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FACTIONALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NORTHERN GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *Studies suggest that in relatively stable academic environments, internal divisions, whether political, ideological, or structural, can significantly influence governance and institutional effectiveness. However, much of Western literature fails to consider the nuanced interplay of ethnicity, traditional authority, and partisan politics. These factors are more prominently embedded in African academic settings, particularly in Northern Ghana. This study examined the impact of sociocultural and political affiliations on factionalism in higher education institutions, as well as the effects of factionalism on staff motivation, productivity, and intrapersonal conflict. Guided by Social Identity Theory, structural equation modeling was employed to analyze data from 200 university staff in Northern Ghana. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The results showed that sociocultural and political affiliations significantly predicted factionalism, which in turn positively influenced staff motivation and productivity while also contributing to increased intrapersonal conflict. The findings highlight the dual nature of factionalism, both as a motivational driver and a source of psychological tension. The study underscores the importance of inclusive governance, merit-based management, and mental health support in diverse institutional contexts. It contributes to understanding how identity-based affiliations shape organizational behavior in higher education.*

KEYWORDS: Factionalism; Staff productivity; Staff motivation; Higher education institutions; Sociocultural affiliations.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are primarily established to conduct research, disseminate knowledge, and contribute to national and societal development (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). They bring together a wide range of stakeholders—including students, faculty, administrators, policymakers, and external actors—who represent diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, and ideological backgrounds. While such diversity can enrich intellectual discourse and institutional life, it also generates competing interests in areas such as decision-making, resource allocation, and policy implementation (Kezar, 2005; Tierney, 2006). These conflicting interests often manifest as ideological and operational tensions, especially within academic environments that prioritize freedom of thought, critical inquiry, and institutional autonomy.

One emerging concern within HEIs is factionalism—the formation of rival groups or cliques often based on political, ethnic, ideological, or personal loyalties (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Adebayo, 2020). Factionalism can undermine collegial relationships, erode trust, and obstruct effective governance (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Jehn, 1995). Its effects are far-reaching, frequently resulting in low staff morale, heightened interpersonal conflict, and diminished motivation and productivity (Hogg, 2001; Brewer & Venaik, 2011). In more severe cases, it can lead to intrapersonal conflict, a sense of alienation, and weakened commitment to institutional goals (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

In Ghana, particularly within public universities in the northern regions, these challenges are compounded by local socio-political dynamics. Ethnic diversity, traditional authority systems, and political affiliations provide fertile ground for factional alignments (Alhassan & Amoako, 2021; Sawyerr, 2004). These divisions frequently influence contentious recruitment and promotion processes, spark governance disputes, and shape staff perceptions of marginalization (Boateng, Atta, & Gyan, 2019). Despite the salience of these issues, there is a paucity of empirical research exploring how factionalism affects staff motivation, job satisfaction, and institutional performance in Ghanaian higher education institutions.

Scholars have conducted most research on factionalism and governance in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Western and Asian contexts. In these regions, political, religious, and ideological divisions directly influence institutional governance, strategic planning, and academic outcomes. Altbach (2016), for instance, highlighted how trends such as academic capitalism, internationalization, and managerialism have reshaped university governance, often heightening internal competition among academic units. As universities adopt corporate-style administrative models, traditional collegial structures weaken, giving rise to power blocs and internal rivalries resembling factional alignments. Although such phenomena may not be explicitly labeled as "factionalism" in African contexts, they display similar patterns of competition, exclusion, and coalition-building that challenge institutional cohesion. Kezar (2018) explored how the emergence of interest groups within universities can undermine shared governance and institutional transformation. Her research showed that coalitions formed along ideological or disciplinary lines often resist reform initiatives, dominate strategic processes, and exacerbate institutional gridlock. While such behavior may stem from a desire to safeguard academic values or access to resources, it reinforces the structural fragmentation and mistrust that already exist within the institution.

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The studies highlighted above suggest that even in relatively stable academic environments, internal divisions—whether political, ideological, or structural—can significantly influence governance and institutional effectiveness. However, most Western scholars overlook the nuanced interplay of ethnicity, traditional authority, and partisan politics—factors that strongly shape academic settings in Africa, particularly in Northern Ghana. This gap underscores the importance of localized research that contextualizes factionalism within its specific sociocultural and institutional realities.

The current study sought to address that gap by examining the impact of factionalism on staff motivation and job satisfaction in public universities in Northern Ghana. By identifying the forms, drivers, and consequences of factionalism, the study aims to inform policies and practices that enhance institutional coherence, leadership effectiveness, and staff well-being. The findings will also contribute to broader debates on governance, power relations, and organizational culture in African higher education. Moreover, the study holds comparative relevance for institutions in other regions grappling with similar internal divisions, offering empirically grounded insights into managing the adverse effects of factionalism in complex academic environments.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the effect of factionalism on staff motivation, intrapersonal conflict, and productivity in public universities in Northern Ghana. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate how internal divisions, based on political, ethnic, or ideological affiliations, affect staff attitudes, work relationships, and overall institutional performance.

Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

H_1: Sociocultural and political affiliations significantly predict the prevalence of factionalism in higher education institutions.

H_2: Factionalism in higher education institutions has a significant adverse effect on staff motivation.

H_3: Factionalism in higher education institutions has a significant adverse effect on staff productivity.

H_4: Factionalism in higher education institutions significantly predicts higher levels of intrapersonal conflict among staff.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by Social Identity Theory (SIT)**,** initially developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from perceived membership in social groups. Brown (2000) suggested that this self-categorization into "in-groups" and "out-groups" fosters group-based favoritism, loyalty, and sometimes discrimination against members of other groups. SIT argues that people are motivated to maintain a positive social identity, often by elevating the status of their in-group while devaluing out-groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

Social Identity Theory offers a valuable lens for understanding how factionalism arises and persists within higher education institutions, particularly in Northern Ghana. Staff and administrators often align themselves along ethnic, political, regional, or bureaucratic lines, leading to the formation of competing factions. These divisions often manifest in struggles over leadership positions, resource allocation, and institutional decision-making, behaviors that reflect in-group favoritism and out-group exclusion (Hogg, 2006; Ellemers, 2012).

