Nepotistic Practices in the Private Sector

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Abstract: **There is a prevalence of nepotism in all organizations. Numerous studies have attempted to examine nepotism, but very few have focused on the Philippine context. Through the perspectives of private-sector employees, this qualitative study explored workplace nepotism. Literature and participants' data indicate that nepotism has significant negative effects on an organization. Low morale promotes workplace discontent, stress, and demotivation. Inefficiency costs the company money. Employees and management may experience communication and leadership difficulties due to nepotism. Although not illegal, it can cost a business money if it leads to discrimination and an unpleasant workplace. It is unethical because it favors relatives or close acquaintances. It disregards merit, competency, and skill. In private companies, nepotism maintains the business in the family, but it must be used with prudence. As it has negative implications, it is not a smart strategy for the survival, development, or expansion of a business. The family should be approached with discretion.**

Keywords: **Company policy, Family-owned business, Nepotistic practices, Preferential treatment, Unethical Practice**

I. INTRODUCTION

A privately-owned organization is a business affiliation in which essential relationship is influenced by members of family related by blood or marriage or selection who has both the capacity to affect the vision of the company and the energy to utilize this capacity to look for after specific goals.

Business owned by family is the foremost set up and most fundamental show of budgetary affiliation. By distant, most of organization all through the world from shops to multinational organization recorded affiliation with a colossal number of laborers can be considered as companies run by families.

Nepotism is a form of preferential treatment in which family members or friends are accepted or hired to the company or business for reasons unrelated to their experiences, knowledge, or skills. As Bellow (2005), mentioned, there is bad and good nepotism. Hiring one's relatives is considered unethical in an organization as it interferes with someone's right to fair treatment. It tends to overlook an employee's merit, skill, and capability, therefore it's not a suitable strategy for any organizational survival, development, and growth, and so it is a bad nepotism. Good nepotism is hiring a relative that is qualified for the job. Many of them are qualified for their role, but perhaps not the best qualified. Yet, organizations let it slide, because people

defined nepotism not as hiring a relative, but as hiring an Incompetent relative.

The practice of preferring relatives and friends for positions of power in the workplace prioritizes personal commitments and duties to family and friends over other considerations that may conflict with industrial demands. Personal loyalty and commitments to kin and friends are prioritized over other considerations that may conflict with the demands of the industry in the practice of favoring relatives and friends for positions of influence in employment.

According to the Britannica, nepotism is the "unfair practice by a powerful person of giving jobs and other favors to relatives" in the different aspects of human activities that revolve around socio-political factors and is a common occurrence in various fields such as politics and business. It refers to the interaction of organizational dynamics that leads to someone being appointed to a job based mostly on their relatedness (i.e., bloodline) (Arash and Tumer, 2008; Bute, 2011). As a result, it is a global problem that must be addressed in today's society.

Nepotism is not illegal but few laws are regulating the level of government and public offices like Section 125, Rule XII (Prohibitions) of the 2017 Omnibus Rules on Appointment and other Human Resource Actions of the Civil Service Commission (Civil Service Commission, 2017). As a result, the researchers devised the research question to see if private companies had anti-nepotism measures in place to avoid hiring relatives who are unqualified for the position.

Hiring Relatives and the Workplace Atmosphere

Hiring relatives is easy and can lead to greater trust in the relations getting along and sharing a common purpose. But, under such conditions, appointments based on competence and knowledge-accumulation seem impossible, according to the study by Ombanda, (2018). Also, one of the reasons is that it creates low morale in the employees leaving the feeling of dissatisfaction, stress, and motivation to be productive in the workplace, as has shown in the studies by Muller, (2016). When a superior favor one over the other, it can create a feeling of dissatisfaction, not being appreciated. Rampant nepotism can easily drive away hardworking employees, according to Briggs, (2013). According to Baser (2013) and Van Scheers & Botha (2014), job satisfaction is defined as the level of contentment that employees feel about

