

## Article

# Workplace Favoritism and Workforce Sustainability: An Analysis of Employees' Well-Being

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**Abstract:** The goal of sustainability in business is the maximization of resources for long-term productivity at a minimized negative impact for all key stakeholders. Several functions of human resources management are designed to achieve this goal. However, HRM practices can sometimes spiral down and result in the perception of favoritism—a practice that recruits or rewards relationship over merit. Hence, this project was designed to measure the impact of favoritism on the development of a sustainable hospitality workforce through the measures of subjective well-being, psychological capital, and knowledge hiding behavior. With the aid of randomly selected employees and estimation of structural models, the study validates the deleterious impact of favoritism and organizational politics on employee outcomes and by extension the sustainability of the workforce. Practical and theoretical recommendations are provided.

**Keywords:** favoritism; subjective well-being; sustainable workforce; knowledge hiding behavior; organizational politics



**Citation:** Lasisi, T.T.; Constanța, E.; Eluwole, K.K. Workplace Favoritism and Workforce Sustainability: An Analysis of Employees' Well-Being. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 14991. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142214991>

Academic Editor: Hyo Sun Jung

Received: 5 September 2022

Accepted: 10 November 2022

Published: 13 November 2022

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## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, human resource management (HRM) has often focused on employee management issues ranging from talent acquisition to retention and management [1]. Within this scope, several functions, such as recruitment, training, development, motivation, and administration, are undertaken to ensure employee satisfaction vis-à-vis productivity [2]. While effective human resource management strives to minimize the negative work-related stress and stressors, the very nature of work and its human component makes it impossible to completely eradicate employee-related challenges. Furthermore, the sustainability of the workforce is another pertinent responsibility of the HRM, that is, ensuring that the right decisions are made to guarantee long-term benefits for employees and employers while minimizing negative impacts for them. With this in mind, several scholars have often dedicated their resources to uncovering problematic areas in the working environment to provide recommendations and solutions to improve organizational-related performance outcomes as well as employee-related performance outcomes.

One source of work-related stressors in the hospitality industry is favoritism. According to [3], favoritism refers to “the practice of giving nephews or other relatives positions because of their relationship rather than their merit” (p. 555). In other words, it is a form of preferential treatment of certain individuals based on social ties [4]. Such practices project partiality and unfairness, attributes that have been well documented to result in negative employee outcomes. For instance, using data solicited from service employees in Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore, [4] inferred that the nepotism-favoritism paradigm in the organization is a major deterrent to the effectiveness of the workforce. Similarly, [5]

used a sample of hotel employees in Northern Cyprus and concluded that favoritism and nepotism are work stressors with a great negative impact on non-benefiting employees leading to incivility, cynicism, and withdrawal behavior.

Motivated employees are the bedrock of successful hospitality and tourism organization; however, favoritism—which is the practice of giving preferential treatment to employees based on social ties [4]—represents a deterrent to employees' job performance and work behavior. Understandably, considering the harmful nature of its impact, a growing body of literature has been documenting its detrimental contributions to organizational outcomes.

Notably, [6] suggested that favoritism is a departure from equity and meritocracy that results in heightened tolerance to workplace incivilities and psychological contract breach. Reference [7] concluded that favoritism cripples employees' perception of organizational justice, and fairness, which often serves as the foundation of the work exchange relationship, is lost. Other scholars linked favoritism to counterproductive work practices (such as withdrawal behavior) (see [8]), and negative employee outcomes [4].

Furthermore, favoritism tends to bring stratification and division into the workplace. Specifically, beneficiaries of favoritism often experience a different workplace climate in comparison to their non-benefiting counterparts [9]. Alternatively, favoritism can be said to erase the neutrality and equality climate needed for hospitality employees to function. Under such working conditions, non-benefiting employees can devise varying coping mechanisms ranging from counterproductive behavior to total withdrawal [5,6,10].

Considering the criticality of service employees to business survival and success, managers of hospitality organizations striving to attain stability and profitability in business must manage their employees to deliver optimal performance consistently at all times. To achieve this, the detrimental impact of preferential treatment that favoritism represents must be quenched. Since favoritism can be considered a form of supervisor incivility or failure in leadership, appropriate leadership structures within the organization may serve as the short-term solution.

### *1.1. Problem Statement/Research Question*

The previous section highlights a few of the concerns pointed-out in the academic literature with respect to the deleterious contributions of favoritism to hospitality business performance and outcomes. While extant literature has duly documented the impact of employees' behavior, such dedication is lacking in understanding the motivations for managers practicing nepotism. The current project is designed to uncover managers' motivation for the practice of favoritism. In other words, the project sought to investigate the prevalence of favoritism and its antecedents. Further, using the African tourism region, the current project will answer the call of [6] for examination of the mechanisms through which favoritism impacts employees in a cross-national research framework.

Specifically, the article will answer the following questions:

- Do practicing managers favor selected individuals because of their vested interest or is there any positivity in such practices?
- To what degree does the damaging impact of favoritism affect employees' well-being and the sustainability of the workforce?

### *1.2. Research Background*

Employee performance is woven into the very fiber of hospitality organizations' performance. As such, employee well-being and satisfaction are of utmost priority for progressive hospitality managers. With this in mind, the findings from the current project offer several important contributions.

First, by seeking to address the motivations that drive managers' practices of favoritism, the current project will take a detour from the position in extant literature that assumes that all practices of favoritism are motivated by relationships or social ties. While social ties may be the main connector of manager–beneficiary in a favoritism relationship, other factors, such as abuse of power, leadership orientation, and employee attribution,

may drive the perception of the practice. Hence, the project will offer empirically proven antecedents of favoritism in hospitality organizations.

