

# Productivity, a Mirage in Civil Service in Nigeria: A Study of Abia State Civil Service

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**Abstract:** *There has been consistent low productivity in the Nigerian Civil Service since inception, especially that of Abia State. This paper assesses the problem of low productivity in civil service in Nigeria with focus on Abia State civil service. For the purpose of theoretical explanation, the paper applies Maslow's theory of needs. The research designs are historical and descriptive. The sources of data collection were secondary. Data were analysed qualitatively. The paper purely a non-statistical research. The finding of the study reveals that the major factor responsible for low productivity in Abia State civil service is lack or poor motivation to the state civil servants. It is recommended among other things that Abia State government should through the State Civil Service Commission adopt the cafeteria method of remuneration or technique of motivation and ensure that it is used in the State at all time and at all levels, for greater productivity.*

**Keywords:** Low productivity, Civil service, Abia State, Motivation, Public service

## INTRODUCTION

Productivity is an attitude of mind. It is a mentality of progress, the consistent improvement in a work place. It is the certainty of being able to do better today than yesterday and continuously in realization of goals. It is the constant adaptation of time, economic and social life to changing conditions. It is the continual effort to apply new techniques and methods. It is the faith in human progress (Jain & Aggarwal, 1980). Civil service productivity, captured by the amount of effort, time exerted by civil servants, directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the person or institutions they work for and ultimately the governments' aspirations. Intuitively, one will expect that as the civil servant exerts time and effort in performing his duty, the consequence of such efforts are an expected institutional output and objective, enhanced productivity and ultimately achieve the set goals of the government or organisation. If this is achievable, it translates to better outcomes for respective public institutions as well as general governance in retrospect (Chukwuemeka, Isiaka & Bolaji, 2014).

Although, there are many works in literature on the failure of the Nigerian Civil service especially in the area of low productivity, but very few, have focused attention on Abia State civil service. The civil service in Abia State has been plagued with productivity problems since its creation in 1991 from the old Imo State. This challenge has been as a result of apparent lack of proper motivation within the Abia State civil service. Unfortunately, this encourages inefficiency and low productivity in the administration of governmental goals and programmes within the State.

The civil service in Nigeria and especially in Abia State is characterized as a total failure, which has affected the development of the state and the nation in all ramification. Abia state civil service consists of the various unites of the state ministries, departments and agencies located in the state under Abia State Civil Service Commission to perform the civil services functions of the state.

It is therefore the objective of this paper to discuss the problem of low productivity in Civil Service in Nigeria with special focus on Abia State Civil Service.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### The Concept of Productivity

One thing common to the concept of productivity is the desire to portray some one's ability to produce or the rate at which production is carried out in an organization efficiently by the individual. In the words of Riggs, "productivity is the quality, or state of output. It is a concept that guides the management of production systems and measures its success. It is the quality that indicates how well labour, capital, materials, time, and energy are utilized" (1994, p. 28). Productivity is commonly defined as a ratio between the output volume and the volume of inputs. In other words, it measures how efficiently production inputs, such as labour, time and capital, are being used in an economy to produce a given level of output. Productivity is considered a key source of economic growth and competitiveness and, as such, is the basic statistical information for many international comparisons and country performance assessments (Krugman, 1994).

But in the context of this paper, we define productivity from the standpoint of labour. On this context, Nezu (2001) explains that labour productivity is one of the most common indices among partial productivities. This index describes the role of labour in manufacturing products or services. More labour productivity indicates better efficiency and more useful labour. In the same vein,

Malhotra (1987) defines productivity as the "ratio of output to the corresponding labour", He places the validity of this definition on its popularity. Salter (1966) accepts the measure of labour productivity as output per man hour because it has a perfectly respectable ancestry. Kendrick (1993), also opines that productivity is used to denote the ratio of output to any or all associated inputs in real terms. According to Chukwuemeka et al. (2014, p. 2) "productivity in this instance refers to the amount of effort exerted by the civil servant."