Once individuals form identity-based groupings, they often interpret policies, appointments, and institutional actions through a factional lens, frequently perceiving them as biased or exclusionary (Hornsey, 2008). Interpretation of policies, appointments, and institutional actions through factional leans can lead to organizational instability, mistrust, and resistance**,** especially when groups feel marginalized. In such contexts, factionalism is not merely interpersonal conflict but a systemic expression of broader societal identity politics within the university environment (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005).

Empirical evidence from Ghana suggests that identity-driven affiliations—particularly ethnic and political, play a significant role in recruitment, promotions, and institutional governance (Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Asare & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2021). These dynamics tend to intensify in regions such as Northern Ghana, where historical and cultural contexts strongly shape socio-political identities.

By applying Social Identity Theory, this study aims to explore how these group dynamics influence staff motivation, intrapersonal conflict, and institutional productivity. The theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how identity-based affiliations shape organizational behavior, institutional politics, and governance outcomes in higher education institutions.

Empirical Review

This empirical review analyses previous research on the causes and consequences of factionalism in higher education institutions. It specifically examines how political affiliations, leadership styles, and competition for institutional resources contribute to factionalism and how factionalism subsequently affects staff motivation, intrapersonal conflict, and productivity.

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Causes of Factionalism in Higher Education Institutions

Political and Ethnic Alignments

Several studies have identified political and ethnic affiliations as key predictors of factionalism within higher education institutions in Africa. According to Gyimah-Boadi (2004) and Moja (2000), faculty and administrative staff often align themselves with political parties or ethnic groups, which can influence appointments, promotions, and decision-making processes. This politicization of institutional roles fosters competing factions, undermining collegiality and trust.

Tettey (2006) similarly found that ethnic considerations significantly influence administrative appointments in Ghanaian universities, leading to perceptions of favoritism and marginalization. These perceptions often translate into entrenched group identities and positions, thereby fueling factional tensions. These findings support the hypothesis that sociocultural and political affiliations significantly predict the occurrence of factionalism in higher education institutions.

Leadership and Governance Styles

Leadership approaches and governance structures also play a significant role in intensifying or mitigating factionalism. Baldridge (1971) posited that bureaucratic and hierarchical governance frameworks create space for competing interest groups to vie for institutional control. Akech (2011) further argued that authoritarian leadership styles contribute to factionalism by reinforcing exclusionary practices and favoritism. Empirical evidence from Nigerian universities supports this view. Sunday and Ajayi (2009) observed that leaders who engage in nepotism or favoritism erode institutional cohesion and empower factional divisions. These findings highlight the role of leadership dynamics as a structural factor that contributes to factional behavior in university governance.

Resource Competition and Institutional Politics

The scarcity of resources such as funding, promotions, and research opportunities also fuels factionalism. Altbach (2007) observed that competition for limited resources in African universities often leads to perceptions of bias in allocation, fostering mistrust and rivalry among academic groups. Mensah and Owusu (2017), in a study of Ghanaian universities, found that inequitable distribution of research grants and development opportunities led to the formation of factions based on perceived favoritism. These dynamics reflect the operationalization of group-based conflicts, as outlined by Social Identity Theory, and demonstrate how institutional politics drive identity-based divisions.

Effects of Factionalism on Staff Motivation, Productivity and Intrapersonal Conflicts

Decline in Staff Motivation

Factionalism is consistently associated with low morale, emotional exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction. Amponsah and Onumah (2019) reported that faculty in highly factionalized universities in Ghana experienced significantly lower levels of motivation, citing persistent workplace tension and feelings of exclusion. Similarly, Adepoju (2018) found that academic staff in Nigerian universities under factional control reported symptoms of burnout, stress, and

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disengagement from institutional responsibilities. These findings support the hypothesis that factionalism has a significant adverse effect on staff motivation.

Reduced Collaboration and Research Output

Factional divisions also undermine academic collaboration and research productivity. Ogunyemi and Adebayo (2020) noted that faculty members in polarized environments tend to avoid working with colleagues perceived as belonging to rival factions. This reluctance stifles interdisciplinary cooperation and joint research efforts. Akinyemi (2015) observed that departments plagued by factional conflicts produced fewer co-authored publications and collaborative projects. Such findings align with the hypothesis that factionalism negatively affects staff productivity by weakening professional networks and shared goals.

Administrative Inefficiencies and Poor Decision-Making

Factionalism disrupts effective governance and decision-making. Kwarteng and Boateng (2021) found that in Ghanaian universities, policy paralysis often occurs due to factional resistance to reforms perceived as favoring rival groups. This perception impedes institutional efficiency and strategic development. Jansen (2004) observed that, in the context of South African universities, factional disputes delayed administrative reforms and reduced the capacity for institutional innovation. These consequences underscore how factionalism impacts broader institutional performance, extending beyond individual motivation and productivity to affect the integrity of governance.

Factionalism and Intrapersonal Conflicts

Empirical studies examining factionalism in higher education institutions have consistently highlighted its disruptive impact on institutional cohesion, staff morale, and administrative effectiveness. In such environments, intrapersonal conflict arises when institutional decisions are perceived as unjust or skewed toward particular factions, challenging an individual's moral or professional identity. Adegoke (2021) argued that people who experience such conflicts are more likely to disengage from institutional processes, exhibit absenteeism, or seek external job opportunities. The author further noted that unresolved intrapersonal conflict contributes to the erosion of trust in institutional leadership. Similarly, research by Mutebi and Kasozi (2023) in Ugandan universities found a correlation between perceived factional favoritism and reduced staff productivity, with intrapersonal tensions acting as a mediating factor. Staff members who perceived themselves as politically neutral or unaffiliated with dominant groups experienced greater psychological strain, often leading to job dissatisfaction and burnout.