Second, favoritism literature has been skewed in context, that is, most of the studies within this domain have been conducted in Asian contexts. As is the case in social studies, human behavior and interactions are heavily influenced by the culture and the predominant views in society. Since European business and societal cultures are different from those of Asians; the findings of the current project will help to further strengthen the generalizability of the scholar's claim of the impact of favoritism in the hospitality business. Similarly, with the Africa focus of the current project, the results of the study will further validate the claims of the impact also within the African context.

Lastly, findings from the current project will elicit employee coping strategies, managers' motivations, and potential outcomes of the practice of favoritism. These findings are crucial in formulating transparent human resource processes which are essential in handling the menace of favoritism in the industry. As well-being and psychological capital are linked to employee morale, and in turn workplace climate, the findings of the present study will establish the impact of favoritism on the development of a sustainable workforce. As a result, the findings will lend practical recommendations to practitioners and help project policy documents that can be implemented as a deterrent for culprits of such practices.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been used in the literature to provide support for the investigation of favoritism and its impacts. For instance, [5] used the job demand resource framework to underpin their study which considers favoritism as a form of supervisor incivility and job stressor. Reference [4] relied on workplace spirituality through its dimensions of meaningfulness, transcendence, mindfulness, and compassion as the foundation for uncovering employees' coping mechanisms. Reference [6] used social identity theory to explain how favoritism supports social classification and forces employees to be in in-group or out-group categories based on their position concerning the benefits of favoritism. Reference [9] argued that leader-member exchange (LMX) better explains organizational relationships and the associated benefits. Reference [6] deployed both relative deprivation and LMX theories to explain the mechanism through which favoritism results in psychological contract violation.

Given the focus of the current study, this research will adopt [6]'s conceptualization and use both relative deprivation theory and LMX to explain the linkage between favoritism and employee well-being. As emphasized in the literature, favoritism drives stratification which in turn leaves the non-beneficiaries with a sense of deprivation [11]. Such feelings of being outcast or out of place can threaten the psychological capital of the employees. Additionally, LMX posits that employee classifications are based on distinct relationships and further suggests that leaders possess the ability to improve distinct relationships within various groups [12]. Thus, through the application of LMX to workplace favoritism, we argue that the knowledge of the workplace social ecology will be advanced and better insight can be garnered in the research domain. As a result, both relative deprivation theory and LMX are used as the underpinning theoretical framework for the proposed project.

### 2.2. Hypothesis Development

The construct of favoritism has been defined by several authors in different research contexts, however, there has been a consensus on its definition. The underlining definition is that favoritism is extending favors based on friendship, relations, or personal associations [13]. It is considered to be prejudiced by cultural, environmental, and political issues [14]. When favoritism is pervasive in the organization, it is exceedingly difficult to eradicate; it also instigates much negative employee behavior. While several studies (e.g., [8,13]) have considered favoritism as a dimension of organizational politics, in our study, we opine that favoritism is an antecedent of organizational politics. Organizational

politics, according to [14] is “self-interest behavior, selfishness, advantages at the expense of other employees’ interests, and also organizational interests” (p. 19329). According to [15]’s derivative equity theory, employees may be in political behaviors (devastating behaviors) once disparity and unfairness are perceived by the out-group employees. Reference [16] argued that favoritism is one of the most important drivers of strain, incongruity, and stress in the workplace, which has been found to increase turnover or intention. It is considered to also be an antecedent of power fights and organizational politics. When employees perceive that coworkers who do not necessarily possess the required skills, are favored in terms of position, duties, promotions, or pay, they begin to engage in self-interest behaviors to be in the same ‘favor space’ with their superiors. This is detrimental to the organization’s performance [17]. This outcome has also been confirmed by [7], who found that favoritism can lead to job stress, and consequently, turnover intentions or cause them to be involved in political conduct so as to belong to the management’s in-group. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Favoritism is positively related to organizational politics.*

Favoritism has been found to reduce employees’ psychological and mental energy [5]. The energetic process provides a cognitive-emotional framework for analyzing political behavior and relates job demands with poor results through favoritism. Favoritism in the workplace causes an unfavorable, negative, and evolving pattern of an individual’s organizational conduct that is recognized as a predictor of the undesired employee attitude. This indicates that favoritism affects employees’ psychological capital. According to [18], favoritism is defined as “a positive and changing state of individual’s organization behavior composition, and it is acknowledged as an indicator of desired employee attitude” (p. 15) and it is considered to have four dimensions: optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and hope [19]. When there is favoritism in the organization, employees tend to lose hope in organizational transparency, fairness, as well as their social identity (social ties) with the favored in-group members. Furthermore, employees have pessimistic perceptions of how their capacity can help benefit the workgroup in achieving organizational success when there is favoritism in the workplace. Reference [20] defines employee resilience as “the capacity of employees to utilize resources to continually adapt and flourish at work, even when faced with challenging circumstances” (p. 460). Therefore, when special privileges are given to individuals because of their physical characteristics or social ties with those authorities, it decreases employees’ capacity to use resources and adapt or flourish at work when faced with difficult challenges because there is no motivation to do that. Similarly, they begin to lose their personal belief in their capacity to perform assigned tasks successfully, therefore, their self-efficacy reduces. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 2.** *Favoritism is negatively associated with psychological capital.*

Previous studies have established a relationship between the effects of identity on knowledge hiding (e.g., [21]). For instance, the authors proposed that employees who are in the in-group are less likely to withhold knowledge from individuals within the group. This inclination applies to individuals in the in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice. According to [22], in the case where in-group favoritism is practiced in an organization, any member of the group who does not participate in the favoritism will receive cold responses from in-group members, and could face ostracism, thereby hiding information from such individuals. Employees also try to act as modestly as possible and are hesitant to express their radical ideas and/or knowledge when they drastically diverge from those of their coworkers and managers within the in-group [23]. To foster in-group harmony and prevent any potential conflict, they will align or alter their ideas with those of the supervisor and their colleagues. In-group favoritism members will engage in knowledge hiding toward the out-group individuals, as they will not want to share vital information with them so they can remain competitive and more empowered than their counterparts [24].