Productivity according to Ogunna (2006) is the capacity of a situation where an individual or organization produces maximum results with available human, financial and material resources to achieve set organizational objectives. In this sense, efficiency and effectiveness are indices of public organization while profitability, efficiency and effectiveness are the indices of business organization. Other scholars like Direck (1986), Liklermah (2005), Nelson (2002), Schomid and Adams (2005) among others were of the view that productivity is a goal of every organization. Any organization that cannot operate to a degree of significant productivity is an impotent entity. Such an organization, these scholars individually noted, would produce a wholesale disappointment to its owners and a widespread dissatisfaction and disaffection among its entire workers.

### **The Concept of Civil Service**

The civil service in the words of Ipinlaiye (2001) is the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and nonpolitical career basis by the federal and state governments primarily to render and effect government decisions and implementation. According to Abba and Anazodo (2006), civil service in Nigeria comprises workers in various ministries, departments and agencies apart from political office holders. "The civil service is the main instrument which government uses to regulate and manage all aspects of the economy of a society. It is the main medium through which all institutions obtain various types of approvals, licenses, permits, etc." (Ishaq, 2013a, p. 158).

The civil service is a branch of government which is usually grouped with the Executive, and without which governments cannot function. These are men and women who have been selected based on their experience, knowledge, character and training and constitute the permanent staff of the departments of governments. They are professional administrators. Some people refer collectively to these personnel as public administrators or the bureaucrats (Eme & Andrew, 2013). Career officers got their appointment from civil service commission, and exercise power of delegating duties and responsibilities to ministries, departments and agencies of government in accordance with laid down rules (Nebo & Nnamani, 2015).

The civil service is mainly organized around the federal ministries headed by a minister for federal or commissioner for State appointed by the president governor for state, who must include at least one member of the 36 states for Federal and one member of local government for States in his cabinet. President's appointment is confirmed by the Senate of Nigeria for Federal while the, the State House of Assembly approves that of the state. In some cases, a federal minister is responsible for more than one ministry and a minister may be assisted by one or more ministers of state as is the case in Nigeria. Each ministry has a permanent secretary who is a senior civil servant. At the state level, civil service is the collectivity of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Governor's appointments into the MDAs are confirmed by the State House of Assembly. The political heads of state ministries are the Commissioners while administrative of the ministries are the state Permanent Secretaries.

The civil service according to Marshall and Murtala (2015) is an organ created to ensure that policies and programs of any government at any particular time are carried out. The Civil service as part of Government never dies because of its perpetual nature and the changing nature of constitutionally elected government, it has to be endowed with specific peculiarities or leanings of that government. Further characteristics of the civil service are that:

- It has to be non - partisan to enable it serve any government of the day.
- It has to be made of experienced men and women with the technical and professional know –how to enable it implement government policies.
- It has to be orderly and also ensure that orderly administration of the country or state is continuous.
- The Civil Service is indispensable since it continues the traditional role of keeping the functions of government running no matter what changes occurs in the administration of the country.
- It operates under rules which guide its conduct.

### **The Concept of Public Service**

Just like civil service, public service is a service offered by the government to all individuals under its jurisdiction, including the most needy segment of societies. It is performed by public servants and includes services like: Paramedics; Fire brigades; Police; and the Armed Forces. Aside from the members of the just mentioned official bodies, public servants are not necessarily skilled or qualified individuals. In fact, they can perform various tasks – including volunteering – that do not require particular abilities but that fall within the services offered to the citizens by the government. Such services should be available to all persons under the government's jurisdiction, including the neediest individuals (Giulia, 2018). The meaning of public service is contained in section

277 (91) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1979 now section 169 of the 1999 Constitution as amended as encompassing the civil service (Ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, educational institutions, financially wholly or principally owned by government at the State, Local and Federal levels, Nigeria Police or Armed Forces and other organizations in which the Federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest. In Nigeria, the Country's government bureaucracy is the public service. This is because government at whatever level enunciates and implements its policies, programs and projects through the instrumentally of the public service. Most public services are service oriented (Marshall & Murtala, 2015).

