

# Diversity and Communication in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service

Samam Grace Abiye

Rivers State University of Science and Technology  
Rivers State, Nigeria  
[arimie.caroline@yahoo.com](mailto:arimie.caroline@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *Workforce diversity is the differences, such as in age, gender, ethnic heritage, physical ability/disability, race, and sexual orientation that make up the employees of an organization. Nigeria is a multinational state inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures. Despite the cultural richness and diversity of Nigeria, the civil service often struggle to embrace and harness the full potential of their workforce. Against this backdrop, there is a growing recognition of the need to prioritize diversity and open communication within Nigerian federal civil service. The study aimed to investigate if there is a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service that deals with multicultural diversity employees and examine if there is a good interest from managers and decision-makers to deal with cultural diversity. The survey research design was adopted in this study, which involves the distribution of questionnaires, following the principles of quantitative research and empiricism. The population consists of staff of the federal ministry of information, Rivers state chapter. The study is based on a sample size of 120 respondents, and adopts the systematic random sampling technique. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, mean score, standard deviation and rank were used to analyze the acquired data. Results revealed that the management of the federal civil service does not demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities as it obtains the lowest rank with mean of 3.52. Additionally, a significant proportion of the participants (76.7%) identified problem of digital divide as the major challenge hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service. The study concluded that by recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, addressing systemic barriers, and implementing effective strategies, the Nigerian federal civil service can create inclusive work environments that foster innovation, engagement, and organizational success. Furthermore, ICTs usage in the Nigerian federal civil service remains a key factor in enhancing public service delivery in the country.*

**Keywords:** diversity; Diversity, communication, employees; ICT; Nigeria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Workforce diversity is the differences, such as in age, gender, ethnic heritage, physical ability/disability, race, and sexual orientation that make up the employees of an organization [1,2]. Diversity management is a faithful initiative aims at achieving equal, diverse and equitable representation without compromising merit [3]. According to [4], what sets most successful organization apart is how they manage their diverse potentialities of human resources.

Meanwhile, Nigeria has an estimated population of over two million people; with a Federation comprising of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory situated in Abuja, further clustered into six geographical zones, namely: North-West, North-Central, North-East, South-West, South-East, and South-South [5]. Nigeria is a multinational state inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures [6]. However, the emphasis is not on the actual socio-demographic heterogeneity of Nigeria, but valuing and harnessing the full potentials of this diversity [7].

Despite the cultural richness and diversity of Nigeria, the civil service often struggle to embrace and harness the full potential of their workforce. Historically, issues such as ethnic nepotism, religious biases, tribal favouritism, and regionalism have plagued the Nigerian civil service, leading to social tensions, inefficiencies and inequalities [8,9]. Furthermore, the Nigerian civil service continues to grapple with significant challenges related to managing workplace diversity and fostering inclusion [10,11]. Hence, management and inclusion of a diverse workforce have become a critical concern and significant challenge in the civil service across all sectors.

As noted by [12], these challenges manifest in various forms and have far-reaching implications for organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and societal cohesion. One of the primary challenges facing Nigerian public organizations is the prevalence of exclusionary practices and a lack of inclusive organizational culture [8]. Deep-rooted biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes often permeate workplace interactions, hindering the full participation and engagement of employees from diverse backgrounds [8,13]. Furthermore, ethnic and tribal tensions represent another significant problem confronting diversity management in Nigerian civil service [14].

Evidence suggests that the benefits of diversity management and inclusion are yet to be fully established in Nigeria, especially in an archetypal public organization where there is a multicultural workforce. In recent years, Nigeria has struggled in its pursuit of a 'real' equitable, inclusive and diverse representation particularly in the public sector [6,15]. Considering the importance of this sector, a truly representative bureaucracy is very crucial to the socio-economic growth and survival of the country. According to [16], people with various experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table when they collaborate.

Meanwhile, the civil service is a vital part of the government in running and administering the public sector and is often characterized by "administrative bureaucracy". The role of civil service in the growth and development of a country is constantly examined considering the fact that civil service employs a large number of people into the workforce of the public sector that compliments the private sector in a free market economy [17]. This is why the civil service of any nation is generally regarded as the pivot that promotes socio-economic and political development (18-20).

Moreover, the role of the Nigerian civil service in public service delivery vis-à-vis bringing about socio-economic and political development in the country is now constantly been criticized and despised from many quarters [21]. The Nigerian federal civil service is seen today by many people as an institution that has become unnecessarily bureaucratic, ineffective, sluggish, corrupt, a clog in the wheel of progress, and unresponsive to the needs of the government and aspirations of the people [14].

Meanwhile, communication is a cardinal component of human activity. The communication process holds the organization together in the sense that it provides the means for transmitting information vital to organizational activity and goal attainment [21]. For effective and enhanced service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service for instance, it is expected that civil servants should be able to communicate effectively among themselves and members of the public. There should be free flow of communication among officials as communication gap can be misinterpreted and this can result to perception of bias. Problems often get magnified over diversity issues because people are afraid or otherwise unwilling to openly discuss issues that related to diversity [4,22].