Being an outsider can make minority coworkers more unwilling to cooperate with the in-group, which reduces knowledge sharing and could lead to knowledge hiding [25]. Additionally, individuals in the out-group may engage in knowledge hiding toward employees with the same prejudices and/or those in the in-group. The reason for knowledge hiding with employees in the same discrimination could be to have a higher knowledge base to increase their productivity, thereby making them be noticed by their managers and included in the in-group. Considering that the grapevine channel is beneficial to organization performance [26], out-group members will withhold critical information or ideas from their peers who are considered to be in the in-group. To summarize, this means that when there is favoritism, there could be knowledge hiding within the in-group members, within the out-group members, or among the intra-group. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 3.** *There is a positive relationship between favoritism and knowledge hiding.*

According to [27], subjective well-being (SWB) is a dynamic and multi-dimensional construct that includes affective and cognitive dimensions. Affective SWB is the recurrence of both negative and positive affective states, such as general mood states and specific emotions. Cognitive SWB, on the other hand, is how individuals holistically evaluate their specific life (i.e., job satisfaction) and general life (i.e., life satisfaction). Several authors (e.g., [28]) have concluded that both affective and cognitive SWB are related but are distinct functionally and conceptually. Several factors have been found to affect SWB. Reference [29] found seven determinants of SWB, these include infrastructure geography, culture and religion, personality, functioning and health, socioeconomic status, basic demographics, and social support. When there is favoritism in the workplace, the affective well-being of the out-group members is affected as they will consistently be in a negative emotive state. Their cognitive well-being is affected in that they do not experience job satisfaction, which has been confirmed in several studies (e.g., [7]). Furthermore, stress experienced because of favoritism will lead to less life satisfaction, as confirmed in [30]'s study that favoritism is a predictor of low levels of overall work-life satisfaction. More importantly, without satisfaction with the job, the employees cannot grow into a sustainable workforce. Therefore, favoritism in the workplace can affect both employees' affective and subjective well-being. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 4.** *There is a negative relationship between favoritism and subjective well-being.*

Psychological capital is an important state of development as it affects human behavior. Even though the nexus between psychological capital and organizational politics has not been established, it is universally believed that the political workplace environment has a deleterious impact on the satisfaction of psychological needs and behavior [31]. When the workplace is politically inclined, employees who are competing for a position often engage in aggressive behavior to deplete the resources of their competitors. As a result, people constantly exaggerate their accomplishments and underestimate those of others [32]. People lose their sense of competency in an atmosphere where others constantly devalue their accomplishments, making it impossible for anybody to succeed equitably. Additionally, in a political climate, people are aware that decisions are made in favor of a manager's interests rather than those of the organization. Also, employees become uncertain and pessimistic about the future and value of the organization [33].

Furthermore, interpersonal conflict level increases in the workplace political environment and this has been found to cause stress and burnout, affecting the psychological capital of the employees [33]. This is because the political workplace setting makes the performance criteria or reward systems unpredictable. Employees are more prone to advance their interests in these circumstances, and these actions foster uncooperative and competitive settings, which exacerbate interpersonal conflict. Consequently, organizational politics will encourage self-serving actions, while eliciting aggressiveness and conflicts [34]. In this environment, there will be a lack of co-worker support, more judgmental responses,

and a low level of satisfaction and relatedness. Finally, with the negativity associated with organizational politics, the mental health of the employees will be affected thereby influencing how optimistic and hopeful they are as well as their capacity to recover or stay well in the face of such stress or belief in their capacity. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 5.** *There is a negative relationship between organizational politics and psychological capital.*

Although there has been much empirical research on the impact of organizational politics on employees' work behaviors and ensuing outcomes, the impact of organizational politics on the SWB of employees is understated. Drawing on several theories, such as the Person-Environment Fit (P-E fit) theory and affective event theory, specific work events, and the overall work environment have an impact on employees' well-being and health, which can affect work behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, according to [35], recent organizational politics research, views of organizational politics are affect-laden experiences that would elicit strong emotional reactions. Therefore, the effects of organizational politics on employees' wellness and well-being warrant additional study. According to [36], organizational politics are unavoidable in the workplace and sadly it has a damaging effect on other employees and the organization because organizational politics' unfavorable effects eventually have an adverse effect on achieving the organization's goals. Employee stress at work is a result of perceived organizational politics, which eventually causes high turnover rates as workers quit their jobs in pursuit of greener workplace pastures. Therefore, establishing a pleasant work environment is crucial for organizations. Additionally, when firms strive to achieve overall performance goals while operating in a highly political organizational environment, it puts a tremendous amount of stress on the lives of the individuals who work there. Such circumstances generate unfavorable emotions such as stress and anxiety, which lowers well-being levels. According to [37], there are reports that managers and employees have committed suicide because of the extremely high-stress level they face at work. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 6.** *There is a negative relationship between organizational politics and subjective well-being.*

