

Evaluating the Nigeria Civil Service as Agent of National Development

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the importance of the Nigeria civil service in promoting national development in Nigeria. The study adopts survey design as it the most appropriate to evaluate social variables. Data were gathered by sampling participants who were randomly drawn from the population of interest using the Yamani statistics. A 5 point Likert scale was used to craft the survey instrument. Reliability of the instrument was ensured by the use of the Guttman Index Scaling with reported reliability of 90% factor loading; internal consistency coefficient yielded .83 and a factor analysis. Regression statistics was deployed to test the hypothesis, yielding a statistically significant relationship between the Nigerian civil service and national development. The study elucidates the relevant information needed to understand the significant roles the civil service is plays in engendering national development in Nigeria and factors militating against the civil service through both primary and secondary means and data collected were analyzed and a conclusion on the established research questions and hypotheses.

Keywords: Accountability, Bureaucracy, National Development, & Reforms

INTRODUCTION

This study evaluates the role of the Nigeria civil service in contributing to National Development. Achieving economic development has being on the front burner of all regimes since attainment of independence on October 1st 1960. The government sector is the largest employer of labor and active player in the service industry. Hence its policy direction, directly impacts on the national economy. Developing economies depend largely on government patronage to address many socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and consequent associated vices. The civil service is therefore a critical service delivery arm of government to execute developmental policies. According to Nwosu 1997, Nigeria faces greater challenges of national development and optimal allocation of scarce resources than any other country in Africa. As the most populous black nation on earth, with a heterogeneous socio-cultural environment characterized by powerful contenders to the seat of power, the state is constantly under pressure to deliver gains of economic development and in a hurry to take leading position in sub-Saharan economies.

Ola, 1990 contended that the task of achieving economic development in Africa, largely rest on the shoulders of government. The wider society looks up to the civil service not only to implement developmental gains and administer government policies, but as a key player in the formulation of developmental strategies, policies and programs in manners that fast track socio-economic growth. It is through the civil service that government achieves reduction of unemployment rates, increase social amenities, achieve more equitable income redistribution and other realize other fiscal policy directions. Realities on ground and empirical studies however indicate the failure of theses policy thrust in the face of daunting unemployment and alarming poverty in the land.

Statement of the Problem

Research efforts remain redundant and directionless unless there exists an empirical researchable problem envisaged by the researcher. Nigeria civil service has faced myriads of problems inhibiting its ability to play its statutory roles as catalyst to economic development.

Scholars are unanimous that Nigeria civil service is synonymous with inefficiency in service delivery and ineffective as agents of national development. According to Oladipo (2009) and Ademolekun (2002) the various service reforms by different administrations have not achieved the desired efficient and effective civil service. Ade (2005) contended that the Nigeria civil service has failed as agents to social change. This is evidently due to a number of factors such as inherent pandemic corruption, lack of accountability, poor staff training and weak cognitive developments, poor infrastructures and negative altitudinal practices by the service personnel. Despite the series of reforms in the last 5 decades, general poor service delivery remains a visible features of the Nigeria civil service. The study therefore aims at appraising the disfunctionality or otherwise of the Nigeria civil service as agent of national Development.

Research Purpose

Empirical findings notwithstanding, the study is aimed at examining the role of the Nigeria civil service in promoting economic growth and to ascertain the extent to which it had made contributions to national development over the last 5 decades. The study aims to identify ethical factors inhibiting the effectiveness of the service and proffer suggestions to address them.

Another objective of the study is to identify challenges confronting the civil service and offer recommendations towards a pragmatic solutions to the problem.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research questions provide focus and direction on salient issues in the study. It redenominates the research problems to answerable questions. It defines the structure the survey instruments will take and basic variables to be addressed in the course of the research. Research questions determine the kind of research data needed for analysis. It predetermines the kind of data to be sought for, how and where to look for them. In the course of this study, the following questions were advanced:

- What are the statutory roles of the Nigeria civil service in promoting national development?
- How effective and efficient has the Nigeria service delivered on these roles?
- What are the identified factors mitigating the effectiveness and efficiency of the Nigeria civil service?
- What are the panacea to the challenges confronting the civil service in the promotion of service delivery?

