which an instrument asks the right questions in terms of accuracy. The validity of the research instrument was achieved through the expert judgment of the research supervisor who critically went through it to ensure that the questions contained were clear and precise and present the phenomena under study.

Reliability is the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Orodho, 2003). Pilot test was carried out by randomly distributing about 20 questionnaires to target respondents within the different target groups in the study. This was done to determine whether data gathered from each variable has a significant effect on career development. Cronbach's Alpha was then used for testing the reliability of the questionnaire responses, using SPSS software. The Alpha test was computed on the different sections of the questionnaire. The critical point for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 and from the test that was carried out in the study, the overall reliability of the questionnaire by calculating Cronbach's Alpha (α) value at confidence level 95% was found to be 0.935 on satisfaction and 0.959 on importance. While individual item reliability range was found to be 0.801-0.819 on satisfaction and 0.863-0.872 on importance. All the values were highly appreciating due to having acceptable range

(Values ≥ 0.70 is acceptable). Therefore the researcher confirmed that the instrument was reliable.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data collected were edited and coded using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Two types of analyses were computed. The first was descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and the second was inferential statistics (Spearman rank correlation) where responses to patronage were analyzed to determine their association with career development. Significance was tested at 95% confidence level.

Results and discussion

Gender, age and nature of responsibility presented the demographic characteristic of the respondents.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	72	55.4	55.4
Female	58	44.6	44.6
Total	130	100.0	100.0

Results indicated that more than 50% of the respondents were male (55.4%), female were found to form 44.6% of the respondents as shown in Table 4.1. Both male and female respondents had an equal chance to be represented in the study.

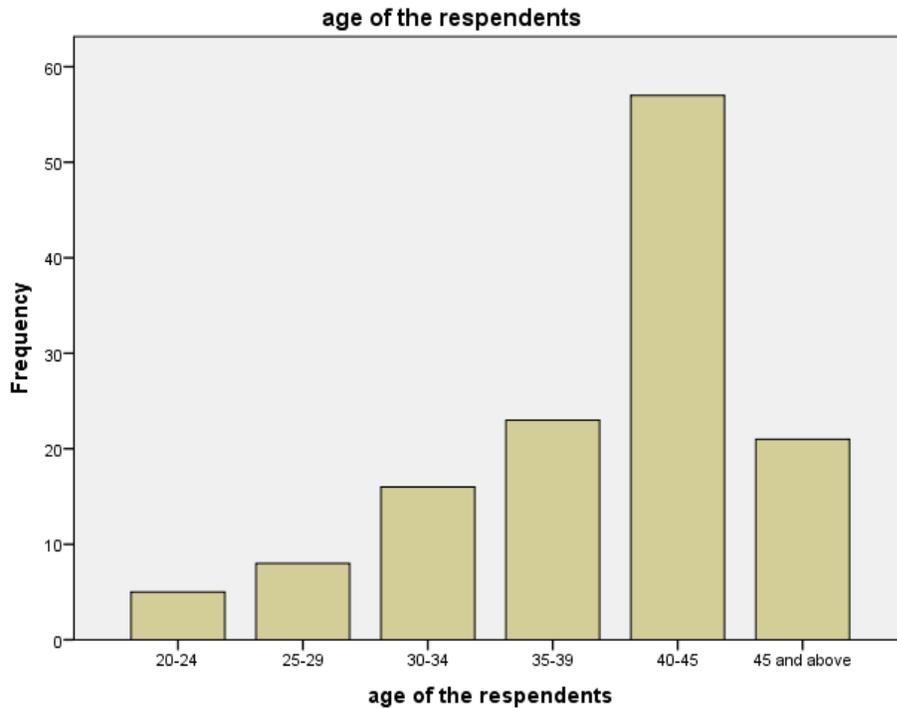


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age

The findings from Fig. 1 above indicated that the majority of respondents were between 40-45 years old (43.8%). This is in comparison to other categories, 35-39 years (17.7%) above 45 years (16.2%), 30-34 years (12.3%), 25-29 years (6.2%). Respondents between 20-24 years of age reported the lowest percent of 3.8.

Table 2: Nature of responsibility of Respondents

Position	Frequency	Percent
Clerk	16	12.3
Secretary	37	28.5
Administrative assistant	30	27.7
Senior administrative	36	23.1
HoD	11	8.5
Total	130	100.0

It was ascertained from the findings of the study that the majority of respondents were secretaries (28.5%), compared to those who work as administrative assistants (27.7%), senior administrative (23.1%), Office clerks (12.3%) and HoD's (8.5%) as shown in the Table 2. All categories had equal chances of representation in this study.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of career development elements and their responses were summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Importance of career developments items

Career development items	SD		D		U		A		S A	
	Fre q	%	Fre q.	%	Freq .	%	Freq .	%	Fre q.	%
Promotions based on merit	5	3.8	7	5.3	2	1.5	100	76.9	16	12.5
Training and development	2	1.5	4	3.1	1	0.8	120	92.3	3	2.3
Merit based hiring	3	2.3	7	5.3	0	0.0	90	69.2	30	23.1
Appointment of positions	3	2.3	7	5.3	1	0.8	117	90.0	2	1.5
Salary increment based on merit	5	3.8	3	2.3	0	0.0	97	74.6	26	20.0

