

Innovative leadership as a barrier to perceived traditional Nepotism and discrimination (NCFD) in promotions and recruitments at higher management level: A Case study at Reduit and Ebene Mauritius

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ABSTRACT:

This paper provides an insight of the devastating impact of nepotism, cronyism, favoritism and discrimination (NCFD) in recruitments and promotion process. The paper is a Case study performed in the area of Reduit and Ebene in Mauritius. The paper tries to identify the perceived NCFD some people faced in their hunt for promotions and jobs at higher management level. Innovative leadership is viewed as the answer to fight discrimination and any form of nepotism (NCFD). The various terms such as innovative leadership, nepotism, cronyism, discrimination, favoritism has been elaborated in this paper. Le-Breton & Miller (2006) hammers that the practice of nepotism encourages relatives, the next in line to access leaderships post rather than the deserving qualified candidates. It is not a political paper, the facts remains that it is very unfair that due to nepotism, cronyism, favoritism and discrimination people close to power get promotions and leadership positions, managerial posts, rather than deserving qualified postulants, at the expense of meritocracy. Whether proven or not, some methods of recruitments, by which way some accessed some positions are very questionable. Kwon (2006) believes that favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism are stimulants for the development of the conflicts of interest. It has even been shown that discrimination has an impact of mental health. The International Labour Organization had stated that anti-discrimination laws do not function effectively and therefore employment discrimination, including recruitment discrimination, continues to exist around the world (ILO, 2011). The quantitative research provided the confirmation of the hypotheses of the perceived nepotism, cronyism, favoritism and discrimination and the qualitative research of the paper provided Innovative Leadership as a solution to counter these scourges. An innovative Leader must have the right leadership qualities to inculcate a culture of zero tolerance to any form of NCFD.

KEYWORDS: *nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, discrimination, Mauritius, innovative leadership, management*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nepotism can be defined as appointing someone to a position mainly due to their relatedness (i.e., family ties, or bloodline) (Arasli&Tumer, 2008; Bute, 2011). Yasir et al.,(2013) states that nepotism mainly relies on organizational political activity rather than the merit-based reference. Boadi (2000) and Arasli et al. (2006) explained that nepotistic practices persists and continues recurrently in the daily operations of the business environment in developing nations as there are no visible implementation of any policies against such practices. The term “Nepotism” comes from the Italian word “nepotismo,” which is based on Latin root “Nepos,” meaning nephew or grandson (Chukwuma et al, 2019). Nepotism is an owner’s or manager’s preference for hiring or appointing family members (nepots) instead of unrelated job applicants (Bellow, 2003). It results in interference from family , their involvement for years and generations (Chrisman et al., 2003; Chrisman et al., 2012). Le-Breton & Miller (2006) hammers that the practice of nepotism that encourages, make it easier for relatives, the next in line to access leaderships post rather than the deserving candidate. Some studies show that nepotism can harm the establishment itself (Cialdini, 1996; Kets, 1996; Bloom & Van-Rennen, 2007) even in terms of performance (Schulze et al., 2003). This even has an impact on mental health of postulants. Schunck et al (2015) and Sellers and Shelton (2003) argued that PD is associated with an increase in depression, anxietyand psychological distress as well as a decrease in well-being and the more frequent the PD, thegreater the risk of mental health problems.

II. METHODOLOGY

Due to the serious nature of the paper, all ethical standards were obeyed, and confidentiality of all participants were respected. Confidentiality of the respondents also were requested on questions asked, timing and areas where data was collected. The region of Reduit and Ebene, are vast regions in Mauritius. Considering the sensitivity of the topic in question, so as not to cause any prejudice to any institutions, the names of the targeted institutions were not named in this paper. In the signed consent forms, the respondent was requested not to provide any information to the public so as not to cause any prejudice to the research and researcher and their own organizations. In the end everyone would benefit from the outcome of the paper. The Case study method was employed. Data was collected by Questionnaires and interview process. To gather quantitative data from the respondents, an adapted questionnaire from Williams et al (1997) was administered. The sample size was decided to be 200 persons. Equal number of men and women were selected. For qualitative data, 20 people were interviewed until saturation. Charts were drawn on EXCEL by Microsoft to analyze the Questionnaires. The Interview data was coded and analyzed. An adaptation of In Vivo coding was used.