The statement of hypotheses are a tentative declaration, assuming a causal relationship between key variables in the study. Nachmas and Nachimas (1976) asserted that hypotheses are tentative answers to research problem. This is like a legal dictum that presume the accused innocent until proven otherwise. So, hypotheses assume a path of relationship between the variable and lays the ground for a contrary conclusion or confirmation by the outcome of data analysis. Hypothesis are generally tentative because their validity or otherwise are evaluated only after they have been empirically tested. They are usually expressed in the form of a relationship between independent (predictive or casual) and the dependent (criterion, outcome) variables. Hypotheses are usually stated in a negative declaration termed as null hypothesis.

For this study the hypotheses is formulated as follows:

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the civil service and national development in Nigeria, and the alternative hypothesis will be:

Hi: There is statistical significant relationship between the Nigerian civil service and national development.

SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Nigerian civil service is one of the most important institutions whose services directly impact the lives of citizens on a daily basis. This study therefore will be of high significance to policy makers on national development and to accord the service the needed attention to enable more effective service delivery.

The study outcome will be of immense benefit to the Nigeria civil service as agent of socio-economic development through effective implementation of government policies and programs. The study will also provide insight into the pool of intellectual discussion on national development and provides a platform for future research on the phenomenon.

The research is carried out on the Nigerian civil service and national development. The main focus of the research effort is on the public sector of the economy and the study spotlights the nexus between the civil service and national development in Nigeria. The study mirrors into emerging issues, statutory mandates and vision 20 20 20 of the Nigerian government.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Evolution of the Nigerian Civil Service

The evolution of civil service as a structured institution of government was analyzed in this study. According to Nwosu (1977) the current civil service in Nigeria dates back to the British colonial rule in 1900 and the later amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1944. Then, the major duties of the civil service were the maintenance of law and order and raising the internal revenue to sustain the colonial authorities. The service was simply an arm of the colonial authority geared towards the prevention of troubles in the areas under the British administration. The service was directly responsible to the Governor-General who reports to the colonial secretary in London. Nwosu (1977) held that the structure of the service was ill-defined. Right at the head of the service was a delegated proxy of the Governor-General, who held the office of the chief secretary. He conducted the entire service with administrative and political departments. The study examined the post-independent structures of the civil service. According to Okunade (1990) the post-independence services were structured into administrative and the professional groups with hierarchical relationships.

The Characteristics of the Nigerian Civil Service

Various ministerial departments and agencies of government warehouse the workers known as civil servants. The service is a bureaucratic organization with codes of behaviors, functions and duties, discipline and responsibilities. The ministries are headed by political appointees termed ministers, while chief executives are appointed to oversee departments and agencies with ministerial lines of reporting. The MDAs are responsible to help government in planning, advising and execution of government policies. The civil servants are career employees and are expected to be apolitical, with neutral political affiliation. They are expected to be loyal to any government in power and help in the actualization of government plans without sabotages. The jobs of the civil servants are tenured and employees are retired at attainment of specified years of service or 60 years of age whichever comes first. Government comes and goes but the service remains. The civil servant exercises the rights to vote at elections but their views and choices of candidates must not affect their loyalty to whichever candidate that emerges as head of government. They are to remain non-partisan. The civil service is guided by codes of conducts and ethical prescriptions and to maintain the highest level of confidentiality.

Functions of the Civil Service

The civil service as agent of the executive arm of government is saddled with certain statutory functions such as:

- **Advisers to government:** The appointed ministers (who are politicians with probably, no bureaucratic experience), depend largely on the advice of the civil service to be able to deliver on their mandates.

- Programme planning: It is incumbent on the civil service to plan government programme of activities and translate them to blueprints of implementable actions.
- Policy formulation & Implementation: It is the civil service that helps the political heads to define and formulate policies of government and effectively implement same policies.
- Budget preparation and execution: It is the civil service that prepare budget estimates, consolidate same and implement it when passed into law.
- Drafting bills: The civil servants in the office of the attorney generals and other political office holders draft bills towards enactment into laws.
- Production and service delivery: The civil service is tasked with production of goods and service for the common use by citizenry.

History of National Developments

The history of development plans in Nigeria has been that of crafting beautiful development policies and failures in the implementation of same midway into the plans. Political leaders seem to loose direction and engage in policy summersaults resulting in abysmal performance on the plan threshold. The first national development plan was formulated in 1962 and 1968 under the thrusts of health, education and employment generation. According to Ogwunike (1995), the plans failed due to overdependence on external financing, as more than 50% of the resources needed to execute the plan was to be sourced externally, whereas actual external financing stood at barely 14% of the projection. The collapse of the 1st republic and the subsequent civil war truncated the 1968 plan.

