



POLITICIZATION OF WORKERS' PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE AND ITS EFFECTS ON SERVICE DELIVERY: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The Nigerian civil service is a critical institution for governance and national development, yet its efficiency has been undermined by political interference. This study examines the politicization of workers' performance in the Nigerian civil service and its effects on service delivery, using Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory and Public Choice Theory to analyze how political favoritism, corruption, and inefficiency erode professionalism and public trust. Employing a qualitative research design, the study relies on secondary data sources, including government reports, academic literature, and policy documents. Findings reveal that political interference in recruitment and promotions weakens meritocracy, leading to inefficiency, low motivation, and corruption. Additionally, frequent leadership changes disrupt policy continuity, negatively impacting essential public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The study concludes that depoliticizing the civil service, enforcing merit-based appointments, and strengthening anti-corruption measures are vital for restoring efficiency and accountability. Recommendations include transparent recruitment processes, mechanisms for policy continuity, enhanced civil service training, and stronger public accountability frameworks. Implementing these reforms will help revitalize Nigeria's civil service, enhance governance, and improve service delivery.

Keywords: Civil Service, Politicization, Bureaucracy, Governance, Corruption, Service Delivery

Introduction

The civil service is a cornerstone of public administration, responsible for implementing government policies and delivering essential services. In Nigeria, the civil service is expected to function as a neutral and professional entity, adhering to principles of meritocracy and impartiality. However, the infiltration of political considerations into civil service operations has become a pressing concern, affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery.

Historically, Nigeria's civil service was modeled after the British system, emphasizing neutrality and professionalism. However, over the decades, political interference has eroded these foundational principles. The politicization of appointments and recruitment processes has led to the selection of individuals based on political affiliations rather than merit, resulting in inefficiencies within the public sector. This phenomenon has been identified as a significant factor contributing to corruption and a loss of accountability in the service (Chikeleze and Orji, 2021).

Furthermore, the enforcement of civil service rules has been inconsistent, leading to challenges in maintaining discipline and ensuring effective service delivery. Factors such as poor motivation, conflicting government policies, and human factors have been identified as impediments to the strict enforcement of these rules, thereby affecting the overall performance of the civil service (Obi and Nwokuwu, 2022).

The politicization of the civil service has far-reaching implications for public service delivery. When appointments and promotions are influenced by political considerations, it leads to a demotivated workforce, inefficiencies, and a decline in the quality of services rendered to the public. This undermines public trust in government institutions and hampers national development.



Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian Civil Service, traditionally envisioned as a neutral and professional body, has increasingly become susceptible to political influences. This politicization manifests through appointments and promotions based on political affiliations rather than merit, leading to several detrimental outcomes:

- i. **Erosion of Meritocracy:** The infiltration of political considerations into recruitment and promotion processes undermines the principles of merit-based advancement. This shift results in the appointment of less qualified individuals, thereby compromising the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery.
- ii. **Declining Employee Morale:** When civil servants perceive that career progression is tied to political connections rather than performance, it leads to demotivation, reduced productivity, and a lack of commitment among staff.
- iii. **Deterioration of Service Delivery:** The appointment of less qualified individuals due to political patronage can result in inefficiencies and a decline in the quality of public service delivery, as these individuals may lack the necessary skills and expertise required for higher positions.

To address these issues, the study sets forth the following objectives and corresponding research questions:

Objectives of the study

- i. Examine the extent of political interference in Nigeria's civil service.
- ii. Assess the impact of politicization on workers' performance and motivation.
- iii. Investigate how politicization affects the quality of public service delivery.

Literature Review

The politicization of Nigeria's civil service has been extensively analyzed by scholars, who have identified its adverse effects on administrative efficiency and public service delivery.

The Concept of Politicization in the Civil Service

Politicization in the civil service refers to the undue influence of political considerations in administrative processes, including recruitment, promotion, and decision-making. In Nigeria, this phenomenon has led to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness within the public sector. Chikeleze and Orji (2021) highlight that such politicization results in corruption and a loss of accountability in the service.

Manifestations of Politicization

Political interference in civil service appointments often leads to the selection of individuals based on political affiliations rather than merit. This practice undermines the principles of neutrality and professionalism essential for effective public administration. Dueze and Impey (2019) observed that such politicization contributes significantly to inefficiencies in service delivery, as unqualified personnel are appointed due to political considerations.