The aim and objective of the research paper is to:

- (i) examine the perceived traditional Nepotism, cronyism, Favoritism and discrimination in promotions and recruitments at high positions and their degree of impact
- (ii) to identify the possible solution to these scourges of NCFD
- (iii) to maintain confidentiality of respondents and targeted institutions so as not to cause prejudice to anyone
- (iv) to illustrate the innovative leadership qualities that can counter NCFD

III. DISCUSSION

Nepotism is when Managers and those responsible for recruitment decisions with whom they are socially connected regardless of their ability or qualifications (Alesina, 2007). Most studies have shown that nepotism leads to decreased employee satisfaction and commitment (Bellow, 2003). Human resource management plays an important role to create competitive advantage but only when there is a highly competent workforce to utilize (Boxall, 1998). Bellow (2003) and Boxall (1998) stated that where there is nepotism, this may influence individual employees' behaviour and performance. Wong & Klemer (1994) defined nepotism as the hiring and advancement of unqualified or under qualified relatives simply by virtue of their relationship with an employee, officer, or shareholder in the firm. Adams' Equity Theory (1965) of motivation states that positive outcomes and high levels of motivation can be expected only when employees perceive their treatment to be fair. Adams (1965), Equity theory introduces the concept of social comparisons, whereby employees evaluate their own input/output ratios based on their comparison with the input/outcome ratios of other employees (Carrell and Dittich, 1978). Bandiera et al (2009) confirmed that nepotism is a common accusation in politics when the relative of a powerful figure ascends to similar power seemingly without appropriate qualifications. Studies show that nepotism in staff reward as a kind of conflict of interest. It means providing unearned income in an unethical way to a relative or somebody from family connection (Boadi, 2000). When a job advertisement is being placed you may notice that the qualifications listed tend to bend towards people of a certain group and this fosters nepotism from the recruitment stage (Carless, 2004). According to Bellow (2003) there is evidence that leaders from developed and developing countries have engaged in nepotism, cronyism and favouritism in the appointment of important members of their administration. Yukl (1994) and Zaccaro and Klimoski (2001) stated that leaders influence their followers in every step they take and these steps provide direction to achieve organisational goals. Therefore leaders serve as a role model for their employees and they have the ultimate responsibility to inculcate to ethical and moral values into their employees to avoid practice of NCF (nepotism, cronyism and favouritism). Leaders who demonstrate a fair and trustworthy attitude and who reject NCF behaviours, have been shown to demonstrate good work attitudes, enhance morale, satisfaction and commitment to the organisation (Korsgaard et al, 2002). Discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person or group due to particular characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability (American Psychological Association, 2019). Perceived discrimination (PD) is when people experience the discrimination. PD can be at the institutional level, or the personal level and can manifest itself as both direct and indirect forms. This even has an impact on health of postulants. Schunck et al (2015) and Sellers and Shelton (2003) argued that PD is associated with an increase in depression, anxiety and psychological distress as well as a decrease in well-being and the more frequent the PD, the greater the risk of mental health problems. The International Labour Organization has argued that anti-discrimination laws do not function effectively and therefore employment discrimination, including recruitment discrimination, continues to exist around the world (ILO, 2011).

IV. FINDINGS

From the gathered data charts were drawn to illustrate the findings. The questions QA , QB ,QC ,QD section 1 , asked to the respondent was , whether they had ever felt being victim of perceived (i) nepotism, (ii) cronyism, (iii) favoritism, (iv) discrimination (NCFD) in their work and applications . They were required to rate on a Likert (Likert ,1931). scale of 1 to 5 of the influence. Whereby 1 represent the most impactful and 5 the least impactful. Gay et al (2009:150) proposed a scale with responses as strongly agrees, agrees, is undecided, disagree, or strongly disagrees.