While the existing literature provides considerable insight into the connection between factionalism and intrapersonal conflict, most studies have focused on university settings in West and East Africa. There is limited empirical research addressing the phenomenon within the context of smaller or newer institutions, such as those in Northern Ghana. Furthermore, studies rarely account for the complex interplay between cultural identity, institutional policy, and personal values in shaping individual experiences of conflict.

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Conceptual Framework

This study adopted a conceptual framework that maps the relationship between factionalism and key institutional outcomes, specifically staff motivation, productivity, and intrapersonal conflict. The framework draws on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and is further informed by empirical studies on organizational behavior in higher education (Altbach, 2007; Hogg, 2006; Tettey, 2006).

Factionalism is defined as an organizational phenomenon in which individuals or groups within a university form competing alliances rooted in ethnic, political, or ideological affiliations. These alliances often emerge from perceived inequities in resource distribution, leadership opportunities, and policy decisions. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework diagram, which shows how political and ethnic alignments, leadership style, and resource competition contribute to factionalism, ultimately affecting intrapersonal conflict, staff motivation, and productivity in higher education institutions.

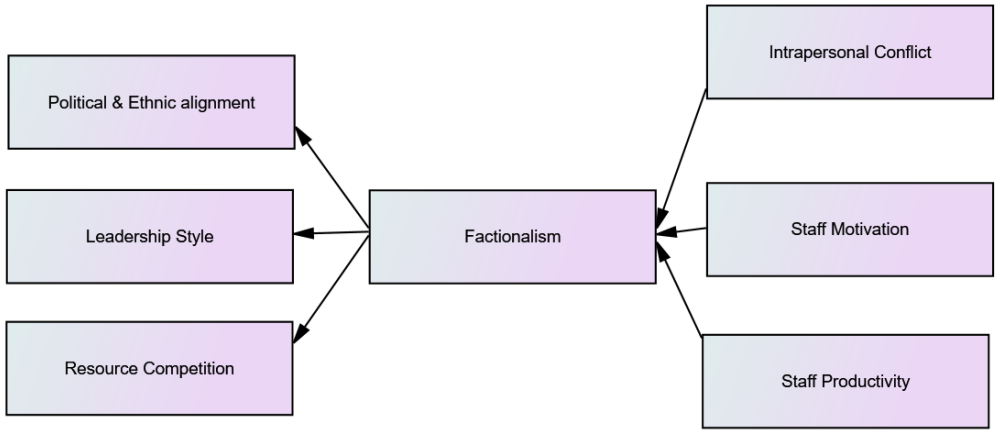

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Factionalism and Staff Outcomes in Higher Education n

As demonstrated in Figure 1, political alignment among staff within a university setting has the potential to fuel factionalism. When faculty and administrative staff align themselves with political parties or ethnic groups, it can influence appointments, promotions, and decision-making processes. This politicization of institutional roles fosters competing factions, undermining collegiality and trust. Additionally, poor leadership styles among university managers can create multiple factions within the institution. Managers or administrators who engage in nepotism or favoritism risk eroding institutional cohesion and reinforcing factional divisions within their organizations. Authoritarian leadership styles, in particular, tend to encourage exclusionary practices and favoritism. Furthermore, inadequate resources—such as limited funding, promotion opportunities, and research support—can contribute to factionalism. Competition for scarce resources may lead to perceptions of bias in their allocation, fostering mistrust and rivalry among academic groups.

The consequences of factionalism include reduced productivity, low staff morale, and the emergence of intrapersonal conflicts. These outcomes hurt institutional health and reputation. The current study, therefore, seeks to explore how internal divisions—based on political, ethnic, or ideological affiliations—shape staff attitudes, work relationships, and overall institutional performance within the context of Northern Ghana.

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RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to guide the collection and analysis of data. The researcher chose this approach to align with the study's objective of quantifying the prevalence of factionalism and assessing its impact on staff morale and productivity within public universities in Northern Ghana. Quantitative methods are particularly suitable for identifying patterns, measuring relationships, and drawing generalizable conclusions from large datasets (Creswell, 2018; Babbie, 2021). By employing structured questionnaires, the study generated numerical data that reflected participants' experiences and perceptions. Moreover, the use of inferential statistical tools enabled the researcher to test hypotheses and establish correlations between factionalism and key staff outcomes, thereby enhancing the objectivity, reliability, and validity of the findings (Muijs, 2011; Bryman, 2016).

Research design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to guide data collection and analysis. This research design is particularly well-suited for studies that aim to observe, describe, and analyze phenomena as they exist at a specific point in time (Levin, 2006). It allows researchers to capture the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of a defined population without manipulating any variables, making it ideal for exploring naturally occurring relationships among variables (Setia, 2016). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the descriptive approach facilitates the systematic and objective description of a situation, while the cross-sectional nature of the design allows for the examination of relationships among variables across a sample at a single point in time. This design was, therefore, appropriate for the current study, as it enabled the researcher to assess the extent and implications of factionalism on staff morale and productivity within the institutional setting without altering the existing conditions.

Population and Sample

The target population for the study was all senior members of the three (3) public universities in Northern Ghana. The estimated population of senior members across the three public universities is 2,200. The breakdown includes UDS (1,400), C.K.T-UTAS (318), and SD-Dombo (482). To determine the appropriate sample size for a cross-sectional survey of a population of 2,200, the researcher used the standard sample size calculation formula or Table based on the confidence level, margin of error, and population size (Israel, 1992; Cochran, 1977). Thus, for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the researcher sampled 327 respondents from a population of 2,200.