their job overall and specific aspects of the job. According to Muller (2016), if leadership positions are filled by family and friends, there is little incentive for management to urge people to pursue leadership positions. Rampant nepotism can drive away hardworking employees who feel they were not valued or were not properly recognized; they will look for employment elsewhere. Creating and maintaining work satisfaction and engagement with employees is a continuing problem for firms, according to Jones (2018). Within the study of Carnahan, (2013), the researcher has cited Psychologist William Kahn's concept of employee engagement in 1990 when he first identified it. Employee engagement, according to Kahn, is "harnessing of organization members' identities to their work responsibilities; in engagement, employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while performing their roles". Although a consensus has not been reached on one definition, most definitions include employee satisfaction, work involvement, and enthusiasm for work. According to Feleke, (2020), Employee involvement is characterized by enthusiasm, devotion, and absorption. The display of high levels of energy, and thus the willing commitment of time and energy to the work, is referred to as vigor. The term "extension" refers to a person's work title, position, or pride (Cahill, McNamara, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Valcour, 2015). The difficulty in disengaging from work is known as absorption (Gilkes, 2019).

Employee Retention

In the study conducted by Farahmand (2013), he indicated that most people feel nepotism as discriminatory actions in the workplace that have a detrimental influence on organizational efficiency and may lead to high employee turnover. According to Hom et al., (2017), organizations continue to struggle with employee retention. In the study conducted by Abbas et al., (2021), they cited a previous study conducted by Kerse & Babadag (2018), which they investigated the impact of nepotism/favoritism on hotel personnel' turnover intention. Kerse and Babadag (2018), found that nepotism to have a positive result on turnover intentions. An employee who is facing nepotism may have a negative attitude towards the organization's atmosphere, and this results in turnover intention. (Bourne and Aldossari,2014). Furthermore, when experienced employees discover about nepotism, they feel demotivated, perform poorly, and quit in huge numbers because these organizations have extraordinarily high turnover rates.

Harm in Business Competency

A general disadvantage of nepotism is that it can hamper the growth or progress of an organization due to workforce incompetency, harm to leadership, and the possibility of corruption, among others (Yeung, 2019). According to Kawo, J. W. & Torun, A. (2020), nepotism is an unethical issue in an organization that has strong negative impacts over periods. In addition to that, it erodes the organizational unity and motivation of the workers, thereby causing unfairness, weak dedication to work, and inefficiency. However, Jones and Stout (2015) have stated that nepotism is not a problem if the recipients are competent and qualified people. According to Jaskiewicz et al., (2013), the appointment of relatives to advantageous positions is usually referred to as nepotism. Although nepotism may have certain benefits to an organization, it is often regarded as unfair, unethical, and unprofessional (Dariolyn & Riggio, 2014). Bute (2011) found that HRM approaches cannot perform independently in a highly nepotistic organization when nepotism is strongly felt. As a result, appointment based on ability and knowledge accumulation appears to be unachievable in such circumstances. According to Demaj (2012), offering special privileges to select persons is a very upsetting scenario for employees, and the resulting to lack of trust has a detrimental impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational trust and loyalty, and individual performance, as well as hindering the internal management system.

Conflict between Management and Employees

An organization composed primarily of people who are mostly linked to one another might permeate farther into an organization. Their issues can be a difficulty in the organization and can cause disruptions (Brookins, 2017). When a boss chooses to hire new employees in a position where they seem to be not fit or unqualified, other employees will hold negative feelings not only against the boss but also towards the new hire. Other employees may question his skills and knowledge of the job, and whether his friends or family members are qualified for the position. When employees are hired at a company because of nepotism, other employees may question whether the family member or friends have the necessary knowledge and skills for the job, according to the study by Brookins (2017). Individuals who are hired through nepotism and are sufficiently qualified excel in their positions; they have higher levels of performance, better well-being, and more autonomy and control. Individuals hired through nepotism, on the other hand, showed poor psychological well-being, a lack of autonomy and control, and poor performance (Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2018). The issue of nepotism is that they were hired not because of their knowledge and skills but because of connections, and so this perception, might affect their relationship with fellow employees.