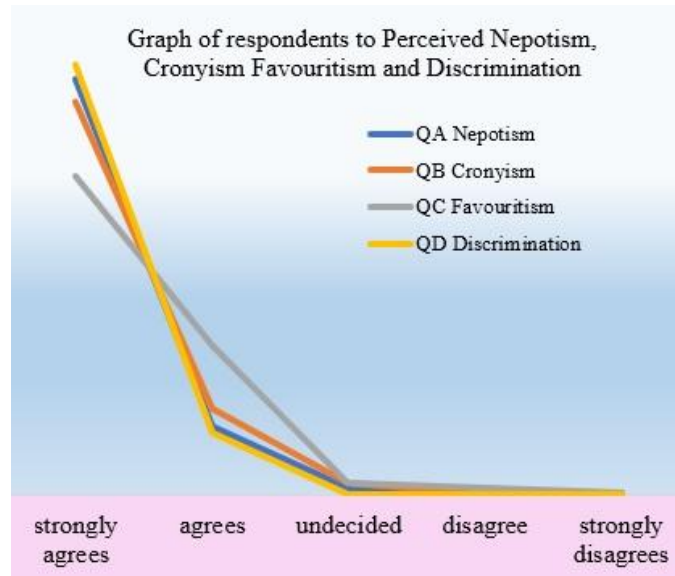


Diagram 1 showing graph of Respondents on Questions QA, B C D on (i) nepotism, (ii) cronyism, (iii) favoritism, (iv) discrimination in their work and applications

The responses of the interviews were coded into themes. The questions that were asked to the respondents where to their opinion as perceived victim of NCFD what their proposed solution to this problem would be. Their responses were regrouped codified into 5 themes.

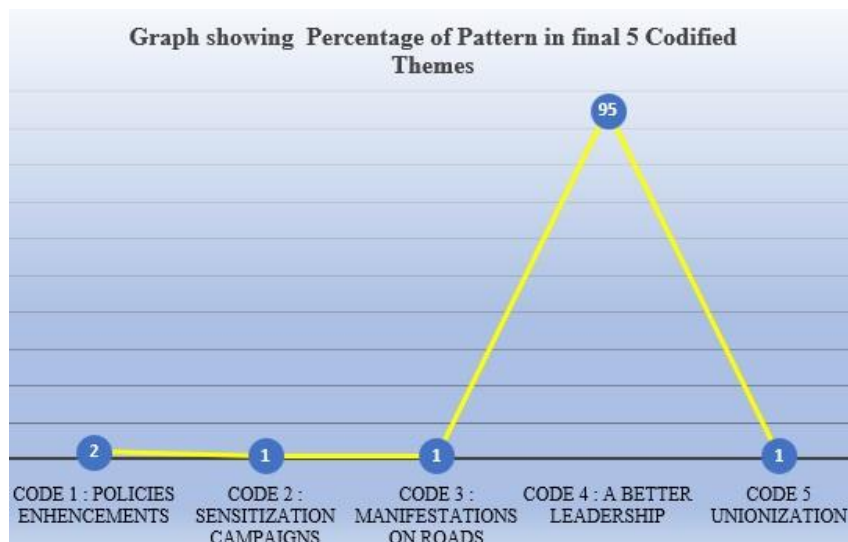


Diagram 2 showing Graph of Percentage of codes of final 5 themes from Qualitative data