The proportionate stratified sampling technique was employed to sample from each of the universities. This technique ensured that each university was represented fairly in proportion to its size within the total population. First, the researcher calculated the proportion each group represents in the total population of 2,200:

1. UDS:

$1400/2200=0.636 \rightarrow 63.6\%$

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2. C.K.T-UTAS:

   318/2200=0.1445 → 14.5%

3. SD-Dombo:

   482/2200 =0.219 → 21.9%

Applying those proportions to the target sample size of 327:

1. UDS: 0. 36×327≈208
2. C.K.T-UTAS: 0.145×327≈47
3. SD-Dombo: 0.219×327≈72

Table 1 shows the final sample allocation.

Table 1. Final Sample Allocation

University	Population	% of Total	Sample Size
UDS	1,400	63.6%	208
CKT-UTAS	318	14.5%	47
SD-Dombo	482	21.9%	72
Total	2,200	100%	**327**

In each of the universities, the researcher adopted the proportionate sampling technique to sample male and female respondents. The final sample consisted of 206 male and 101 female staff.

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher employed a structured questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire is ideally suited for cross-sectional designs because it facilitates the collection of data from a large population quickly and efficiently (Bryman, 2016). Self-administered, structured questionnaires are beneficial when investigating sensitive topics, as they reduce interviewer effects and enhance respondent confidentiality **(**Dillman, Smyth, & Christia, 2014). Additionally, the benefit of a structured questionnaire lies in the standardization of questions, which enables comparison between subgroups and facilitates statistical analysis of the data (Creswell, 2014).

The questionnaire comprised six sections. Section A focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Section B assessed the prevalence of factionalism. Section C examined the predictors of factionalism, and Sections D to F explored the effects of factionalism on various staff outcomes. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (SD) to "Strongly Agree" (SA). The instrument was self-developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature on factionalism in institutional settings. To ensure its quality, the questionnaire underwent expert review, pilot testing, and assessments of both validity and reliability. Additionally, the researcher conducted exploratory and

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confirmatory factor analyses to validate the construct structure and measurement properties further.

Piloting the Instrument.

Piloting the questionnaire is a crucial step in establishing the validity**,** reliability, and practicality of the data collection instrument. Conducting a pilot study allows the researcher to evaluate whether the questions are interpreted by respondents as intended and to identify any ambiguities or misunderstandings. Through piloting, the researcher assessed the instrument's reliability—its ability to measure the intended variables consistently—and its construct validity, ensuring that the items accurately represented the underlying concepts under investigation. According to Creswell (2014), pilot testing is essential for refining research instruments and enhancing the logical soundness of the method. The pilot study also enabled adjustments to the questionnaire's format, timing, administration procedures, and overall data collection process to improve its effectiveness and usability in the main study.

Validity and Reliability Tests

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the instrument, the researcher tested for its validity and reliability. For validity, the researcher tested for construct validity. The researcher performed two forms of construct validity tests. They include convergent and discriminant validity. The researcher conducted a convergent validity test to assess the extent to which multiple measures of constructs theoretically related to each other are indeed related (Geffen, Straub, and Boudreau, 2000). For instance, the researcher assessed the multiple indicators measuring staff perceptions of the prevalence of factionalism under convergent validity to ascertain whether the indicators converged to measure the underlying construct (prevalence of factionalism). The researcher assessed Convergent validity using Average Variance extracted (AVE).

AVE = (Σ Standardized Factor Loadings²) / (Σ Standardized Fac or Loadings² + Σ Error Variance)

Where:

- Standardized Factor Loadings = λ (lambda)
- Error Variance = $1 - \lambda^2$ for each item

The AVE indicates the proportion of the indicator variance that the latent variable can explain. An AVE greater than .50 provides empirical evidence for convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). An AVE of .50 or over implies that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in its items, suggesting that the items share a high proportion of variance in common and measure the same concept.

The researcher performed the discriminant validity test to determine the degree to which the measures that should not be highly correlated with each other are distinct. Discriminant validity indicates the extent to which a given construct differs from other constructs (Anderson & Gerbig, 1988). For example, measures of the staff motivation construct should be completely distinct from those of the staff productivity construct. Fornell and Larkers (1981) recommended the shared variance approach for assessing the discriminant validity of constructs. The study

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determined the discriminant validity index by taking the square root of the AVE. The formula is as follows:

For rA and B, discriminant validity is established between A and B when

$$\sqrt{AVE}A \ > r, AB \ and \ \sqrt{AVE}B \ > r, BA$$

Where:

- $\sqrt{AVE}A$ is the square root of the Average Variance Extracted from Construct A.
- $\sqrt{AVE}B$ is the square root of the Average Variance Extracted from Construct B.
- r, AB, and r, and BA is the correlation between Construct A and B.

The researcher computed the composite reliability (CR) to assess the internal consistency of the latent constructs used in this study. Unlike Cronbach's alpha, which assumes equal factor loadings and may underestimate reliability, composite reliability accounts for the actual loadings of each item on its corresponding construct, providing a more accurate and robust measure of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019; Raykov, 1997). Researchers (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) generally consider CR values of 0.70 or higher as acceptable, indicating that the items consistently reflect the intended latent construct

Factor analysis

The purpose of the factor analysis was to reduce the large number of variables describing the prevalence of factionalism, intrapersonal conflicts, staff productivity, and motivation into fewer interpretable latent factors (Hair et al., 2010). The analysis followed two significant steps.