In 1970, after the civil war, the 2nd development plan was crafted with policy directions on agriculture, industry, transport, man-power development, defense, electricity, communication, water supply and social services. Corruption and budgetary indiscipline frustrated the plan. The 3rd development plan was made covering 1972 to 1980, with a more ambitious focus. Emphasis was on rural development and revamping of agricultural sector. The 4th plan covered the period 1981 to 1985 with focus on social service and health services. The plan targeted improving the high standards of living for the citizens, by increasing the real income of Nigerians. The plan was targeted to achieve more equitable income distribution, reduction in unemployment rate and improve socio-economic status of citizens. Unfortunately, the oil wealth was not properly invested to build viable industrial base for economic development. Since then different administrations had pursued various economic plans, such as Green Revolution and Operation Feed the Nation, Vision 2020, Structural Adjustment Plans, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (Need), Seven Points Agenda etc., but all lack clear methodological approaches towards achieving the set plans. Major factors responsible for the failure of past efforts and plans can be attributed to embarrassing level of corruption, sundry primordial values and poorly structured federalism.

Nigeria has not benefitted from the vast human resources at her disposal, even as the civil service is rendered ineffective, inefficient and ridden with bureaucratic corruption in sourcing, placement and promotion of personnel in the services. Corruption is the undertone, as vacant positions are filled by candidates of the political class and those that can pay huge bribes, leading to underutilizing of the best hands in the polity.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study is situated within selected undergirding theories and conceptual framework, such as theories of bureaucracy, concepts and theories of national development, public management theory and human development theory. This study seeks to evaluate the role of the civil service in national development in Nigeria. The study set out to address the impact of the civil service in contributing to sustainable development. For this reason, the study is situated within the ambit of new management theory.

The Theory of New Public Management

New public management theory mirrors the transition from existence process and procedures to a more workable, practicable and result oriented processes. The emphasis of the theory is on good governance as a

function of the recent globalization of the economy, technology innovation and democratization. The new public management theory is the relentless efforts towards greater transparency in authority, decentralization, resources allocation and performance management through service quality (Pollit 1996). The theory underscores the concept of institutional and organization restructuring towards achieving improved service delivery. It is more result oriented rather than process oriented approach.

Larbi (1998) asserted that the new public management theory focused on accountability, transparency, democratization and citizen participation. It was Jones and Thompson (1999) who argued that the new public management theory is represented by the five Rs which focus are:

- Restructuring with emphasis on core competencies
- Reengineering of work processes
- Radical organization
- Reinventing new ideas & processes
- Realignment by introducing activity based costing and responsibility budgeting.

This study therefore is sandwiched within the theory of new public management thinking.

Theory of Bureaucracy

The theory of bureaucracy was propounded by Weber (1958). Weber argued that in order for any large scale, complex organization to run efficiently, there is need for formalized rules and procedures. Weber (1958) postulated that for an organization to function effectively, they must operate under a hierarchy of authorities and meritocracy, therefore decision making must follow clearly defined chains of command structures. Bureaucracy theory is most rational and idea solution to effective management of complex organizations. The Nigeria civil service is indeed a complex organization, employing nearly one million workers, with well-established chains of command and bureaucratic structures in place. The theory of bureaucracy is most appropriate for the study.

Theory of National Development

The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines national development as a phenomenon which embraces a whole nation. It is the overall development or collective socio-economic, political and religious advancement of a country. Theories of development can be conceptualized into:

- Modernization theory
- Structuralization theory
- Dependable theory
- Neo-liberalish theory
- Sustainable theory and
- Human development theory

Modernization theory is used to analyze the pattern of modernization processes in a society. The theory looked at the aspects of the country which is beneficial and which constitute to economic development.

Structuralization theory focuses on structural aspects which impede economic growth of developing countries' policy prescriptions, resulting from structuralist;s thinking, including major government intervention in the economy to fuel the industrial sector etc.

Dependency theory is closely linked to the structuralization theory and shares most of its attributes. The departing point is that whereas the structuralists do not think that development would be possible at all unless the prescribed structure were followed, dependancy thinking could allow development with external links with developed world.