A systematic literature review carried out by [38] found the relationship between organizational politics and counterproductive work behaviors to be positive. This indicates that employees who experience a political environment in the workplace may react by engaging in withdrawal behaviors such as taking extended breaks, arriving late, etc. But nothing is understood about the nexus between organizational politics and what [39] refers to as "counterproductive knowledge behavior". We suggest that employees are more prone to participate in knowledge-hiding practices in a highly political firm for three reasons. Firstly, employees hide knowledge as a form of defense. According to [40], studies have shown that when employees are in a political work environment, they become more defensive. The reason for this is that, according to [41], employees may be concerned that sharing knowledge even with good intentions could lead to unintended issues in a political environment. Secondly, employees hide knowledge to achieve political advantage because knowledge is viewed as a power source in a knowledge-based organization [42]. Lastly, in an overtly political atmosphere, employees might hide information to further their interests [43]. In a political work environment, employees attempt to guard against being exploited by individuals who they perceive to be untrustworthy. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 7.** *There is a positive relationship between organizational politics and knowledge hiding behavior.*

The relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables, as well as mediating variable to independent variables is more than a simple effect. Having established in the above argument that there is a relationship between favoritism and orga-

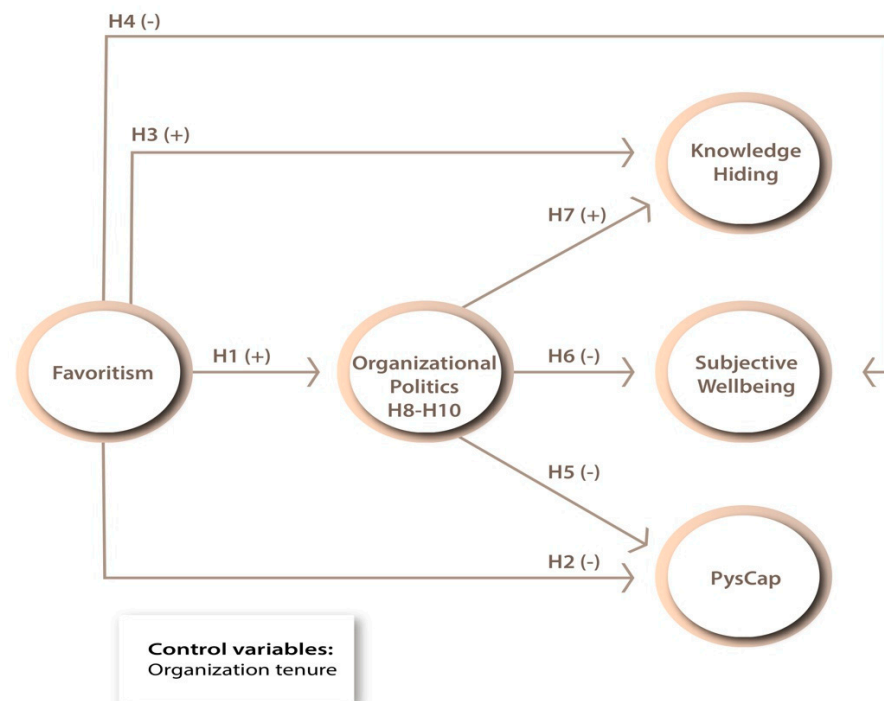
nizational politics (H1) with psychological capital (H2), knowledge hiding (H3), subjective well-being (H4) and organizational politics with psychological capital (H5), subjective well-being (H6), and knowledge hiding (H7), therefore, we consider these relationships to be indirect. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 8.** *Organizational politics mediates the relationship between positive favoritism and knowledge hiding.*

**Hypothesis 9.** *Organizational politics mediates the relationship between negative favoritism and subjective well-being.*

**Hypothesis 10.** *Organizational politics mediates the relationship between negative favoritism and psychological capital.*

Figure 1 presents all hypothesized relationships.



**Figure 1.** Proposed research model and hypotheses.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample and Procedure

Nigeria has been gaining traction in recent hospitality studies such as [44–46], highlighting the interest of tourism stakeholders in the country to see the tourism and hospitality industry of the nation develop and flourish. As such, the current study attempts to follow extant literature in the field to aid the formulation of a policy roadmap that will help in the development process. The present study, with the aid of the convenience sampling technique, employed a survey-based approach for the solicitation of data from hospitality employees. Specifically, the researchers assigned field investigators to circulate the surveys to hotel employees in Nigeria. A similar approach has been used in recent extant hospitality studies [47,48].

The survey was designed to measure favoritism, organizational politics, knowledge hiding behavior, psychological capital, and subjective well-being. Prior to the actual distribution of the surveys, we performed a pilot study using 45 hotel employees to gauge the understanding of the measures, the contextual correctness of word adaptations, and

other important queries that may compound the result of the study. None of the subjects of the pilot study reported any ambiguity in the wording or comprehension difficulties, as such, the survey was deemed appropriate for the measurement of the research objectives.

After the pilot study, the main data collection followed. Six hundred and twenty surveys were distributed across several hotels. The field investigators responsible for the survey distribution were also tasked with explaining the purpose of the study and emphasizing the voluntary participation rights of the participants. The survey also included an introductory message that informs the participant of the right to discontinue at any given time. All the aforementioned processes were in place to minimize the problem method bias and also to improve the engagement of the participants with the surveys.

The data collection process spanned four months, after which five hundred and fifty-two filled surveys were returned. Due to missing data and unresponsive participants, thirty-five observations were discarded, and a final five hundred and eighteen useable observations were included in the study. Hence, we achieved a response rate of 83.5%. The sample of 518 useable observations is suitable for the estimation of the proposed structural model based on the use of Daniel Soper's priori sample size calculator for determination of the sample size for SEM, which was 150 ("anticipated effect size" = 0.3; "desired statistical power level" = 0.8; "number of latent variables" = 5 (favoritism, organizational politics, knowledge hiding, subjective well-being, and psychological capital); "number of observed variables" = 42 (favoritism 14 items, organizational politics 12 items, knowledge hiding 3 items, subjective well-being 5 items, and psychological capital 8 items); and "probability level" = 0.05). This method for sample size determination is widely used in tourism and hospitality studies (see: [49,50]).