Legal Implication

Nepotism can also cause lawsuits, though it is not illegal, if the treatment of the employees is discriminating and create a hostile environment, it can hurt the company's reputation, as shown in the studies of Safina, (2014); Fahramand, (2013); Holtom and Burch, (2016). Employees can sue companies that engage in nepotism if they have proof that the corporation is discriminating against their relatives and friends in terms of compensation, benefits, and promotions while ignoring the requirements of their other employees (Brookins, 2017). And if an employer's nepotistic practice leads to a sort of discrimination and harassment, the employees have the right

to complain and file a lawsuit. If your preferential treatment for family or friends makes other employees feel they can't receive the same favors or treatment, you could face a lawsuit for discrimination. While in government, nepotism is considered a grave corruption of authority that may cause dismissal from service.

II. IDENTIFY, RESEARCH AND COLLECT IDEA

This chapter concentrates on the discussion of the research methods and procedures adhered to by the researchers in order to answer systematically the specific problems posed for investigation. Specifically, the research method, research design, tradition of inquiry and data-generation method, sources of data, and the research instrumentation used for the accurate data analysis and interpretation were explained in this chapter.

Research Method

In the qualitative research method known as narrative enquiry, the stories themselves serve as the primary source of data for analysis (Butina, 2015). For the purposes of this research, the narrative method involves conducting an interview based directly on the experiences of the participants.

Research Design

This study used exploratory research study using narrative inquiry. as it aims to explore and conceptualize human experience, represented in textured form. It aimed for an in-depth exploration of the meanings people assigned to their experiences, it worked with small group of participants to obtain rich and free-paying discourse. The emphasis is on storied experience.

Tradition Of Inquiry and Data – Generation Method

This study used the purposive sampling method on our participants. They are chosen as they can provide information on the subject matter as people who personally experienced nepotism in the workplace.

Sources Of Data

As Batuna (2015) pointed out, narratives consist of a collection of stories contributed by individuals or small groups. As the researchers wanted to tell all sides of story in the nepotism culture in the organization, the researchers invited participants who were victim of nepotistic practices, we also have a beneficiary of nepotism, and for management and policy perspective, we have the participant from Human Resources Department and the Administration.

The researchers chose the participants as they have personal knowledge and experience of nepotism in the workplace and participants are willing to tell their side of story. The accepted method is to examine one or two cases (Ndjama, 2021). According to Batuna (2015), narratives are collections of stories given by individuals or small groups. A Brief profile of the participants were provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant's profile

Male, 27 years old, a teacher in a private school
Male, 23 years old, a call center agent in a BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) company
Female, 27 years old, a factory worker in a manufacturing company
Female, 40 years old, Managing Director of an HR (Human Resource) Consulting Firm
Female, 33 years old, digital marketing manager in an advertising agency

Description of the Participants:

The first participant has witnessed, experienced nepotism ever since he worked as a teacher in private schools, and his two-year teaching in his previous school was the topic of our conversation on nepotism. Considered an aggravated party. Second participant has experienced nepotistic practices in his first and current company, wherein he considered himself as an aggravated party. Third participant was a former beneficiary of nepotism as she was referred to the company by her husband and with the supervisor who is a fellow church member. The fourth participant has experienced nepotism in her previous company, wherein she felt somewhat aggravated. But currently, she is managing her own company and informed the researchers why nepotism is hard to stop, as she is admittedly practicing nepotism in her own company. The last participant was a beneficiary of nepotism as she started her career as a Product Manager to their family business, wherein she has no experience, skills, or knowledge of the said position.

Instrumentation

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews consisting of several key guide questions with key participants. This interview guide questions helped the researchers to defined and obtained the participants' experiences and thoughts about turning nepotism in the workplace. And it allowed the interviewers to divulge with them to purge an idea or response in detail.

This method used to provide a deeper understanding obtained from a structured questionnaire. The research interviewers used narrative research design to untold the perspective of the participants' experience in the topic. The researchers used semi-structured questions; therefore, the following interview questions were divided according to research sub-questions.

Impact in the organization

Do you think nepotism is present in your organization? If yes, how prevalent is it?

Have you witness nepotism in your company? Tell me instances that you encounter nepotistic practices in your organization.

What is the organization currently doing about nepotism?

What is the organization's official stand on nepotism, if any?