Impact on Bureaucratic Performance

The encroachment of political interests into bureaucratic functions hampers the development of a competent and efficient civil service. Nweke (2013) noted that policy formulation and application in Nigeria often reflect the interests of the ruling class, leading to the appointment of individuals based on political affiliations rather than merit. Similarly, studies have shown that such interference negatively affects local government performance, resulting in poor service delivery.

Consequences for Service Delivery

The politicization of civil service appointments has direct implications for service delivery. A study focusing on Enugu State revealed that political considerations in appointments led to inefficiencies in service delivery, as individuals lacking the requisite expertise were placed in critical positions (Eze and Ume, 2022). Furthermore, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG, 2023) highlighted that political interference compromises the civil service's ability to function effectively, thereby affecting the quality of public services (Okonkwo and Adeyeye, 2023).

Public Service Delivery in Nigeria:

Public service delivery in Nigeria has been a subject of concern due to persistent challenges in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. While the government has introduced several reforms to enhance efficiency, issues such as inadequate funding, poor governance, and infrastructural decay continue to hinder effective service delivery (Adegoke & Ogunleye, 2022). This review explores the major challenges and ongoing efforts to improve service delivery in these critical sectors.

Healthcare Service Delivery in Nigeria



The Nigerian healthcare system is characterized by poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal access to medical services, especially in rural areas (Obinna & Adeola, 2023). According to the World Bank, Nigeria spends only about 4% of its GDP on healthcare, which is below the 15% recommended by the Abuja Declaration (World Bank, 2023). This underfunding has led to deteriorating hospital facilities, lack of essential medicines, and an acute shortage of medical professionals (Okeke *et al.*, 2022). Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have been proposed as a viable solution to improve healthcare infrastructure. For example, the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) partnered with private investors to establish a modern cancer treatment center, reducing the need for Nigerians to seek treatment abroad (Phlox Global Healthcare, 2024). However, challenges such as regulatory bottlenecks, corruption, and poor financial management continue to impede the effectiveness of PPP initiatives (Adebayo and Yusuf, 2023).

Education Service Delivery in Nigeria

Nigeria's education sector faces numerous challenges, including poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, and high rates of out-of-school children (Onyema *et al.*, 2023). Reports indicate that over 10 million children are currently out of school, with the northern region being the most affected due to insecurity and socio-cultural barriers (UNESCO, 2023). To address these issues, the World Bank recently approved a \$1.57 billion financing package for Nigeria, with \$500 million allocated to improving education and healthcare governance (World Bank, 2024). This funding is expected to enhance school infrastructure, train teachers, and promote inclusive education policies (Afolabi and Eze, 2023).

Despite these efforts, the education sector continues to struggle with low teacher remuneration, leading to frequent strikes by educators (Ogunyemi, 2022). Additionally, poor learning conditions in many public schools discourage students from attending classes (Adeyemi and Salisu, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including increasing government spending, reforming teacher training programs, and integrating digital learning tools into the curriculum (Ogundipe and Hassan, 2023).

Infrastructure and Public Service Delivery

Nigeria's inadequate infrastructure is a major impediment to economic growth and public service delivery. The country suffers from frequent power outages, poor road networks, and unreliable transportation systems (Eze and Ugochukwu, 2023). According to Reuters, Nigeria loses an estimated \$29 billion annually due to power grid failures (Reuters, 2024). The national power grid, which operates far below capacity, frequently collapses due to outdated infrastructure and inadequate investment (Ogundipe *et al.*, 2023). In response to these challenges, the Nigerian government has partnered with international organizations, such as the World Bank, to develop alternative energy solutions like mini solar grids in rural areas (World Bank, 2024). Additionally, some states have started creating independent power markets to reduce reliance on the national grid (Oluwole and Adebisi, 2023). However, these efforts are often hampered by policy inconsistencies, corruption, and slow project implementation (Okonkwo and Adeyeye, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is built on Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory that explains the politicization of the civil service and its impact on service delivery.

Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory

Max Weber's bureaucratic model is one of the most influential theories in public administration. According to Weber (1947), an ideal bureaucracy should be characterized by hierarchical authority, merit-based appointments, specialization of labor, and adherence to formal rules and regulations. The model assumes that bureaucracies should be free from political interference, ensuring efficiency and professionalism in public service delivery (Weber, 1947).