### 3.2. Instrumentation

For the measurement of construct in the current study, we adapted a scale from previous studies. Specifically, a 14-item scale was used to measure favoritism. This scale was adapted from [5]. A sample item was "Employees at this hotel always feel that they need a relative in a high-level position". The organizational politics scale included 12 items which were adapted from [51]. A sample item was "In this hotel, it is safer to agree with management than to say what you think is right". This scale was anchored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). We measured reciprocal knowledge hiding using a three-item scale adapted from [39]. A sample item was "I often communicate only part of the whole story to my colleagues". Scale anchors ranged from one (never) to five (always). Psychological capital was measured with an eight-item scale by [52]. The scale measured employees' resilience, efficacy, hope, and optimism. A sample item was "I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job". The scale was anchored on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). The subjective well-being scale was adapted from [53]. The scale included five items anchored on a seven-point Likert scale. A sample item was "If I could live again, I wouldn't change anything".

### 3.3. Analysis Strategy

Data preparation, cleaning, and curation as well as generation of participants' profiles were performed in SPSS 25, while the estimation of structural models was performed with AMOS 26. A test of normality of the data was performed in SPSS as well.

## 4. Results

Following [54]'s recommendation, the result of skewness and Kurtosis showed normality as the results were below the absolute value of three. In addition to skewness and Kurtosis, we also performed Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro Wilks' test of normality, the result indicated that the null-hypothesis of non-normality should be rejected. Frequency analysis was employed to highlight the participant profile, as presented in Table 1.



**Table 1.** Participant profile.

	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	268	51.7
Female	250	48.3
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18–27	149	28.8
28–37	209	40.3
38–47	85	16.4
48–57	51	9.8
58 or above	24	4.6
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary	60	11.6
Secondary	77	14.9
Vocational	114	22.0
Bachelors	233	45.0
Masters/PhD	34	6.6
<b>Organizational tenure (years)</b>		
Under 1	135	26.1
1–5	176	34.0
6–10	111	21.4
11–15	53	10.2
16–20	27	5.2
20 or more	16	3.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single/divorced	231	44.6
Married	287	55.4
<b>Income (NGN)</b>		
Under 50,000	139	26.8
50,001–100,000	156	30.1
100,001–150,000	128	24.7
150,001 or more	95	18.3

Income is measured in Naira.

#### 4.1. Measurement Model Testing

The covariance matrix was tapped in AMOS 26. The result of confirmatory factor analysis supported the five-factor model as the standardized loadings ( $\Phi$ ) for each item loaded perfectly to its underlying construct. As presented in Table 2, the  $\Phi$  and corresponding t-values indicated that the items significantly loaded onto their respective constructs.

The average variance extracted (AVE) for favoritism was 0.862, for organizational politics was 0.691, for reciprocal knowledge hiding was 0.90, for psychological capital was 0.749, and for subjective well-being was 0.48. These results indicated that our study satisfied the universal AVE test threshold of 0.5 except for subjective well-being. However, this finding does not raise any concerns as the composite reliability score for all the constructs exceeds 0.7. Further, the lower and upper confidence intervals for both the AVE and CR showed that they were significant for all constructs (see Table 2). Hence, convergent validity is attained [55,56].

**Table 2.** Validity analysis and confidence intervals.

Variables	Standardized Loadings	t-Values	AVE	Lower 95% AVE	Upper 95% AVE	CR	Lower 95% CR	Upper 95% CR
<b>Favoritism</b>			<b>0.862</b>	<b>0.804</b>	<b>0.912</b>	<b>0.989</b>	<b>0.983</b>	<b>0.993</b>
FAV1	0.994 ***	185.31						
FAV2	0.946 ***	65.65						
FAV3	0.998	Constrained						
FAV4	0.976 ***	98.82						
FAV5	0.983 ***	115.81						
FAV6	0.972 ***	92.05						
FAV7	0.991 ***	154.19						
FAV8	0.887 ***	43.44						
FAV9	0.778 ***	28.06						
FAV10	0.765 ***	26.93						
FAV11	0.940 ***	61.54						
FAV12	0.914 ***	50.72						
FAV13	0.973 ***	93.32						
FAV14	0.838 ***	34.77						
<b>Organizational Politics</b>			<b>0.691</b>	<b>0.629</b>	<b>0.745</b>	<b>0.964</b>	<b>0.953</b>	<b>0.972</b>
OrgP1	0.837 ***	26.94						
OrgP2	0.738 ***	21.36						
OrgP3	0.849 ***	27.77						
OrgP4	0.847 ***	27.65						
OrgP5	0.852 ***	27.97						
OrgP6	0.884 ***	30.40						
OrgP7	0.873 ***	29.58						
OrgP8	0.894 ***	31.22						
OrgP9	0.891 ***	30.98						
OrgP10	0.892	Constrained						
OrgP11	0.711 ***	20.09						
OrgP12	0.665 ***	18.14						
<b>Reciprocal Knowledge Hiding</b>			<b>0.909</b>	<b>0.871</b>	<b>0.942</b>	<b>0.968</b>	<b>0.953</b>	<b>0.980</b>
RKH1	0.982	Constrained						
RKH2	0.950 ***	55.49						
RKH3	0.927 ***	48.23						
<b>Employee's subjective well-being</b>			<b>0.480</b>	<b>0.336</b>	<b>0.764</b>	<b>0.821</b>	<b>0.714</b>	<b>0.908</b>
SWB1	0.604 ***	12.37						
SWB2	0.739	Constrained						
SWB3	0.732 ***	14.75						
SWB4	0.638 ***	13.04						
SWB5	0.740 ***	14.87						
<b>Employee's Psychological capital</b>			<b>0.749</b>			<b>0.960</b>		
PysCap1	0.896 ***	32.62						
PysCap2	0.908	Constrained						
PysCap3	0.881 ***	31.24						
PysCap4	0.855 ***	29.08						
PysCap5	0.815 ***	26.19						
PysCap6	0.883 ***	31.42						
PysCap7	0.884 ***	31.56						
PysCap8	0.796 ***	24.98						