The neo-liberalist theory emerging from the classical economics thoughts, argue for a free market and stoutly stand against government intervention. The school of thoughts align significantly with Adam Smith philosophy on trade liberalization.

The sustainable development theory is a moderation of economic development thinking such as fusing the needs of the present and that of the future generation together.

Theory of Human Development

The theory of human development is a product of various thoughts on human origins, such as ecology, sustainable development, feminism and welfare economics. It underpins the fluid human characterization from different ages and dispensations, from social mobility to modernization. The theory provides the core ideas underlining the construction of the human development index. It is a human focused measures of development pioneered by the UNDP in its human development reports. According to Ogbenjuwa (2012) there is a need to broaden the space for more learning seekers to make desired developmental impact on human beings.

Civil Service as Agent of Devotional Development

The civil Service in Nigeria occupies a unique position in the formulation and implementation of national development plans. The public Service Review Commission (2004) emphasized the developmental roles of the public Service. Aside the primary functions of the Service which are: Advising political Office holders on policies formulation, implementation of government policy decisions, sustenance of continuity of the state, regulation of business activities and provision of social services, the Civil Service plays a dominant role in the social economic development of any country. According to Ajayi (1997) the task of national development cannot be achieved without the civil Service.

From early 1979, the role of the Civil Service has had to adapt to modern challenges of managing an ailing economic through structural Adjustment Programmed, (SAP), Rationalization, Nationalization Privatization, Poverty alleviation, Empowerment etc. Government at different levels had had to carry out series of reforms of the civil to align it policy direction of government. It is however yet to be noted if those reforms produce the desired result.

Challenges of Nigeria Civil Service as agent of National development

That the Nigerian Civil Service has not been able to deliver on their mandate of national development is occasioned by a number of factors such as:

- Poor remuneration: Despite the various wage increments, the Civil Service in Nigeria are poorly remunerated and earning far below living wages. This makes some personnel to engage in sharp practices of corruption. The Nigerian government recently passed into law the minimum wage at seventy thousand naira which is just above \$43 USD per month. This grossly inadequate and fall below poverty (@ \$2.15 per person per day) of the United Nations, (<https://unstats.un.org>).
- The Service is over bloated with idle personnel who are ineffective and contribute little or nothing to economic development.
- Political intervention and instability encumbered the effectiveness of the Service.
- The Civil Service in Nigeria is not adequately exposed to quality training
- and motivation.
- The Service is poorly equipped with the use of old and obsolete equipment and cannot work with modern equipment.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology defines the research design and strategies, the areas of the study and the population, the sampling strategies and techniques, instruments and its reliability and validity, and the method of data collection and analysis.

The Study adopts a survey research design, as most appropriate for the study of social variables of attitudes, and elicits opinions of participants in an objective fashion. Data were collected using the 5 point Likert Scale which has enjoyed years of usage in social science research. According to Ogbenjuwa (2016) Likert Scale enjoyed a long history of usage in measuring social science attributes of attitudes. Reliability of the instrument was ensured by the result of the Guttman Index Scaling with reported reliability of 90% factor loading; internal consistency coefficient yielded .83. Ogbenjuwa (2016) held that Internal Consistency Coefficient (ICC) is conducted to evaluate the rate of the consistency of the instrument. I finally carried out a factor analysis procedure to reduce the large numbers of overlapping procedures.

Questions were crafted in a one-dimensional direction to enable non spurious computation and outcomes. Questions were semi-structured to keep responses within the theoretical frame work and yet making room for options of choices. Questions were tuned to be non-directional or leading questions, unidimensional and objective. Dichotomous and structured questions were avoided to enable participants' freedom of expression, by availing them, options of choice. The consistency test yields acceptable grade. To ensure the validity of the instrument, I employed the external criteria to check the results across responses. Outliers in my data set were eliminating by the computation of Z-score statistics. The population of the study is the entre civil service population of over 720,000 as at December 2023 and random public analysis on national issues.