Relevance to the Study

In the Nigerian context, the politicization of the civil service undermines merit-based appointments, as positions are often allocated based on political patronage rather than competence.

Political interference disrupts the hierarchical structure and accountability mechanisms, reducing efficiency in public service delivery (Obi and Nwoku, 2022). Deviation from bureaucratic principles results in poor policy implementation and a lack of professionalism among civil servants (Chikeleze and Orji, 2021).

Application of Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory emphasizes a structured, rules-based, and meritocratic approach to public administration. However, the Nigerian Civil Service deviates significantly from Weber's ideal model due to political interference in recruitment, promotion, and policymaking.



Key Applications

Erosion of Meritocracy: Instead of appointments based on qualifications and experience, political considerations often determine who gets employed or promoted, leading to inefficiency and incompetence in public service (Obi and Nwokuwu, 2022).

Lack of Hierarchical Accountability: Political appointees often disregard the hierarchical command structure, weakening discipline, order, and procedural adherence, which are essential for effective service delivery (Chikeleze and Orji, 2021).

Inefficiency in Service Delivery: The breakdown of bureaucratic processes due to political favoritism affects decision-making, slows down administrative procedures, and compromises public services such as health, education, and infrastructure (Nweke, 2013). Thus, Weber's Bureaucratic Theory helps explain how political interference weakens the structures that should enhance professionalism and efficiency in public service delivery.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using secondary sources of data to analyze the politicization of workers' performance in the Nigerian civil service and its effects on service delivery. The methodology is structured as follows: This study employs a descriptive research design to examine the extent and impact of political interference in the Nigerian civil service

Data Collection Method:

Since this study is based on secondary data, the research relies on existing literature, government reports, policy documents, and scholarly articles. The sources of data include:

Discussion of Findings

The study confirms that the Nigerian civil service suffers from excessive political interference, leading to the recruitment and promotion of underqualified personnel. This finding aligns with Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which argues that professionalism and efficiency decline when bureaucracies fail to uphold merit-based recruitment (Weber, 1947). The prioritization of political loyalty over competence discourages hardworking civil servants, leading to a decline in efficiency. The study finds that political appointments encourage corruption, bribery, and misallocation of resources. This aligns with previous research by Ifaka and Odigie (2021), who argue that political appointees often engage in corrupt practices to maintain their positions. The study highlights how frequent changes in leadership and policies hinder the continuity of government programs. This supports findings by Akinyemi (2023), who notes that political instability results in weak policy execution and wasteful spending (Akinyemi, 2023). The study confirms that poor governance and inefficiency have eroded public trust in civil service institutions. This is consistent with Transparency International's (2023) report, which ranks Nigeria poorly in corruption perception and governance effectiveness (Transparency International, 2023)

Conclusion

The politicization of the Nigerian civil service has significantly weakened institutional capacity, professionalism, and service delivery. Political influence in recruitment and decision-making erodes meritocracy, leading to poor governance and inefficiency. Additionally, corruption flourishes when public servants prioritize political patronage over competence and accountability. To address these challenges, systemic reforms are needed to promote merit-based recruitment, reduce political interference, and strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms. A professionalized civil service, insulated from partisan interests, is critical for effective governance and improved public service delivery.

Recommendations

To mitigate the negative effects of politicization in the Nigerian civil service, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Strengthen Merit-Based Recruitment and Promotion

The Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) should strictly enforce merit-based appointments through transparent recruitment processes. The use of political influence in civil service appointments should be criminalized, ensuring that only qualified candidates are employed.

ii. Enforce Anti-Corruption Measures

Stronger anti-corruption laws should be implemented to prosecute public servants involved in bribery and rent-seeking. Agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should focus on investigating politically motivated appointments in the civil service.



iii. Depoliticize Policy Implementation

The Nigerian government should ensure that policy continuity is maintained despite changes in political leadership. Civil service leadership should be insulated from political influence, ensuring that policies are executed based on national interest rather than political agendas.

iv. Improve Civil Service Training and Motivation

Civil servants should undergo continuous training to enhance professionalism, leadership skills, and ethical conduct. The government should introduce performance-based incentives to reward efficiency and discourage corruption.

v. Promote Public Accountability and Transparency

Government agencies should publish annual reports on civil service performance, providing transparency in operations. The Freedom of Information (FoI) Act should be strengthened to allow public scrutiny of civil service recruitment and policymaking.

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