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

In Table 3, we present the result of the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), square roots of AVE, and the bivariate correlation of constructs. The HTMT ratios were below 0.8 [56,57], while the square of correlation of constructs was less than the AVEs. Thus, discriminant validity was attained [54]. Furthermore, the data fitted the five-factor model excellently as demonstrated in the model fit statistics [58,59] (see Table 4).

**Table 3.** HTMT ratio, square root of AVE, and bivariate correlations.

	Mean	SD	FAV	OrgP	PysCap	SWB	RKH
<b>FAV</b>	3.25	1.19	<b>0.929</b>	(0.101)	(0.111)	(0.011)	(0.155)
<b>OrgP</b>	3.91	1.48	0.140 **	<b>0.831</b>	(0.201)	(0.100)	(0.031)
<b>PysCap</b>	3.68	1.34	−0.141 **	−0.153 ***	<b>0.865</b>	(0.093)	(0.446)
<b>SWB</b>	1.49	0.47	−0.012	−0.090 †	0.095 †	<b>0.693</b>	(0.089)
<b>RKH</b>	2.87	1.36	0.186 ***	0.041	0.442 ***	−0.019	<b>0.953</b>

HTMT ratio is reported above the diagonal in ( ), the square root of AVEs are reported in bold along the diagonal, and Pearson's bivariate correlation is reported below the diagonal. FAV—favoritism, OrgP—organizational politics, PysCap—psychological capital, SWB—employee's subjective well-being, and RKH—reciprocal knowledge hiding. †  $p < 0.100$ , \*\*  $p < 0.010$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 4.** Model fit measures.

Measurement Model	Thresholds	Interpretation	Constrained Single-Factor Model	Interpretation
$\chi^2 = 2413.51$ , df = 807			$\chi^2 = 14,929.66$ , df = 817	
$\chi^2/df = 2.99$	Between 1 and 3 [1]	Excellent	$\chi^2/df = 18.27$	Terrible
CFI = 0.948	<0.95 ([60])	Acceptable	CFI = 0.545	Terrible
TLI = 0.945	1 = maximum fit [3]	Acceptable	TLI = 0.520	Terrible
NFI = 0.924	1 = maximum fit [3]	Acceptable	NFI = 0.531	Terrible
IFI = 0.948	1 = maximum fit [3]	Acceptable	IFI = 0.545	Terrible
RMSEA = 0.062	>0.06 <0.08 ([61])	Acceptable	RMSEA = 0.183	Terrible
SRMR = 0.032	<0.08 ([62])	Excellent	SRMR = 0.253	Terrible

#### 4.2. Result of Hypothesized Linkages

As depicted in Table 4, the proposed model fitted the data better than the constrained single-factor model. The model fit statistics for the proposed model were within recommended thresholds while this was not the case. The results in Figure 2 and Table 5 confirmed that favoritism positively and significantly fosters organizational politics ( $r = 0.140$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) ( $\beta = 0.168$ , LLCI = 0.085, ULCI = 0.254). Thus Hypothesis 1 was supported. Likewise, the path estimates linking favoritism to reciprocal knowledge hiding behavior indicated a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.214$ , LLCI = 0.136, ULCI = 0.301). As expected, a strong negative and significant path estimate was obtained for the linkage between favoritism and psychological capital ( $\beta = -0.136$ , LLCI =  $-0.225$ , ULCI =  $-0.033$ ). Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also empirically supported.

However, Hypothesis 4, which posits that favoritism will impact employees' subjective well-being, did not receive empirical support. As reported, favoritism did not explain employee's subjective well-being ( $r = -0.012$ , ns) ( $\beta = -0.043$ , LLCI =  $-0.031$ , ULCI = 0.024). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 investigated the impact of organizational politics on knowledge hiding, subjective well-being, and psychological capital, respectively. The path estimates lend support to the linkages between organizational politics and subjective well-being as well as psychological capital, but not with knowledge hiding. In other words, Hypothesis 5 with path estimates ( $\beta = 0.061$ , LLCI =  $-0.031$ , ULCI = 0.123) was rejected, while Hypothesis 6 with path estimate ( $\beta = -0.027$ , LLCI =  $-0.044$ , ULCI =  $-0.006$ ) was supported and Hypothesis 7 with path estimate ( $\beta = -0.125$ , LLCI =  $-0.193$ , ULCI =  $-0.055$ ) was also supported.