### **The Concept of Performance**

Through the literature, scholars continuously insist that no standardized or uniform definition of performance exists, and they argue on how it is a multidimensional concept. However, Tatjana Samsonowa argues that all the different definitions in the performance measurement literature, have one common characteristic; they all are related to two terms: effectiveness and efficiency; effectiveness as an indicator of the degree of a goal attainment, and efficiency as an indicator of the resources that were consumed to reach the level of achievement Samsonowa (2012). In her work (2012), she uses the term "performance" as the level/degree of goal achievement of an organization/department rather than of individuals. This chosen definition is mainly inspired from Krause's work (2005).

Andersen and Fagerhaug (2002) believe that it is adequate to reach a time where performance will be substituted to productivity. It is generally accepted to cover a wide range of aspects of an organization – from the old productivity to the ability to innovate, to attract the best employees, to maintain an environmentally sound outfit, or to conduct business in an ethical manner. Cordero (1989), defines performance as effectiveness (i.e. measuring output to determine if they help accomplish objectives). Efficiency (i.e. measuring resources to determine whether minimum amounts are used in the production of these outputs). Lebas (1995), in his own point of view says that performance is about deploying and managing well the components of the causal model that leads to the timely attainment of stated objectives within constraints specific to the firm and to the situation.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **The Functions of Civil Service**

The basic role of the civil servant according to Eme and Andrew (2013), is therefore, to initiate and take active part in all the processes leading to the formulation of policy; and thereafter ensure that the policy agreed by government is faithfully and honestly executed. From this brief statement of the function of the civil servant, it will be seen that the civil service is about the most important single institution affecting the lives of the citizens of a state; its influence is all pervasive, more so in the modern world where most states carryout wide functions in providing social services and regulating the economic life of their citizens.

Obiajulu and Obi (2004) observe that the critical highlight in the major function of the civil service is the implementation of government policies. Civil servants are not policy makers and are not really in a position to question government policies. Whenever a policy is made, it becomes the role of the civil servants to implement the policy the way the government of the day wants it to be.

Also, Ezeani (2005) noted that the civil service is a store of knowledge of past government decisions and procedures. Thus, it plays an educative role by assisting professionals and military political executives (as is the case in Nigeria), especially the new ones —to adapt themselves to the realities of their offices. The federal and state civil servants play important role in policy formulation and advice. They play a major economic, social and educational objective of both the federal and state governments. Furthermore, the civil service also gathers statistical information for the activities of the government. Senior civil servants also have to inform the public about the achievements, abilities and problems facing the government.

Civil services in Nigeria are a natural extension of the executive arm of the government. The main goals of this power involve the provision of the population with the services they need: free medical care, free education, and so on. One of the main functions of the civil services in Nigeria is to make certain services free or, at least, affordable to people and to introduce services that don't even exist yet. For example, owing to the civil services, pregnant women can deliver their babies free of charge in state hospitals, those who suffer from appendix inflammation can be operated for free or at reasonable prices, and so on.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Maslow's theory of needs propounded in his 1943 paper has been adopted for this study. Maslow based his theory on the idea that individuals work to satisfy human needs, such as food and complex psychological needs such as self-esteem. He coined the term Hierarchy of Needs to account for the roots of human motivation. Abraham Maslow propounded the theory of human needs which is popularly known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs in human environment in the society (Aruma & Hanachor, 2017). Onah (2015) remarks that in 1943 that Brandeis University professor of psychology, Abraham Maslow as a renowned researcher in the study of

human needs and motivation came up with his hierarchy of needs theory with a proposal that people are motivated by five levels of needs namely: (1) Physiological needs, (2) safety needs, (3) belonging needs, (4) esteem needs and (5) self-actualization needs.

According to Maslow (1943), those needs that are largely unsatisfied tend to create tension within people that leads them to behave in ways that are aimed at reducing the tension and restoring internal equilibrium. Once a certain need or set of needs become satisfied, it loses its potency as a motivating force until it again becomes manifest (activated).