Are there specific policies in your organization that addresses any form of nepotism?

How do you feel about Nepotism in your organization? Do you believe nepotism is good or bad for an organization? Why?

Employee morale (engagement) and Organization's Productivity

How does it affect the employee engagement and productivity in your workplace?

How does nepotism affect your job satisfaction? Do nepotism cause employees like you to leave your job?

Do you ever feel threatened or worried about the organization's incompetency that might cause by nepotism or favoritism in the workplace?

Are you satisfied with your current job?

Are you in good terms with your colleagues?

Are you in good terms with your superiors?

Are you okay with the overall administration and management of your organization?

How difficult it is to cope with the problems of a family business?

How it affects your decision making at work your ability to complete job duties and loyalty to the employer?

As a nepotism beneficiary, how do your co-workers treat you knowing that your supervisor is a close friend even before you get hired?

As an HR Manager, how do you prohibit nepotism in your organization? Is there any policy that the HRM implement top avoid nepotistic practices?

How does it affect the hiring procedure of the company?

As a victim of nepotism how do you cope with negativity it caused you?

As a beneficiary of nepotism, how do you handle stress in dealing with co-workers thinking that you are incompetent for the job.

As an HR Manager/Management, why are nepotism in the organization is hard to stop?

Data Collection

The data collection for this study started on June 5, 2022, and end in June 13,2022. The data- gathering were made through online video platforms like Google Meet and Facebook Messenger video call, wherein the researchers have prepared several questions for an interview, in connection with the research problem, which lasted no longer than an hour for each participant. The note taking was facilitated through audiotape recordings, and will be destroyed after it is transcribed.

The first participant agreed to participate to the scheduled online interview held on the 5th of June 2022, by 3 pm, through Google Meet. The second participant agreed on June 6 interview by 2 pm, through Google Meet. The third participant agreed on the interview through Facebook Messenger Video call by 4 pm, on the same day. The fourth participant agreed on the online interview on June 7, 2002, by 3 pm, through Google Meet. And the last participant organized an online interview through Google Meet, by 1 pm on June 13,2022.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included the coding and transcription of the interviews for the analysis of the information in relevance to the objectives of the study.

The transcripts were coded to extract the participants' experience to determine the compatibility and gaps in the interview conducted with the past literature and studies, and of the Bureaucratic Management theory of Max Weber, as this study is anchored on its framework that emphasized on the key principles of the management, wherein Weber believed that employees should be chosen based on their technical skills and competencies which are acquired through education, experience or training, and no other factors should be consider. Another principle of mentioned theory is to prevent nepotism, relationship between employees is only to be professional.

Overall, the management theory of Weber aligned with the factors to consider avoiding nepotism in the workplace, as it favors efficiency, uniformity, and clear distribution of power. Weber theory advocated that only the most ideal candidates with the exact skill required for the position should be hired to ensure the best results for the company.

The theoretical framework of this study has supported the research action to create and enforce a policy in prohibiting nepotism in the private organizations, as the Weber theory did not condone any type of personal relationship in the workplace, and all work relationships are bound by rules and regulations.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers assured the participants are not subjected in any ways whatsoever. The respect to the participants' dignity as part of the study is prioritized. Full contents are obtained from the participants prior to the conduct of the interview. The protection of privacy of the participants were ensured, therefore an adequate level of confidentiality of the participants' data was considered. The anonymity of the individuals was ensured and will only be divulge upon the participants' written approval. Anytime of misleading information, as well as the representation of the primary data findings in a bias way is avoided.

III. FINDINGS

Based on the data collected from the participants, through the interviews that researchers have conduct, it is very clear that nepotism in the organization has bad implications, holistically.

The researchers find out that nepotism causes communication gap between co-employees, and organizational mistrust to the management, as the participants expressed their sentiments to the higher ups and co-employees who has given higher incentives or special treatment. One of the participants, who was a beneficiary of nepotism felt she treated well but did not earn the respect of her colleagues.

After the researchers learn the experiences that the participants have went through with nepotism going on at the workplace, it proves to be a contributor to the increase of employee attrition as some of them have decided to leave their job because of it.