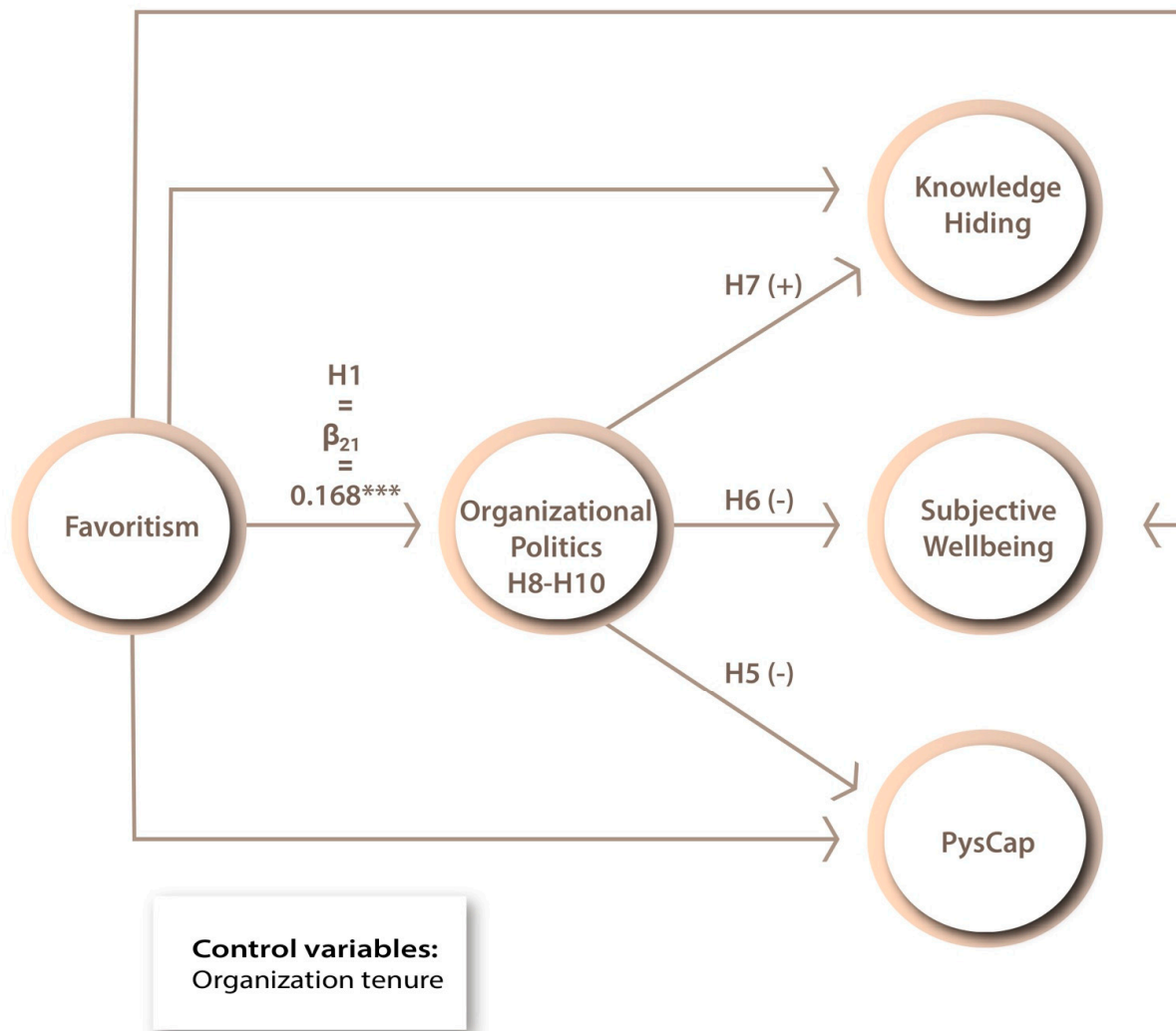


Figure 2. Research model with the result. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

With respect to organizational politics as a mediator, the Sobel test findings indicated that the indirect effect of favoritism ( $0.168 \times -0.125 = -0.02$ ) on psychological capital through organizational politics was significant and negative ( $z = -2.07$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 8 was supported. The indirect impact of favoritism ( $0.168 \times -0.027 = -0.004$ ) on subjective well-being via organizational politics was also significant and negative ( $z = -1.66$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 9 was supported. The finding regarding the indirect influence of favoritism ( $0.168 \times 0.061 = 0.01$ ) on reciprocal knowledge hiding via organizational politics was significant and positive ( $z = 2.68$ ), supporting Hypothesis 10.

Table 5. Path estimates and confidence intervals.

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	Lower BaCI	Upper BaCI	Decision
1	Favoritism → Organizational politics	0.168	0.085	0.254	Supported
2	Favoritism → Psychological capital	-0.136	-0.225	-0.033	Supported
3	Favoritism → Reciprocal knowledge hiding	0.214	0.136	0.301	Supported
4	Favoritism → Employee’s subjective well-being	-0.043	-0.031	0.024	Unsupported
5	Organizational politics → Knowledge hiding	0.061	-0.031	0.123	Unsupported
6	Organizational politics → Subjective well-being	-0.027	-0.044	-0.006	Supported
7	Organizational politics → Psychological capital	-0.125	-0.193	-0.055	Supported

## 5. Discussion

The current research was motivated by the need to develop and validate an empirical research model of whether favoritism and organizational politics influenced employees' knowledge hiding behavior, subjective well-being, and psychological capital. We also estimated the mediated relationships of favoritism and the outcome variables via organizational politics. With this model, our study, by extension, validated the impact of favoritism on the development of a sustainable workforce in the African tourism context with the observed variables as favoritism has been linked with counterproductive work practices and negative employee outcomes. Unlike the extant literature, data used for the estimation of the research model were solicited from hotel employees in Nigeria. The findings provided several meaningful observations.

