

# Zonal Consideration and Recruitment Exercise in Nigerian Organizations: A Study of Some Selected Ministries

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**Abstract:** - Zonal consideration appears to be a strong factor in the recruitment of workers in the Nigeria Civil Service. This practice which seems to be a method for political leaders to gratify their supporters and party stalwarts, appears to portend danger for the Nigerian civil service. This study therefore examines the impact of zonal consideration on recruitment exercise in some Nigerian organizations. For the purpose of this study, a research hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The study utilized the survey research design, simple random and stratified sampling techniques. A sample size of 420 Civil Servants from some selected Ministries in Imo State Civil Service was used. Data for the study were collected through questionnaire, interview and secondary sources. The data gathered were analyzed using tabular modes of presentation including frequencies and percentage, while the Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) was used to test the hypothesis. The findings showed that zonal consideration affected workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service, thereby reducing the efficiency of the organizations. The study recommended that Imo State Civil Service must purge itself from the use of zonal consideration in workers recruitment and the offenders punished. The study further recommended that recruitment examination should be incorporated into recruitment exercise so as to employ the best hands, and less emphasis on the recruitment of workers based on political party loyalty because this will politicize the working environment.

**Key words:** Zonal consideration, primordial issues, recruitment, Federal Character

## I. INTRODUCTION

Zonal consideration appears to be a strong factor in the recruitment of workers in the Nigeria Civil Service. This factor is a clear departure from meritocracy which is the basic criteria for employment into the Civil Service all over the world. This practice which seems to be a method for political leaders to gratify their supporters and party stalwarts, appears to portend danger for the Nigerian civil service. This factor in recruitment has permeated recruitment into the Civil Service at state level in Nigeria. Recruitment process in Imo State Civil Service seems to lack merit, thereby making it difficult to select the best qualified and competent staff. This anomaly created by this primordial criterion can undermine the quest for efficiency which is the hallmark of productivity in every formal organization and administration.

Morris (2009) points out that the Nigeria Civil Service System, from which the Imo State Civil Service takes a cue, emphasizes merit, uniformity, standardization and transparency in the selection of competent employees. The recruitment and selection process in Imo State Civil Service appears to lack equity and transparency. Top administrators and political office holders perceive public appointments as opportunity to either reward or compensate relations, friends and loyalist by filling existing vacancies irrationally in the public offices within their sphere of authority and zone. For Anyaocha and Umeh (2019), the consequence of this untoward practice against the merit philosophy is the up-holding of mediocrity as standard performance. Considering the importance of the Civil Service in any society, the major objective of this study is to examine zonal consideration in Imo State Civil Service recruitment exercise with a view of establishing its impact on the Civil Service.

## II. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Balogun (2009) states that recruitment is the process by which personnel or manpower resources are made available through appointment as in the case of board members, or directors of government enterprise especially in public organization. In the Civil Service Commission in Nigeria, recruitment in the employment of personnel or staff.

According to Nwankwo (2008) recruitment involves getting all prospective applicants for job position in an organization. For Abah (2007) recruitment is the act of seeking, evaluating, obtaining commitment from placing and required for the successful conduct of an organization. For him, the recruitment process involves seeking and attracting pool of people from which candidates to fill job vacancies can be selected.

Osaghe (2011) sees recruitment as an exercise of choosing par excellence through the process of rejecting or matching of applicants, first against the attitude, which will make for success on the job and second matching of the candidates, one against the other until one has rank-ordered all of them in order of relative suitability. Simply put, recruitment is the process of selecting and attracting of personnel or right candidates into job position of an organization.

Adiele (2010) conceives recruitment as “those activities in human resource management which are undertaken in order to attract sufficient job candidates who have the necessary potential, competencies and traits to fill job needs and to assist the public service organization in achieving its objectives”. Similarly, Motsoeneng (2011) defines recruitment making sure that qualified people are available to meet the employment needs of government. He added that Ineffective recruitment exercise precludes any chance for selection of poorly qualified candidates. The task of recruitment is to generate a sufficient pool of applicants to ensure that there are people available with the necessary skills and requirements to fill positions as they arise.

Obviously, recruitment is not an easy task. In view of the complexity of the task, Civil Service employers need to take it seriously beforehand to avoid possibly enormous and incalculable cost due to faulty employee recruitments. Therefore, recruitment can be defined as a process undertaken to identify a match between an individual and the job.

Dozie (2010), suggests that the criteria that support effective recruitment are adequate: job analysis, manpower planning, job description and job specification rather than extraneous primordial variables such as: ethnic affiliation, religious affiliation, cultural grouping and federal character principle that dictate the essence of hiring of workers, thus, making it to recruit staffs that are not qualified, thereby faced with problem of inefficiency in Civil Service delivery.