Even the beneficiaries of nepotism admittedly believe that nepotism wouldn't do good in anyway. The participants have the same perspective on how harmful it is to competency of the business organization.

Another negative effect due to nepotism is the conflict between management and employees, wherein the participants have expressed disapproval with the overall administration of the management doing nepotistic practices. One participant, who's also a beneficiary even called out their management for those practices.

Based on a participant who is managing her own business, practicing nepotism is hard to stop or prohibit inside the organization because the root cause of nepotism is due to policy neglected by the Human Resource Department or Management. First, there is no policy against nepotism, second, there is prohibition against nepotism, but it was not implemented. The participant added that the only battle against nepotism is that the company would have the standard policy against the nepotistic practices. In her case, as an HR professional and owner of a HR Consulting Firm, the reason why nepotism on her organization is hard to stop is to help relatives.

The Research Problem on Nepotistic Practices in the Private Sector (Snippets from the Interview Conduct with the Participants)

Participants	Effect on Private Organization	Effect on Employee Morale and Engagement	Hiring Relatives and the Working Atmosphere	Consequence on Organization's Productivity	Harm in Business Competency	Management and Employees Relationship
MAJ	"If you really looked at it holistically, It is bad."	"Mostly of the higher ups are relatives, they will not get into entry level, they will enter the administrative right away. So, you cannot talk to them at your level."	"I think so. Because before you think about the welfare of the student, you first must think about how you will please the family who owns the school."	"Indeed, indeed. It affects."	"Yes, always because our bosses are not aligned with the field of education, because you are an interior designer then he is not aligned."	Asked if he is in good terms with the management, "Business-wise, yes. Professionally, yes. But first, boss will always be boss, you will never become friends with them."
JIN	"Very bad. It should be removed. It is unfair." "The son should be removed, it should not be allowed that, if they discover there are family in the company. Even not in the same department, it should not be allowed."	Asked if he is in good terms with the son of his Team Leader, "Ah we are not…we have not talk to each other even once. It is like, he is aloof too, to our colleagues." "I even work harder like I want to prove something. So, I will do is to exceed his performance (the son of TL), if I did that, it is achievement for me. But at the end of the day, he still got the biggest incentive, and I do not know why."	"Me, ah I just go with the flow. I already accept that there is no act to be done with that. Even if I made an act, to approach the management, it still no use." Asked if he has crossed his mind to leave his job, "Yes, of course. Ah, it is just that it is hard to resign and find a new job… for now I just put up with it. For now."	"Ah it doesn't affect the productivity of the organization since there is really high productivity because, I have said the task is easy, the only cons are being unfair with the incentives."	"Ah no, I don't have that kind of feeling."	"Go with the flow because you cannot do anything about it. Even if I approach the management, they will not do anything…"
LIS	Asked if she think nepotism is good or bad. "For me, it is both. Because it taught to be humbler, not to interfere	"For example, I will have same shift with others, I thought we are fine. But the next week of change shift, I will learn that they described me to our colleague's opposite of	"For me, I am happy with the job I have chosen, that helped me to make a living… " "Ah my husband	"Others are telling that the reason why I got in my job is because of our supervisor, like that.	"Ah maybe in Company S, once they found that there is an event like that, if it is really worst, they directly report it to	"We're not friends. Others are telling that the reason I gotten in my job is because of our superior, like that. Of course, I'm telling