Firstly, our results suggest that the perception of the presence of favoritism and nepotism in the investigated hospitality organizations leads to the perception of organizational politics. It appears as though employees who feel less favored associate managers' behavior with group privileges and political motivations. As a result, these employees may have a sense of lack of belongingness or identification with the organization. These negative feelings and experiences possess the potential to create a negative workplace environment—one that hampers employee morale and satisfaction—thus, defeating the very goal of sustainability in the workplace. This finding is consistent with the relative deprivation theory and the findings of [6] on the negative impact of favoritism in a hospitality organization.

Secondly, the findings suggest that favoritism fosters knowledge-hiding behaviors and hampers employees' psychological capital. Consistent with the detrimental impact of favoritism on employees' well-being and organizational performance, the perception of favoritism or the presence of it leads the employee to hide valuable knowledge that may be critical to organizational performance [5,60]. Especially in the hospitality industry where human interactions and involvement are essential elements of the services, feelings of unwantedness emanating from the perception of favoritism may be too detrimental to the goal and vision of the organization. This finding is consistent with the LMX theory as the perception of leadership's behavior has a great effect on employees' behavior. However, our findings do not provide empirical validation for the negative impact of favoritism on subjective well-being. This finding, though contrary to expectation, was not surprising considering the context of the study. Specifically, the ever-increasing unemployment index and the deteriorating economic conditions of the country may be a salient factor in explaining the somewhat surprising findings as a feeling of ill-treatment may be considered a lesser evil than being unemployed.

Thirdly, organizational politics was found to negatively influence employees' subjective well-being and psychological capital, however, the results do not give credence to the relationship between organizational politics and knowledge hiding behavior. In other words, when employees have the perception that decision-making in the organization is distorted by dysfunctional political games, fostering favoritism over merit, it undermines their work motivations and by extension their hope, resilience, and more importantly, their well-being.

Furthermore, our study lends credence to the indirect effect of favoritism on the outcome variables of knowledge hiding behavior, subjective well-being, and psychological capital via organizational politics.

### Theoretical Implications

The current study contributed to relevant extant studies by assessing the detrimental impacts of favoritism and organizational politics simultaneously on knowledge hiding behavior, subjective well-being, and psychological capital. While similar studies evaluating the impact of favoritism abound in literature (e.g., [5,61], our paper examined the construct in relation to employees' ill-health and coping abilities in the form of resilience and hope as measures of psychological capital. Unlike the scores of studies, this study focused on

the mechanism through which employees perceive favoritism and the resulting impact on their well-being and work motivations.

Furthermore, the study presents that favoritism does not impact subjective well-being and organizational politics do not result in hiding behavior, seemingly suggesting that greater attention is focused on job security than on workplace atmosphere for the context of the study. This surprising result is not untoward in such a context characterized by a high unemployment rate and poor economic conditions [62,63].

### *5.1. Practical Implications*

Several meaningful contributions can be drawn from the findings of this study for managers and other practitioners in the industry. First, relative deprivation activates feelings of deprivation in comparison to experiences of others within their workspace. As such, managers must establish and maintain a work environment that operates on the principles of hard work and merit-based rewarding. More importantly, given that favoritism can easily heighten the relative deprivation perception of the employees, managers must establish functional LMX relationships that will foster mutual respect and benefits for all employees to mitigate such feelings of deprivation.

Second, perception of organizational politics fosters feelings of deprivation and diminishes employees' well-being and psychological capital. As the well-being of employees is paramount to their performance and psychological capital for their future outlook, managers need to avoid the polarization of the workplace. Projecting a safe and open workplace that incorporates the tenets of inclusivity will aid the subjective well-being of the employees and help to bolster their psychological capital.

Thirdly, it is a known fact that both favoritism and perception of organizational politics negatively impact employee outcomes. As such, organizations showing these attributes simultaneously will overwhelmingly burden their employees with ill health and loss of motivation for future work.

### *5.2. Future Recommendation*

It is recommended that future studies consider cultural favoritism in their studies, as well as sociocultural factors such as religion and sexuality as control variables. Due to differences in culture, a comparative study between this current context, Western and non-Western contexts to provide more contextual insights. Furthermore, the fact that our study concentrated on one operating sector of tourism, the hotel industry, limits the generalizability of its findings. To provide deeper insights, the study's model should be tested in other tourism operating sectors or mixed industries.

## **6. Conclusions**

Our paper develops and empirically examines a parsimonious model of the interrelationships of favoritism, organizational politics, psychological capital, knowledge hiding, and subjective well-being, underpinned by social identity, LMX, relative deprivation, derivative equity, P-E fit, and affective event theories. These relationships were evaluated with data obtained from hotel employees in Nigeria. Concerns have been raised in the academic literature regarding the detrimental effects of favoritism on the outcomes and performance of the hospitality industry. Although the effects of employees' behavior have been adequately documented in the literature, this attention to understanding the causes of managers who engage in favoritism is absent. The current endeavor identified the drivers of managers' use of favoritism. In other words, the paper investigated the occurrence of favoritism and its consequences. Additionally, the current project responded to the call of [6] for the examination of the mechanisms through which favoritism influences employees in a cross-national research framework by employing the African tourism region.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, T.T.L. and K.K.E.; methodology, K.K.E.; formal analysis, T.T.L., E.C. and K.K.E.; investigation, T.T.L., E.C. and K.K.E.; resources, T.T.L., E.C. and K.K.E.; data curation, E.C. writing—original draft preparation, E.C.; writing—review and editing, T.T.L., E.C. and K.K.E. 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 presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgments:** Taiwo Temitope Lasisi gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Faculty of Informatics and Management of the University of Hradec Králové (FIM UHK) within the framework of the Specific Research Project “Information and knowledge management and cognitive science in tourism”. The authors wish to express their thanks to Zuzana Kroulíková, a FIM UHK student, who assisted with the graphical elements of this study.

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

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