From the coding and themes it was found that respondents describe their solution to fight NCFD to be a better leadership. A leader is an organisation can be the manager, the supervisors, the rector, the principal, even the employer. It is the duty of a leader, to inculcate leadership qualities the various sections of the organisation, to the recruitment cell, to the human resource section a culture of zero Tolerance to NCFD. Any such cases should be reported to relevant authorities. A review of literature provided an overview of what an innovative leader represents. According to Horth & Vehar (2014) innovation involves implementing something new that

adds value or quantifiable gain. It requires many skillsets, usually those of a team and leadership is a process by which an individual or group creates direction, alignment, and commitment for their shared work. The innovation leadership is described by the process of creating direction, alignment, and commitment needed to create and implement something new that adds value to the organization. A leader's ability to discover and implement innovations is critical to adapt to change, such as new approaches to tackle NCFD, recruitment process, technologies and customer preferences, enhancing employee creativity, developing new products, supporting market competitiveness, and sustaining economic growth. Innovation leadership commonly includes four basic stages, which are: (a) support for idea generation, (b) identifying innovations, (c) evaluating innovations, and (d) implementation. There are two types of innovations, including: (a) exploratory innovation, which involves generating brand new ideas, and (b) value-added innovation, which involves modifying and renewing ideas that already exist. The two fundamental leadership theories that are generally necessary for innovation leadership are path-goal theory and Leader Member Exchange theory (Gliddon & Rothwell 2018).

Gliddon (2006) explained in his research that innovation leadership is a philosophy and technique that combines different leadership styles to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products, and services.

Some of the qualities of an innovative leader are illustrated in the table below.

1	Identifies innovation	11	empowerment	21	Success Driven	31	Addresses the correct audience
2	Curiosity	12	Team problem solving	22	Competitiveness	32	Exemplary writing skills
3	Conduct needs analysis	13	Cultivates loyalty	23	Planning and project management	33	Takes responsibility
4	Values higher educations	14	Sense of urgency	24	time management	34	Commitment to ethics
5	Employs research methods	15	Stress management	25	Encourages accountability	35	Champions change
6	manages expectations	16	Motivates others	26	Delegation	36	Accepts bad ideas
7	Leads by example	17	Ambition	27	Understands non-verbal cues	37	Integrity
8	Knows the strength and weaknesses of the team	18	Passion Driven	28	empathy	38	Impact and influence
9	Teamwork	19	Shown Tenacity	29	Objectivity	39	Courage and conviction
10	Team commitment	20	Perseverance	30	Fluency	40	Visionary leadership

Table showing 40 qualities of an Innovative leader. Source Adapted from Gliddon (2006)

V. CONCLUSION

Such research is not very easy to conduct since it is a very sensible issue and confidentiality of respondent is crucial so that they are not put in danger. The limitations remain the relatively few number of respondents but the research was very conclusive. NCFD is recognized and an innovative leadership has the potential to tackle this problem.

It is undeniable that in today's society, the mindset of people that are into nepotism, cronyism, favoritism and discrimination is very difficult to change. Why would politics and people in power change a system that brings them comforts and advantages. As a researcher, I am bound to be neutral, impartial and apolitical writings. The problem is that the mode by which some people close to power, are recruited are also very questionable. When some people close to politics of any side, get jobs through interviews on phone, without any proper qualifications, when relatives of politicians get high earning jobs without even being qualified and experienced for a post, while the honest citizen climbs the hierarchical ladder, with masters and postgraduates qualifications, the population has ground to have perceptions of an unfair recruitment and promotion process.

There is a giant bird called the Ostrich that likes to stick its head into the ground . A picture is shown below. Ostrich Politics is the style of politics that evades problems of the society like NCFC rather than addressing and facing the problems.



(Source of picture: Diginomica, 2022)

Hopefully, NCFD can be broken by an innovative leadership style that has qualities of integrity, accountability, vision, objectivity and leads by example and that do not pretend not to see or hear any problems related to NCFD and recruitments and promotions at Management level based on meritocracy and fairness , rather the traditional way.

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Dedication: This research was put to paper while I was recovering from a head surgical treatment. I, Mr Yudhistir SMF Jugessur, dedicate this paper to my mother who has been my only support in these difficult times, as well as in all these years solitude, harassment, denigration and prejudice.

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