First, the researcher assessed the factorability of the dataset using four indices: The Determinant, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. A small determinant (close to zero) indicates multicollinearity, suggesting redundancy among variables (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Field, 2013). The KMO index assesses the shared variance among variables; values between 0.8 and 1 suggest adequate sampling for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Bartlett's Test checks whether the correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix; a significant result ($p < .05$) supports factorability (Bartlett, 1954; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Field, 2013).

The second step was factor extraction. The researcher used Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to reduce the data into a smaller number of components that explained most of the variance. PCA was appropriate due to the high intercorrelations among the variables and the exploratory nature of the study, which helped identify potential data structure.

Data collection procedure

The researcher notified the universities of his intention to conduct a study on factionalism in higher education institutions. After obtaining permission from the Registrars, the researcher proceeded to administer the questionnaire. Four trained research assistants assisted the researcher during the data collection exercise. The respondents completed the questionnaire in

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the presence of the researcher and research assistants. The researcher clarified items that required further clarification.

Research Ethics

The study addressed all ethical considerations related to the research. First, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The researcher informed participants that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point, even after the initial consent. The researcher strictly maintained the confidentiality of all research data and the anonymity of the respondents throughout the study.

Additionally, the researcher acknowledged all sources cited in the literature review. The researcher also utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely for proofreading purposes and correcting grammatical errors without compromising the integrity or originality of the work.

Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate the predictors of factionalism as well as the effect of factionalism on staff productivity and motivation. SEM is a powerful statistical tool that helps enhance our understanding of complex relationships by combining different types of data analysis techniques. It is beneficial because it can show both direct effects, such as how one variable leads directly to another, and indirect effects, where the relationship is more complex. Due to its strengths, the researcher selected the SEM as the most suitable research method. The researcher thoroughly reviewed the data to ensure its appropriateness for SEM analysis. This step was crucial to ensure the accuracy of our analysis. The processes included several key activities:

1. *Handling Missing Data:* The researcher removed variables with too much missing data from the analysis. For other variables with fewer than three missing data points, various techniques were employed to accurately fill in the gaps.

2. *Checking for Normality*: We ensured that our data followed a pattern that would allow for proper statistical analysis. We performed this analysis by examining measures of shape (skewness) and peakedness (kurtosis) as well as conducting a specific test called the Q-Q test of normality.

3. *Identifying Outliers:* We used the Mahalanobis distance to identify data points that were significantly different from others. These outliers could skew the analysis if not appropriately handled. The researcher did not find extreme outliers.

Confirming the Model

After preparing the data, we conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess how well our proposed model fits the data. The researcher checked several fit indices:

1. Chi-square (χ^2) and degrees of freedom (df): evaluate the model's goodness of fit by comparing it to the observed data.

2. The comparative fit index (CFI): Assesses fit quality while adjusting for model complexity.

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3. The Tucker-Lewis index (TLI): Another measure of model fit that accounts for model complexity.

4. The root mean square root of approximation (RMSEA): This parameter estimates how well the model fits the data in the population.

Testing Relationship Paths

Once the researcher validated the model, the researcher tested the hypothesis relationships. This stage involved analyzing the standardized path coefficients (β) and assessing their significance using p-values. The researcher also examined R^2 values to determine how well one variable predicted another. To ensure robustness, we employed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to test the reliability of direct, indirect, and total effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the validity and reliability test

The researcher assessed convergent and discriminant validity using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the square root of the AVE, respectively. The researcher further evaluated the composite reliability using SPSS Software version 14. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. Results of the Validity and Reliability Test

Indicator	Latent Variable	Standardized Loading	AVE	Alpha	Composite Reliability
PFU1	Prevalence of Factionalism 1	0.675			
PFU2	Prevalence of Factionalism 2	0.735			
PFU3	Prevalence of Factionalism 3	0.608			
PFU4	Prevalence of Factionalism 4	0.683	0.821	0.906	0.605
SCPA1	Sociocultural & Political 1	0.581			
SCPA2	Sociocultural & Political 2	0.469			
SCPA3	Sociocultural & Political 3	0.660			
SCPA4	Sociocultural & Political 4	0.710			
SCPA5	Sociocultural & Political 5	0.745	0.793	0.890	0.721
LGS1	Leadership & Governance 1	0.634			
LGS2	Leadership & Governance 2	0.632			
LGS3	Leadership & Governance 3	0.646			
LGS5	Leadership & Governance 5	0.794	0.821	0.906	0.738
SM1	Staff Motivation 1	0.523			
SM2	Staff Motivation 2	0.740			
SM3	Staff Motivation 3	0.506			
SM4	Staff Motivation 4	0.538	0.757	0.870	0.759
SP1	Staff Productivity 1	0.607			
SP2	Staff Productivity 2	0.674			
SP3	Staff Productivity 3	0.696	0.811	0.900	0.670
IPC1	Intrapersonal Conflict 1	0.591			
IPC2	Intrapersonal Conflict 2	0.645			

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IPC3	Intrapersonal Conflict 3	0.645			
IPC4	Intrapersonal Conflict 4	0.683	0.811	0.900	0.670

As shown in Table 2, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.759 to 0.821. According to Bagozzi and Yi (1988), an AVE greater than 0.50 provides empirical evidence of convergent validity, indicating that a construct explains at least 50% of the variance in its indicators. The result suggests that the items share a high proportion of variance and consistently measure the same underlying concept. Based on this guideline, the AVE results in this study were considered acceptable.

Regarding discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE for each construct should exceed its correlations with other constructs. The results confirmed that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity. In addition, the factor loadings were all significant and demonstrated minimal cross-loadings, further supporting discriminant validity. Specifically, each item loaded more highly on its intended construct than on any other construct.

The composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.605 to 0.759. According to Hair et al. (2010), CR values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable in exploratory research. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the observed CR values were deemed appropriate and indicative of acceptable internal consistency.