Sampling is the scientist approach to selecting sets of participants who are true representation of the population of study and elicit responses from them for the purpose of generalization. This is because it is impracticable to reach all the population of interest. Sampling must therefore be done with the focus that every member of the population is represented. For this study, I adopt a simple random sampling statistic using the Yamani statistics (Onwumere, 2005) to derive my sample size

This is denotes as:

$$n=N$$

$$1 + (Ne^2)$$

Where n= sample size

N=finite population

e=level of significance (or limit of tolerable error)

1= unity (a constant)

In this case we have

$$N=720,000$$

$$e= 0.05$$

$$\text{i.e } 1+720,000 \times 0.0025(0.05)^2$$

$$= 1+1800=1801$$

Therefore 1801 is the sample size for my study. Data was administered using the survey monkey with 87% (1567) response rate

Data Analysis Statistics

The study seeks to establish relationship between the Nigeria civil service and national development, employed a liner regression model to explain the statistical relationship between the two variables. Regression

analysis is a predictive modeling technique used to explain relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. According to Summit (2017), regression is able to identify the pattern of relation, if any, existing between the variables

Model Specification:

Mathematically, the model is expressed as follows:

$$Y = a + \beta x + U$$

Where:

Y= National Development

x= The state of the Nigeria civil service

β = Regression line /slope of intercept

a= Constant

U= Error terms

Using the liner regression to test the hypothesis, express this

$$Y = a + bx$$

Where

x= Dependent valuable (National development)

X= Independent valuable (civil service)

b= Slope of the intercept

a= The constant

$$a = \frac{(\sum y) (\sum x^2) - (\sum x) (\sum xy)}{n (\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2}$$

$$b = \frac{n (\sum xy) - (\sum x) (\sum y)}{n (\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2}$$

The hypothesis for this study states that:

There is no statistical significant relationship between the civil service and national development in Nigeria.

The hypotheses was tested using regression on SPSS

Table 1: MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R square	Adj. R square	Std. error of estimate
1	.885 ^a	.784	.781	.505

Source field survey 2024, SPSS

a. predictors: (constant) civil service

Table 2: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of square	df	Mean sq	F	Sig.
Regression	56.452	1	56.452	221.484	.000 ^b
1 Residual	15.548	1800	.255		
Total	72.000	1801			

Source: Field survey 2024 SPSS

- a. Dependent variable: National Development
- b. Predictors: (constant) civil service

Table 3: Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std error	Beta		
Civil service	1.290	.193		6.686	.000
1 Nat. Devt.	.697	.047	.885	14.882	.000

Source: Field survey 2024 SPSS

- a. Defendant variable: VAR00001

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 indicates that R (which is the coefficient of relationship between the two variables) is 0.697, which explains the strength of the relationship between the civil service and national development. This shows a strong relationship between the Nigeria civil service and national development, which means a virile civil service is a key to sustainable national development. The B value represents the change in the outcome due to a unit change in the predictor variable that is the odd of Y occurring. The b value in table 3 is 1.290, well above 1, meaning, the state of the civil service is a perfect predictor of growth in national development. Civil service has a strong association with promoting growth in the national development indices. The b value further collaborated with $p \leq .05$ ($\text{sig} = .000$), indicating a perfect correlation.

The null hypothesis is consequently rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted thus:

There is a statistical significant relationship between civil service in Nigeria and the national development. As indicated in the empirical studies, the civil service is hampered by a number of factors impeding its effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Civil service is the executory arm of the government. All policy thrust of government are implemented by the service. A poorly implemented action plans by the service impedes government plans and frustrate the delivery of government initiatives to the citizens. The study evaluates the effectiveness of the Nigerian service in playing its statutory role and found out that the service has performed dismally over the years due to a number of inhibiting factors, including undue political intervention, ineptudeness, infrastructural decays and limitations, cognitive gaps, inadequate motivation systems and poor structures. The study evaluated major government policies and development plans from the 1st republic to the 4th republic and noted harrowing gaps between the policies and actual implementations, largely occasioned by poor service deliveries by the Nigerian Civil Service.

It goes to say, that any national development plans not predicted on improved civil service will fail. This accounts for the woeful failures of past development plans in Nigeria. The civil service is a derivation of the

political system and occupies a center position in the formulation and implementation of national development plans. However, the service cannot effectively do this if they lack the requisite skills, knowledge, expertise and needed infrastructures.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends the political will to embark on robust training and retraining of the personnel in the civil service, to gear up their skills and competencies in order to align with global best practices.

Appointment to the service should be done to plug 'square pegs in square holes'. Politicians should avoid promoting nepotism in the appointment, placement and advancement of the service personnel. The service should be made more motivated by according the personnel living wages and general improvement in their welfare. Finally equipment and infrastructure at the service should be upgraded to enable personnel deliver promptly and efficiently on their statutory mandates.

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