### III. ZONAL CONSIDERATION AND WORKERS RECRUITMENT

During the post-independence era, the Nigerian state found itself in a dilemma whereby the political setting was dominated by Northern Executives, leaving its administrative functions to a Southern dominated bureaucracy (Ayoade, 2011). For the political executive to successfully carry out its policies, it required a facilitator in the bureaucracy, which the north was unable to provide in terms of people with required skills, educational qualifications and experience. In this regard, the south with more qualified manpower dominated the public bureaucracy. This meant that while the north dominated the political executive, the south, on the other hand dominated the bureaucracy. It was the fear of domination of one section of the country by the other in the political and administrative affairs that led to the principle of zonal consideration in Nigeria. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognized the imperative of zonal consideration to Nigeria’s administrative system, hence section 14 (3) states that: The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

It was in a bid to resolve the dilemma of the problem of Northern political domination and Southern dominated bureaucracy in the country that led to the introduction of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria (Ayoade, 2011). According to Bodunrin (2012), zoning principle is a political settlement that enables every section of the Nigerian society to be represented in government. He argued that ‘zoning’ in its application and implementation is a mere euphemism for ethnic balancing which has the potential of solving the problem and fear of domination and bring about stability that is needed for development to take place in the country. Scholars have identified some advantages of “zoning principle” or representative bureaucracy to include its ability to create support for government policies, including people who are local and indigenous to the environment in the implementation of government programmes in that particular area and its ability to serve as mechanism for the government party to distribute patronage to its supporters (Bodunrin, 2012; Ayoade, 2011).

However, there are contradictions in the application of zoning principle in the Civil Service particularly in the area of worker’s recruitment and promotion. According to Ayoade (2011), subjecting recruitment to discriminates against merit is unfair to the civil service. The outcome is that of acquisition of incompetent workforce into the public service and the result is that of poor performance.

This study believes that predicating worker’s recruitment on zoning does not mean that such a worker cannot contribute meaningfully towards the enhancement of the goals of the organization. This is particularly so where appropriate recruitment strategies involving the screening of potential workers based on relevant skills, experience and educational qualifications are adopted. What is important therefore is the ability of the individual employed to work for the enhancement of the organization.

Aside from being an administrative mechanism, zoning principle in Nigeria has come to represent a political necessity to further integrate the diverse elements that comprise the nation. Given the multi-ethnic, religious and cultural nature of the country, it is clear that merit as an exclusive principle for recruitment will negate the desire for equal representation of all sections of the country in the Civil Service.

Yaro (2013) in his research on “recruitment and selection in the Nigerian Public Service: Nature, challenges and way Forward” identified the irregularities of recruitment and selection exercise in the Nigerian Public Service. This study adopts a qualitative research strategy using comprehensive document review. It was identified that sentiment and other primordial issues like ethnicity, zonal consideration and favoritism are given more consideration in terms of employment than merit. The major challenges identified are constant political interference which manifested out of the desire of the politicians to get their relatives in the service based on their zones.

Osuorji and Okoro (2016) in their study on “a critical appraisal of recruitment and selection in the context public service reforms in Nigeria”, supported that zonal consideration may have negative effect on the civil service. The study made a critical assessment of the concept and nature of recruitment and selection practice in the context of public service reforms in Nigeria. It highlights the neglect of this aspect of human resource management in this process of reforms. Their study which adopted qualitative method revealed that some of the causes of the limited success of the public service reforms can be traced to wrong foundation, non-institution of merit as a basis of recruitment and selection, etc. They recommended objectives recruitment and selection as a possible panacea to the continuing reform efforts. Based on the literature reviewed the following hypothesis was formulated;

Zonal consideration does not significantly influence recruitment exercise in Imo State Civil Service.

#### IV. AREA OF THE STUDY

Imo state is located in the southeastern Nigeria, the civil service was established in 1976. The Imo State Civil Service performs its functions as stipulated in the 1999 constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Secretariat is situated at Owerri-Port Harcourt road. It is made up of about thirty ministries such as Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Non-Formal Education, Imo State Secondary Education Management Board, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Resources and Pension Affairs, etc.

#### V. METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive survey research design. The essence of this research design was to draw samples from the population and findings from them were generalized to the entire population. In addition to making it possible for the study to infer from the characteristics of the samples to the population, the survey, as Afonja (2008) indicated. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three ministries in Imo state civil service namely Civil Service Commission, Ministry of Sports, and Ministry of Information; stratified random sampling was used to select the 420 respondents in the ministries. Four-point Likert Scale questionnaire and interview schedule were used to gather data for the study, in using interview, the top executive of the selected ministries was interviewed to elicit intricate information about recruitment in the Imo State Civil Service not covered by the questionnaire. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

## VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Number of Respondents per Ministry

Ministry	No	%
Civil Service Commission	105	25
Information and Strategy	240	58.1
Youth and Sports	75	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 depicted that out of the 420 respondents that completed and returned the questionnaires, 105 (25%) were in Civil Service Commission, 240 (57.1%) were in the information and strategy while 75 (17.9) were in the youth and sports ministry.