	with colleagues' lives. And of course, it is also bad because my co-workers discriminate me which I do not like."	what they show me. That is why I told they are faking it."	suggests me to quit because my co-workers are like defaming me to others."		HR. And if there were not able to come up with a solution, they will tell them to voluntary resign. So, for me that is the reason why it is not a threat."	them and explaining that its not because of backer. Of course, I did my best with my interview. My supervisor was not around to let me pass."
Hershey	"Since I am the one creating the policy and I am an HR by nature, nepotism is not good in the company. But well right now I do not have official stand against nepotism, because I myself is practicing it…"	"It is not good; it is very counterproductive. There is no healthy relationship…"	"With the first organization that I worked with, yeah. Always, everyday that I go to work, I always though of leaving the job because I feel the credit goes to the relative of my previous boss. So yes, the attrition is high and there is no job satisfaction every time I achieve something, the credit goes to her."	"No, I am not satisfied with the productivity that I get in my company…we really have to accept that not all employees are professionally matured…as a boss, a leader of the organization, it is also part of my responsibility that, you know, the employee becomes professionally matured in the future."	"When you know that your officemate is a relative of your boss, you are always threatened…"	"With the previous organization…I don't like the management style of the boss, of all bosses. Now, here with my current organization, I'm not, I'm still not satisfied because I am an HR by nature and I want everything to be standardized, and right now, I don't have policy, so I am not satisfied with both."
Anna	"I don't believe nepotism is good in anyway."	"I still help them (former colleagues) every now and then because it's the family business." "I know they know that uhm I am intelligent. I know that, that they know that they just see is my lack of experience is just the problem."	"Definitely. Because apart from doing something that I was not happy…I knew that…they were treating me well, but I know I did have not yet earned their respect."	"My role then was I think Product Manager, and it was very difficult to ah justify to customer uhm or convince them about the product basically because, first of all I didn't have the proper background for the role…didn't have the experience…"	"Yeah, definitely. And that is why I was bringing it up back then, even if I was uhm benefitting from it…"	"In the past? No. I was actually calling them out on it but they are people are experienced and uhm rules need to be followed but usually with nepotism in place, there are people who get special treatment."

IV. DISCUSSION

Nepotism has remained a critical issue for organizations in the Philippines, that though is rarely examined, it is continuously existing in the present. As mentioned by some of the participants, they want to professionalize everything but the bad thing about nepotism is that you cannot terminate the person even if that employee is underperforming, because of personal relationship with the person,

As the study is qualitative, the data depends on the interviewees' responses and the organization's policies toward nepotism. The researchers conduct limited interviews through online video platforms with the participants that shares their knowledge and first-hand experience of nepotistic practices in the organization and the participants dealing with it. While the interview may be beneficial to the research, there is information within the company that they may not choose to divulge since nepotism has a negative implication for the business.

In this study, the researchers are able to know and put in mind to create a strategic plan of what future HR professionals should do to handle and control nepotistic practices in the organization, wherein employees feel not valued. Most importantly, this study will set out standards for good practices and current strategies for preventing corruption in the recruitment procedure of the organization.

There is no established or enforced company policy against nepotistic practices, in the organizations that specifically the participants have worked with and/or currently working with. Aside of the fact, that company policies are confidential and so the researchers can't force the participants to show it, it is hard to prove as there is no such policy against nepotism. As mentioned by the participants who are creating rules and regulations for their respective organizations, they don't have a policy that is against nepotism, as to why it is prevalent to their organizations. Therefore, the challenge to stop nepotism in the organization will not be fill in as there are no rules and regulations bound to guide the private companies in this study in dealing with nepotism.

V. CONCLUSION

It was clear with the literature and studies, and with the information given by the participants that nepotism has big drawbacks in the organization. As it creates low morale in the employees that leave the feeling of dissatisfaction, stress, and demotivation in the workplace. Low productivity hurts the organization as they lose out on money. Nepotism can create conflicts among employees and management that might cause problems with communication and leadership management.

Although it is not illegal, nepotism can create lawsuits that can hurt company's reputation and can cost the company money if the nepotistic practice in the organization leads to discrimination and create hostile working environment. Nepotism is a preferential treatment, given to relatives or even friends, therefore it is unethical. As it tends to ignore merit, skill, and the capability of an employee. In private organizations, nepotism is practiced keeping the business in the family, but it should be done with caution. As it has bad implications, therefore it is not a suitable strategy for any organization for survival, development, and growth.

As future HR professionals, it is a tough challenge that the researchers would face in dealing with nepotistic practices. Dealing with nepotism at work can be stressful, and this matter won't be resolved overnight. Patience is critical. We must work on the transparency in hiring process and other variables in human resource.

Nepotism can hinder us professionally as it is toxic. As future HR professionals, there is no better way to stop nepotism, but to create and enforce an anti-nepotism policy that will be aligned with the management and organizational goals.

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