The central thesis of Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs is motivation. And it is motivation a worker (civil servant or public servant) receives on job that motivates him or her to feel fulfilled on the job, which directly or indirectly increases his performance and productivity on the job. In line with this fact, Frederick Winslow Taylor explains that the role of motivation in influencing a worker's behavior and productivity has been recognized ever since the work of on rational analysis and scientific management Taylor (1911). Taylor, with his contemporaries used classical organizational theories and believed that men and women at work are entirely economic beings; therefore, they can work hard only if their economic positions improve (Richard, 1991).

This means that economic rewards are provided to employees for performance which result in high productivity. At the beginning of the 20th century managers and scholars in the field of management were concerned with improving the productivity of organizations within which work was performed. Therefore, they directed their efforts at finding ways of how organizations should be managed so that there were higher levels of productivity at lower costs of production. Motivation arguably is one of the most important means of boosting worker morale and satisfaction and thus productivity (Nimusima & Tunwine, 2016). This theory is most appropriate because nothing tells of any organization than the way an organization makes decisions and remunerate workers. Every government at all levels would love to extract the best from her workers. By applying Maslow's Theory of Need, this can be done effectively.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers made use of primary and secondary data, which were taken from Abia State official websites, textbooks, journals, internet and other relevant documents.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Problem of Low Productivity in Abia State Civil Service**

In the course of this paper, the researchers observed the following as some of the factors responsible for low productivity in Abia State Civil Service. Chief among these factors are discussed in this section of the paper.

#### **Lack or Poor Motivation**

Empirical evidence from this study shows that there is significant relationship between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and employee engagement in the Nigerian Civil Service. This result is in line with the findings of Renko, Kroeck and Bullough (2012), Jurkiewicz (1998) and Towers and Perrin (2008), who opine that there is a direct relationship between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and employee engagement.

Andriotis (2016) observes that the effects of lack or poor motivation in the workplace are well-attested: higher employee turnover, lower levels of engagement, poor communication, and diminished productivity are just a few of the issues that may proliferate and lead to your workplace become a toxic environment. Ismajli, Krasniqi and Qosja (2015), also believe that lack of motivation in form of none payment of salary as motivational factors have significant impact on the performance of civil servants in Abia State public administration bot at the State and local government levels. The lack of motivation has negative impacts not just on low performance in the sector. It has brought low productivity also this increases the opportunity for corruption under public sector servants.

#### **Absence of Participative Management**

When there is an absence of participative management, workers would not be productive. This is the case in Abia State civil service. Participative management is a decision making process where workers discuss with their supervisors and influence decisions that affect them. It explores the feelings and opinions of workers about their jobs. With the use of participative management, every group is consulted before any change is initiated. Through this system, every worker develops a sense of participation, which results in high productivity (Ejiofor & Aniagoh, 1984).

#### **Politicization of the Civil Service**

Contrary to established guidelines and procedures, undue politicization of civil service in Abia State has contributed to the incidence of low productivity in the state. The role pollical leader in the employment of civil servants in Abia is not encouraging to the service. There is also the strangling of the civil service of the needed resources especially funds with which to carry out its

assignments. The norm that relevant bureaucratic agencies can incur expenditure once budget have been passed has continued to be eroded. Other issues of contention are the apparent lack of conducive work environment and poor condition of service. The wages of a fresh graduate employee of the public service can hardly guarantee the satisfaction of his basic needs. Many cases of sharp practices can be linked to this basic problem (Ishaq, 2013b).

### **Poor Compensation of Workers**

Compensation packages are rewards for performance. They can be in either, cafeteria method, training, cash items such as salary, allowances and Christmas bonus or in non-cash items, which are called fringe benefits such as giving the Local Government workers some items from the government's in scripted products such as calendars, cups, wall clocks, etc. (Ejiofor & Aniagoh, 1984).

### **Leadership Problem**

This is one major problem that will hinder productivity in any government. While conducting this research, we discovered that workers in Abia State find it a bit difficult with their superiors. Most of them complained of their superiors being too authoritative, which is characterized by centralization of authority and decision making in the superiors. Although this type of leader tends to emphasis neither negative nor positive leadership, the superior motivates his subordinates by forcing them to rely upon him for need satisfaction. As such he takes full authority and responsibility for the work to be done. One may argue that in government, things are different, but no matter the institution or organization, the type of leadership goes a long way to either make or mar the level of productivity of that organization or institution (Ejiofor & Aniagoh, 1984).