KEY: SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, U- Undecided, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Results on Table 4 clearly showed that majority of the respondents (above 50%) agreed that; promotion, training, hiring, appointment and salary increment based on merit were important components of career development. About 120 (92.3%) of the respondents agreed that training and development based on merit is important in career development with only 3.1% disagreeing. On the other hand, 90, 76.4, 74.6 and 69.2% of the respondents agreed that appointment of positions, promotions; salary increment and hiring were important elements of career development respectively, against 5.3, 5.3, 3.8 and 5.3% who disagreed on the same respectively.

Influence of patronage on career management

Respondents were asked to give their views on the much they agreed or disagreed with the influences of patronage on career development. Their views were varied as summarized in Table 5 below. Generally, Table 5 showed that, majority of the respondents agreed that patronage affected career development, while a few of them did not agree. For example, 81(62%) of the respondents strongly agreed that promotion only comes when you are connected to someone at the top management while only 1.5% strongly disagreed this. In addition, 54.6 and 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that education and training and salary scale of employees are not

based on merit respectively. On the other hand, 10.8 and 8.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed on this. Results obtained from the study revealed that 51.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that their career growth was not healthy while only 6.2% of them strongly agreed that their career growth was healthy.

A larger percentage of employees agreed that patronage existed in their institution in terms of tribalism, nepotism, biasness and favourism. This is attributed to scarcity of resources that is prevalent in most institutions. Bhatnagar (1992) argues that Organizational situations that are characterized by scarcity of resources tend to attract more political activity than situations that are not so characterized. Another reason could be due to what George (2011) termed as diversity. He further elaborated diversity as differences among people in age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and capabilities/disabilities. The findings are similar to those reported by Nzuve (2007). The researcher reported that in some institutions, managers create coalitions“ to assist, block, protect or hinder some employees. These coalitions are based on tribal and ethnicity.

Table 4: Influence of patronage on career development

Influence of patronage on career development	SD		D		U		A		S A	
	Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Promotions are based on ethnic backgrounds	14	10.8	9	6.9	9	6.9	48	36.5	50	38.9
People are Rewarded on the basis of their tribes	10	7.7	10	7.7	8	6.2	52	40	50	38.5
Priority given to relatives and acquaintances of the management	18	13.8	12	9.2	7	5.4	43	33.1	50	38.5
Hard time in firing or demoting friends and acquaintance	11	8.5	9	6.9	8	6.2	49	37.7	53	40.8
Promotion comes only when you know someone in the top management	17	13.1	2	1.5	6	4.6	24	18.5	81	62.3
Those who work hard are not adequately rewarded	8	6.2	5	3.8	1	0.8	63	48.5	53	40.8
Criteria for reward or promotion is not known	12	9.2	9	6.9	1	0.8	55	42.3	53	40.8
Policies and structures benefit a few individuals	29	22.3	8	6.2	2	1.5	35	26.9	56	43.1
Pay rise and promotions do not follow HR policy	31	23.8	4	3.1	0	0	54	41.5	41	31.5
Education and training	9	6.9	14	10.8	8	6.2	34	26.2	65	50.0

opportunities are not based on merit										
The level of education is inversely proportional to your salary scale	13	10	11	8.5	5	3.8	30	23.1	71	54.6
Your career growth UOE is healthy.	39	30	67	51.5	1	0.8	15	11.5	8	6.2

Items for patronage were used to compute the coefficient of correlation to generate Table 4. Results on Spearman correlation reported a negative significant ($p < 0.05$; $r = -.977$).

The negative significant association between patronage and employee career development is attributed to the fact that, patronage (tribalism, favoritism, ethnicity, nepotism, biasness) creates an unfair ground for employee promotion, salary increment, training and other parameters for career growth. No wonder, Evergreen Business Group (2006) in their discussion on accelerating career success, acknowledge that organization politics can be a real problem that can stretch from victimization, disregard for ethics, talent and manipulation by supervisors. Furthermore, Robbins (2010) pointed out that, those in power manipulate the system in order to reward and recognize favorite employees and in the process, they demoralize the rest of the staff who work hard but they are rewarded. Cranfield University's School of Management (2006) elaborated further that organization politics, which concerns motives, power, positions and competition, if not used constructively, can impact negatively on various aspects of the workplace.

Table 5: Correlation on career development and patronage

Correlation on career development		Career development	Patronage
Career development	Spearman Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	1	
Patronage	Spearman Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	-0.977** 0.000	1

** significant at $p < 0.05$

Conclusion

Most of the respondents reported that favoritism, tribalism, ethnicity, biasness, and nepotism were the main parameters of patronage that are commonly practiced at UOE. The association between patronage and career development reported a negative correlation. Therefore, this study concluded

that increase in patronage (nepotism, ethnicity, tribalism, favoritism and biasness) led to a decrease in career development among administrative employees at UOE.

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