Results of the exploratory factor analysis

Suitability of Data for EFA (Factorability of Data): The researcher initially screened the data for univariate outliers. The study did not identify any extreme outliers. To assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, the researcher conducted several tests: the determinant of the correlation matrix, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The study found the determinant of the correlation to be 0.001, which is higher than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.0001 (Field, 2018), indicating low multicollinearity among the variables.

The KMO measure was 0.803, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), suggesting that the correlations between the variables were sufficient for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significant result ($\chi^2(276) = 1268.710$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlation matrix differed significantly from the identity matrix, which further supports the appropriateness of factor analysis.

Additionally, the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were all greater than 0.5, indicating that each item in the constructs shared some common variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The commonalities for all items were greater than 0.5, further confirming the suitability of the data for exploratory factor analysis.

Factor analysis: The 30 questionnaire items went through exploratory factor analysis. The research employed Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) as the extraction method to identify four factors. The researcher removed seven (7) items to improve upon the 4-factor model. PFU4 (Decision-making is influenced by group loyalty rather than merit), LGS4 (Nepotism and favoritism are common in leadership appointments), SM5 (my enthusiasm to contribute meaningfully has reduced), SP4(I avoid specific tasks due to workplace tension) and SP5(my

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productivity has declined due to persistent group conflicts) were removed because they had loadings of less than .40. The researcher also removed IPS4(I struggle to balance my values with workplace politics) because it had a strong cross-loading with items on the staff productivity construct. The remaining 23 items were condensed into six factors, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: **Factor Loadings**

Code	Variable	Factor	Loading
PFU1	There are identifiable factions within the university		0.675
PFU2	Factional conflicts are common during university elections	Prevalence of	0.735
PFU3	Factional affiliations influence staff promotions	Factionalism	0.608
PFU4	Appointments in the university are based on group affiliations		0.683
SCPA1	Staff form alliances based on tribal/ethnic identity	Sociocultural	0.581
SCPA2	Political affiliations influence groupings among staff	and political	0.469
SCPA3	Cultural background plays a role in staff cliques	determinants	0.660
SCPA4	Religion contributes to divisions among staff	of factionalism	0.710
SCPA5	I feel pressure to associate with people from my ethnic group		0.745
LGS1	The Governance structure does not promote inclusiveness in decision-making	Leadership and Governance	0.634
LGS2	Leadership is authoritarian and suppresses dissenting views	Style	0.632
LGS3	Leadership favors certain groups or individuals over others		0.646
LGS5	Leadership actions often create divisions among staff.		0.794
SM1	I feel demotivated to do my work sometimes	Staff	0.523
SM2	I feel that my contributions are not appreciated due to the perception that I belong to a group	Motivation	0.740
SM3	I sometimes feel demoralized due to perceived favouritism		0.506
SM4	I feel that my efforts at the university are being overlooked		0.538
SP1	Collaborations for projects in the university are effective	Staff	0.607
SP2	My efficiency at the workplace has greatly reduced.	Productivity	0.674
SP3	I avoid certain tasks due to workplace tensions		0.696
IPC1	I experience inner conflict about which group to associate with	Prevalence of	0.591
IPC2	I feel mentally stressed due to divisions in the university	Intrapersonal	0.645
IPC3	I often suppress my opinions to avoid conflicts	conflicts	0.645
IPC4	I feel isolated due to group dynamics		0.683

Main Data Collection

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the 23-item, six-factor model was deemed suitable for further analysis. Upon confirming the structural validity of the questionnaire, the researchers proceeded to administer it across the three selected universities. A total of 327 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 267 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of approximately 81.7%.

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Screening and Editing of Questionnaires

The researcher screened the returned questionnaires for completeness and consistency. The researcher found a total of 55 questionnaires to be incomplete, representing 27.5% of the responses. Additionally, 12 questionnaires contained duplicated responses. These incomplete and duplicated questionnaires were excluded from the dataset, resulting in a final valid sample of 200 questionnaires. The researcher cleaned the data and subsequently entered it into SPSS version 26 for further statistical analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The sample consisted of 120 males (60%) and 80 females (40%), indicating a male majority. In terms of age distribution, most respondents were between 31 and 50 years old. Specifically, 45.5% (n = 91) were aged 31–40, and 41.0% (n = 82) were aged 41–50. A smaller proportion fell within the 51–60 age group (11.0%, n = 22), while only 2.5% (n = 5) were aged 21–30. Regarding work experience, the majority of participants had substantial work experience. About 30.0% (n = 60) reported 11–15 years of experience, and 29.5% (n = 59) had more than 15 years. Those with 5–10 years of experience accounted for 24.0% (n = 48), while 16.5% (n = 33) had less than 5 years of experience. These demographic characteristics indicate that the sample largely comprised experienced professionals in the middle-age bracket, with a slight male dominance.

Assessment of the Measurement Model

The researcher conducted confirmatory factor Analysis (CFA) on the measurement model to assess the fit of our proposed model to the data. The researcher evaluated the model using a variety of fit indices. The model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data: $\chi^2(145.086) = 84$, $p = 0.024$; RMSEA = 0.050, CFI = 0.906, TLI = 0.901, NFI = 0.815. The results indicate that the model provided a good representation of the data. Figure 2 shows the model graphically.