Table 2: Academic Qualification of Respondents

Academic Qualification	No	%
Higher degree	45	10.7
First degree, HND	240	57.1
OND/NCE	60	14.3
Below OND/NCE	75	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

On academic qualifications, the response as presented in Table 2 depicted that those with higher degrees were 45 (10.7%), those with first degree or its equivalent were 240 (57.1%), those with OND or equivalent were 60 (14.3%) while those with below OND were 75 (17.9%). The aforementioned academic qualification of respondents was provided for statistical analysis perspective into the staff composition of the ministry under study.

Table 3: Number of Years in the Ministry

No. of Years in Establishment	No	%
Above ten years	345	82.1
Five to ten years	45	10.7
Below five years	30	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

The data on number of years of the respondents in their various ministries depicted that out of the 420 respondents, 345 (82.1%) have been in their ministries for more than ten years. Those respondents in the ministry for five to ten years were 45 (10.7%) while only 30 (7.2%) have been in their ministry for a period below five years. This is clear evidence that more than 90% of the respondents knew the subject matter under investigation very well. The study respondents are workers with experience and knowledge about the primordial factors militating against Imo State Civil Service recruitment exercise. These workers perception is vital to the study.

*Testing of Hypothesis*

Zonal consideration does not significantly influence recruitment exercise in Imo State Civil Service.

To test this proposition statistically, the responses to the statement in question which says that, “Zonal consideration is discouraging effective workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service” was used and contingency table derived,

.Table 4: Responses to relationship between zonal consideration and workers recruitment

Statement	S/A	A	D	S/D	Total
Zonal consideration is discouraging effective workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service	30 7.1%	120 28.6%	195 46.4%	75 17.9%	420 100%

To statistically test this proposition, the responses to the statement in questionnaire which says that “zonal consideration is discouraging effective workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service” was used. From table 4, we drew our contingency table 5,

Table 5: Categorical Table

Statement	S/A	A	D	S/D	Total
FO	30	120	195	75	420
FE	105	105	105	105	420

As has been indicated earlier in the methodology, the test statistic is the chi-square ( $X^2$ ). The proposition is tested at 5% (0.05) level of significance and 95% level of confidence interval. The degree of freedom from the above 2 x 4 contingency table is  $(2 - 1)(4 - 1) = 3$ .

The critical or table value of  $X^2$  at 0.05 level of significance is given as 7.815. The decision rule is that if the computed value ( $X^2_c$ ) of the test statistic is greater than the table (tabulated) value ( $X^2_t$ ), the proposition is rejected at the stated level of significance. If on the other hand, the tabulated value ( $X^2_t$ ) is greater than the computed value ( $X^2_c$ ), the proposition is accepted at the level of significance.

*Decision Rule:*

The computed chi-square ( $X^2_c$ ) value is 141.428 while the table value of the chi-square ( $X^2_t$ ) with 3 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance is 7.815.

It follows that at 0.05 level, the difference between the observed and expected frequencies of  $X^2$  at 3 degree of freedom is significance since the computed value ( $X^2_c$ ) is greater than the table value ( $X^2_t$ ).

Therefore, since  $X^2_c > X^2_t$ , we reject the proposition and infer that zonal consideration is discouraging effective workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service.

*Discussion of Research Findings*

The findings of this research informed that zonal consideration affects workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service. This is in line with views of Ayoade (2011), who stated that subjecting recruitment to discriminates against merit is unfair to the civil service of which the outcome is incompetent workforce into the public service and the result is that of poor performance. This finding is also supported by Osuorji and Okoro (2016) whose study on “a critical appraisal of recruitment and selection in the context public service reforms in Nigeria”, supported that zonal consideration has negative effect on the civil service. 80 percent of those Executive of the ministries interviewed in the course of this study vehemently agree that zonal consideration in recruitment in Imo State Civil Service is a total deviation from employment exercise which portend danger to the civil service as the best hands are not recruited. In most situations, merit is sacrificed for zonal consideration expediency. The primordial principal of zonal consideration is a requirement that encourages mediocrity in Imo State Civil Service.

VII. CONCLUSION

The researcher discovered that workers recruitment in Imo State Civil Service has a significant relationship with primordial factor of zonal consideration. The primordial principal of zonal consideration is a requirement that encourages mediocrity in Imo State Civil Service.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

- 1 The Imo State Civil Service must purge itself from the use of zonal consideration in workers recruitment. This can be achieved through sanctioning and punishing offenders. The elimination of zonal consideration will enable Imo State Civil Service to become very effective in meeting its objectives.
- 2 The Imo State Civil Service must not recruit workers based on political party loyalism. It will politicize the working environment.
- 3 Recruitment examination should be incorporated into recruitment exercise so as to employ the best hands.

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