### **Ghost Worker Fraud**

According to Oguzierem and Sofiri (2018), ghost workers and payroll fraud refer to all processes of employee impersonations that have salary cost implication on the concerned government. It includes all illegal, unauthorized, unqualified, fictitious and non-existing staff that makes salary claims from the government coffers. This implies that underage, overage, backdated employments, inherited employments, unqualified staff and unauthorized staffs even though they report for work daily; are categorized as part of ghost workers and payroll fraud in the public service. In most instances, these fraudulent public officeholders forge the necessary documents and authorizations to add an employee on the payroll. Government at all levels in Nigeria is arguably the biggest employer of labour. However, this huge workforce is riddled with a lot of challenges amongst which are the problem of ghost workers (Leyira, C. M., & Moses, 2018).

McCallum and Tyler (2001) as cited in Oguzierem, Sofiri and Okodudu (2017) asserted that Apart from traditional ghost workers which are fictitious and non-existing employees added to the payroll by payroll managers, there are also the non-apparent ghost workers. These categories of ghost workers' fraud are real staff in the public sector who receives fictitious pay through payroll irregularities. They include staff who receive unearned salaries through false means; for instance, staff who have multiple jobs in the civil service, receives dual or many salaries using pseudo names, employees who earn levels of pay or allowances greater than their rank, employees on temporary absence or leave of absence but who continued to earn full salary, and employees on transfer or retirement but whose names are in the payroll

### **CONCLUSION**

The importance of the civil service to the effective and efficient administration of a State cannot be over-emphasized. The civil service therefore, is those personnel who have been trained in the specialist task of carrying out the broad decisions of the government. For any government to fulfill her responsibilities to the people, the civil service becomes a necessity. For a civil service to be termed efficient therefore, it must be in a position to determine the set objectives and goals of government and must also be able to make use of the human resource available to achieve those objectives and goals.

The attainment of high productivity in civil service in Nigeria generally and Abia State in particular depends on the effective and efficient provision of services for its citizens through well-motivated civil servants. Service delivery is better performed by an arm of executive called civil service. Civil Service therefore, is a government institution that plays important role in ensuring that government policies result in tangible services for the population. In fact, without the body of professional civil servants, national and state governments cannot operate effectively and efficiently.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of the findings of the paper, the following commendations are presented:

- i. As it was found that motivation is an essential tool for increasing the productivity of the workers in any workplace, the Abia State government should as a matter of urgency consider it a matter of government policy to find and adopt the best means or technique of motivation and ensure that it is used at any point in time in the state at all levels.

- ii. Efforts should be made to ensure that all allowances and necessary fringe benefits are paid to the workers. This is to ensure that their morale is boosted at all times, and also encourage them to be more productive. By so doing, the State would have eliminated another major cause of low productivity by public service workers.
- iii. The civil servants in the State should be encouraged to make their contributions towards the achievement of organizational objectives. This is essential because, it has been observed that in some organizations, the workers (especially the junior staff) were always side-lined when issues or decisions affecting their organizations are being taken. They should therefore be encouraged to participate in decision-making and in running the affairs of the company.
- iv. Abia State government should embark on comprehensive civil service reforms. This is simply because the success or failure of any government depends to a large extent on its workforce. The reform will include among other things a biometric audit in order to eliminate ghost worker fraud as some other state governments like Bayelsa and Kano States have done in recent times.
- v. The cafeteria remuneration method of motivation should be adopted by the state government. The cafeteria plan is a pay system where employees are able to design their own remuneration package selecting from a menu of pay and motivational items up to a value stipulated by the employer. In this process, an employee may choose from a number of available options of compensation options, especially one in which an employee may select a personal package of company benefits offered by the employer's flexible programs. One of the main benefits of cafeteria is the fact that it shaves off an individual's tax liability. The State should introduce this method in its remuneration methods as it will aid satisfying workers' desire for choice.

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