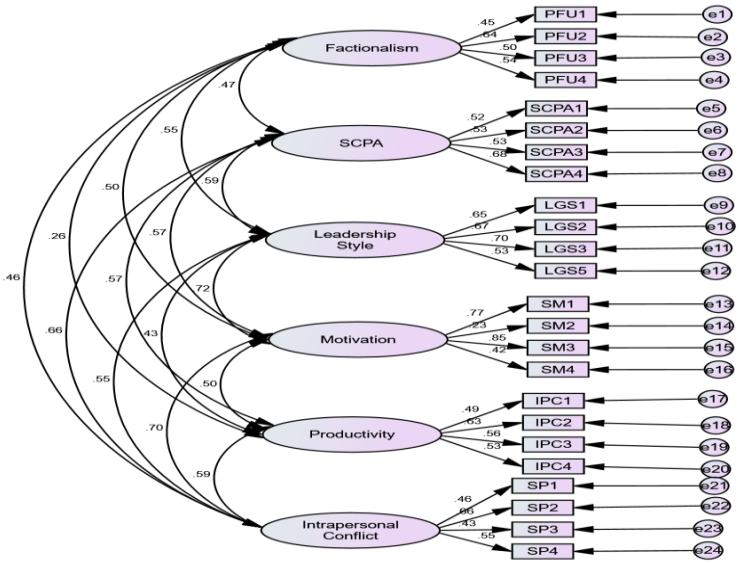

Figure 2. Measurement Model of Factionalism, staff productivity, motivation and intrapersonal conflicts in HEIs

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Results of the Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis H_1: Sociocultural and political affiliations significantly predict the prevalence of factionalism in higher education institutions.

This hypothesis sought to determine whether sociocultural and political affiliations significantly determine the prevalence of factionalism in higher education institutions. The researcher used the structural equation model to test the hypothesis. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Sociocultural and Political Affiliation as a Predictor of Factionalism

Dependent Variable	<---	*Independent Variable*	*Estimate*	*SE.*	*CR.*	*P*
Factionalism		Sociocultural Political Affiliation	.31	.089	4.016	0.001

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; p = significance level.

The structural model revealed a significant positive effect of sociocultural affiliation on factionalism, β = .31, SE = 0.089, p < .05. This path indicates that an increase in sociocultural and political affiliation is associated with increased levels of factionalism. The model explained 36% of the variance in factionalism (R^2 = .36). The significant positive relationship between sociocultural and political affiliations and factionalism suggests that individuals' group loyalties, based on ethnicity, political party affiliation, region, clan, or language, contribute meaningfully to intra-organizational divisions.

This finding supports the core assumptions of Social Identity Theory, which posits that people derive part of their identity from group membership, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. The findings are also in line with Gyimah-Boadi (2004) and Moja (2000), who found that faculty and administrative staff often align themselves with political parties or ethnic groups, which can influence appointments, promotions, and decision-making processes. The findings further confirm Tettey's (2006) finding that ethnic considerations significantly influence administrative appointments in Ghanaian universities, leading to perceptions of favoritism and marginalization. These perceptions often translate into entrenched group identities and positions, thereby fueling factional tensions.

The result enriches the theoretical discourse by empirically linking social identity mechanisms to factional behavior in organizational contexts—particularly in multi-ethnic or culturally heterogeneous settings, such as universities in Northern Ghana. In this context, this study provides empirical evidence to support concerns about politicization and ethnic polarization within academic institutions. It highlights the urgent need for institutional autonomy to be accompanied by culturally sensitive governance frameworks that acknowledge diversity without compromising unity or productivity.

The research finding underscores the need to recognize how sociocultural and political affiliations influence staff relationships, decision-making, and institutional harmony. Institutions must be proactive in promoting cross-cultural collaboration, inclusive practices, and team-building interventions that reduce factional divides. Training sessions in intercultural competence, unbiased hiring and promotion practices, and a focus on meritocracy could be beneficial.

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Hypothesis H_2: Factionalism in higher education institutions has a significant adverse effect on staff motivation.

This hypothesis aimed to determine whether factionalism has a significant impact on staff motivation. The researcher used structural equation modeling to test this hypothesis. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: Factionalism as a Predictor of Staff Motivation.

Dependent Variable	<--	*Independent Variable*	*β*	*SE.*	*CR.*	*P*	*R^2*
Staff Motivation		Factionalism	.71	.177	4.005	< .05	.26

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; p = significance level.

The structural model revealed a significant positive effect of factionalism on staff motivation, β = .71, SE = 0.089, p < .05. This path indicates that an increase in factional affiliation is associated with increased levels of staff motivation. The model explained 26% of the variance in factionalism (R^2 = .26). This suggests that factional affiliation may offer staff members a sense of belonging, influence, or opportunity, which enhances their motivation. The finding aligns with Social Identity Theory, which posits that in-group membership reinforces individual self-esteem and motivation. However, while such motivation may benefit faction members, it raises concerns about institutional equity, unity, and the alignment of individual efforts with broader organizational goals.

The findings, however, are at variance with Amponsah and Onumah (2019), who reported that faculty members in highly factionalized universities in Ghana experienced significantly lower levels of motivation, citing persistent workplace tension and feelings of exclusion. Similarly, Adepoju (2018) found that academic staff in Nigerian universities under factional control reported symptoms of burnout, stress, and disengagement from institutional responsibilities. Factionalism, while it offers some positive motivation in this study, should not be encouraged in the broader context, as it can have an adverse effect in specific contexts.

Research Hypothesis H_3: Factionalism in higher education institutions has a significant adverse effect on staff productivity.

This hypothesis aimed to investigate the impact of factionalism on staff productivity in higher education institutions. To test the hypothesis, the researcher used the structural equation modeling technique. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 6. Effect of Factionalism on Staff Productivity

Dependent Variable	<--	*Independent Variable*	*β*	*SE.*	*CR.*	*P*	*R^2*
Staff Productivity		Factionalism	.318	.1125	2.546	< .05	.19

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; p = significance level.

The results of the structural equation analysis revealed a significant positive effect of factionalism on staff productivity, β = .318, SE = 0.1125, p < .05. This path indicates that an increase in factional affiliation is associated with increased levels of staff productivity. The model explained 19% of the variance in factionalism (R^2 = .19). This finding appears

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counterintuitive, as factionalism is often perceived as a source of conflict and dysfunction (Ogunyemi & Adebayo, 2020). However, in specific organizational contexts—particularly those characterized by strong group identities and internal competition—factionalism may foster increased commitment, motivation, and performance within in-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Brewer, 1999).

When individuals strongly identify with a faction, they may experience a sense of belonging, mutual support, and shared goals that enhance their morale and performance (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In such contexts, factional loyalty can motivate members to work harder to uphold their group's reputation or to gain influence within the broader institutional structure (Van Knippenberg, 2000). This finding aligns with findings in social identity theory, which suggest that group affiliation can bolster self-esteem and drive goal-oriented behavior—primarily when groups compete for prestige or recognition (Haslam, 2001). Brown (2000) suggested that this self-categorization into "in-groups" and "out-groups" fosters group-based favoritism, loyalty, and sometimes discrimination against members of other groups. To maintain a positive social identity and alleviate the status of their in-group, staff may be motivated to work harder, thereby increasing productivity. Factional diversity can enrich intellectual discourse and institutional life, which, in turn, increases the productivity of staff.

This positive link between factionalism and productivity, however, must be interpreted with caution. While productivity may increase within factions, it does not necessarily translate into organizational cohesion or long-term institutional effectiveness. Over time, intense factionalism may undermine cross-functional collaboration, widen intra-organizational divides, and erode collective decision-making (Baldridge, 1971; Tierney, 2008). The model's explanatory power ($R^2 = .19$) indicates that factionalism accounts for 19% of the variance in productivity, suggesting that other organizational, psychological, or contextual factors also significantly influence staff output.

This finding underscores the importance for institutional leaders to acknowledge both the productive and potentially divisive aspects of factionalism. Harnessing the motivational benefits of group affiliation can be advantageous when managed strategically—such as through team-based incentives or inclusive governance structures. However, unchecked factional dynamics may reinforce silos, perpetuate inequities, or lead to organizational fragmentation (Gumport, 2000; Osei-Kofi, 2010). Institutional policies should, therefore, aim to strike a balance between group-based engagement and institution-wide identity and collaboration.

Research Hypothesis H_4: Factionalism in higher education institutions significantly predicts higher levels of intrapersonal conflict among staff.

The hypothesis sought to determine whether factionalism in higher education institutions positively predicts intrapersonal conflict among staff. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7. **Factionalism as a Predictor of Intrapersonal Conflict**

Dependent Variable	<---	*Independent Variable*	*β*	*SE.*	*CR.*	*P*	*R^2*
Intrapersonal Conflict		Factionalism	.27	.139	1.959	< .05	.17

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; p = significance level.

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As presented in Table 7, the analysis revealed a significant positive effect of factionalism on intrapersonal conflict among staff, $\beta = .27$, $SE = 0.139$, $p < .05$. The model explained 17% of the variance in factionalism ($R^2 = .17$). This result suggests that increase in factionalism within the institutions are associated with heightened levels of internal conflict experienced by individual staff members. In other words, as employees perceive deeper divisions, rivalries, or competing allegiances within the workplace, they are more likely to experience psychological tension, identity conflict, or cognitive dissonance regarding their roles, values, or decisions (Jehn, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The findings of this study are in line with Adegoke (2021), who contends that intrapersonal conflict comes about when institutional decisions are perceived as unjust or skewed toward particular factions, challenging an individual's moral or professional identity. Individuals who are involved in such disputes, according to the authors, are more prone to disconnect from institutional procedures, demonstrate absenteeism, or seek outside employment. The author also stated that unresolved intrapersonal conflict adds to a loss of faith in institutional leadership. Mutebi and Kasozi (2023) similarly argue that Ugandan universities found a correlation between perceived factional favoritism. It reduced staff productivity, with intrapersonal tensions acting as a mediating factor. Staff members who perceived themselves as politically neutral or unaffiliated with dominant groups experienced greater psychological strain, often leading to job dissatisfaction and burnout.

Factionalism typically creates an atmosphere of distrust and partiality based on groups and political interactions (Obasi, 2007; Baldridge, 1971). These dynamics can put individual employees under challenging circumstances when their devotion to specific organizations clashes with institutional demands, professional conventions, or personal beliefs. This finding highlights the importance for higher education institutions—especially those in ethnically or politically pluralistic environments—to proactively manage factional divisions and foster inclusive organizational cultures (Gumport, 2000; Tierney, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role sociocultural and political affiliations play in promoting factionalism in higher education institutions, as well as their implications for staff motivation, productivity, and intrapersonal conflict. Based on the findings, the research concludes that sociocultural and political affiliations are significant predictors of factionalism in HEIs in Northern Ghana. The study further concludes that factionalism has a positive effect on staff motivation and productivity while promoting intrapersonal conflict among staff. The outcome of the study affirms the central tenets of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which indicates that individuals derive part of their identity and behavior from group membership, often leading to in-group favoritism and out-group marginalization.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that higher education institutions in Northern Ghana should formulate and implement policies and practices that foster inclusivity and reduce the incidence of factional divisions. Anti-discrimination, fairness, and inclusivity policies may go a long way to reduce the incidence of factionalism. Governance structures in higher education institutions should also encourage cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration in research, teaching, and service.

Furthermore, recruitment, promotions, and leadership appointment policies in higher education institutions should emphasize transparency and be merit-based, with checks against potential favoritism based on political or ethnic considerations. Mechanisms such as external audits, peer evaluations, and diverse appointment panels can enhance credibility and fairness.

Given the link between factionalism and intrapersonal conflict, higher education institutions must invest in mental health services, employee assistance programs, and psychosocial support structures that help staff cope with identity-related stress and workplace tensions. Future studies should consider leadership style and resource allocation as correlates of factionalism in higher education institutions.

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