Additionally, the world has advanced technologically due to the impact of information and communication technology [23,24]. Also, digitalized service delivery in the federal civil service is not only about the automation of the current way of delivering services; but carrying out government responsibility by using collaborative transactions and processes required by the government departments to function effectively and economically, promoting innovation and competition in a bid to improve the quality of services to the citizens [21]. The practices and applications of modern communication tools in the civil service in both the developed and developing countries show that it is a powerful means of delivering better quality services, reducing waiting time, red tape, raising productivity and improving transparency and accountability [25-27]. Several studies are replete with the great potentials of information and communication technology (ICT) tools and applications for operational efficiency, cost reduction, improved quality of services, convenience, innovation and learning in the public sector [28-34]. Thus, information and communication technology is believed to offer considerable potential for sustainable service delivery in the civil service.

Hence, as the need for employee diversity increases, so do the demands, such as the need for effective interaction among diverse employees, this tendency is believed to have potential for conflict among employees [35,36]. Against this backdrop, there is a growing recognition of the need to prioritize diversity and open communication as well as ICT initiatives within Nigerian federal civil service.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate if there is a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service that deals with multicultural diversity employees.
2. To examine if there is a good interest from managers and decision-makers in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with the cultural diversity.
3. To identify the challenges hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. Is there a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with multicultural diversity employees?
2. Is there a good interest from managers and decision-makers in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with cultural diversity?
3. What are the challenges hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service?

## **2. METHODS**

The survey research design was adopted in this study, which involves the distribution of questionnaires, following the principles of quantitative research and empiricism. The population studied comes from federal civil service, Rivers State Chapter. The population consists of staff of federal ministry of information. The study is based on a sample size of 120 respondents, and adopts the systematic random sampling technique. The justification for this technique is based on the fact that it enables every subject in

the sampling frame to have equal opportunity to be selected without bias in a systematic manner [37]. The sampling frame was drawn from a staff list in the office of the federal civil service commission and office of the head of service of the federal civil service, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The questionnaires were circulated to the employees at their work premises. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, mean score, standard deviation and rank were used to analyze the acquired data. Previous research [14,22] effectively used this design. In place of the previously stated rationale, this design is appropriate for this study.

#### 4. RESULTS

**Question 1:** Is there a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with multicultural diversity employees?

**Table 1:** Mean score of respondents according to research question one

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
The Federal civil service prioritize inclusion of cultural diversity in employees recruitment	3.77	.772	6 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service have many policies in place that are specifically designed to foster inclusion in the work place	3.84	.785	5 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service has many strategies to hire or retain trained professionals	3.95	.804	3 <sup>rd</sup>
The Federal civil service faces many challenges in the hiring or retention of trained individuals	3.64	.779	9 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service has awareness or access to resources or programs that support the hiring of trained individuals	4.02	.912	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Cultural diversity can enhance the inclusion awareness in the Federal civil service	3.91	.842	4 <sup>th</sup>
Employees who are different from most others are treated fairly at the Federal civil service	3.75	.795	7 <sup>th</sup>
Employees of different ages are valued equally by the Federal civil service	4.11	.817	1 <sup>st</sup>
Management of the Federal civil service demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities	3.52	.764	10 <sup>th</sup>
Employees of different backgrounds interact well in the civil service	3.68	.901	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.82</b>		

The result of the research question of if there a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with multicultural diversity employees is displayed in Table 1. According to Table 1, 'employees of different ages are valued equally by the civil service' obtains the highest rank with an arithmetic mean of 4.11, and 0.817 of standard deviation, so it confirms that the Nigerian federal civil service treats all categories of age in the same policies. However, the results also indicates that the management of the federal civil service does not demonstrates commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities as it obtains the lowest rank with mean of 3.52 and standard deviation of 0.764. Furthermore, the compatibility of respondents against the questionnaire variables is somewhat good as the grand mean for the distribution equals 3.82. Hence, the researcher can confirm that there is a high level of affection in the Nigerian federal civil service, Rivers State chapter that deals with multicultural diversity employees.

**Question 2:** Is there a good interest from managers and decision-makers in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with cultural diversity?

**Table 2:** Mean score of respondents according to research question two

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
The leadership at the Federal civil service encourages diversity	4.01	.801	4 <sup>th</sup>
Management of the Federal civil service shows that diversity is important through its actions	3.85	.841	9 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service respects individuals and values their differences	3.88	.786	8 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service is making progress with diversity initiatives	3.72	.771	10 <sup>th</sup>
The Federal civil service's policies and procedures discourage discrimination	4.08	.921	2 <sup>nd</sup>
There is cultural diversity among the people a job candidate will meet on his/her first visit to the Federal civil service	4.14	.746	1 <sup>st</sup>
The Federal civil service has done a good job providing training programs that promote multicultural understanding	3.97	.910	6 <sup>th</sup>
Education about diversity will enhance the Federal civil service efficiency	3.89	.811	7 <sup>th</sup>

The Federal civil service provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs.	4.04	.802	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Ethnic, age and gender-based jokes are not tolerated at the Federal civil service	3.99	.799	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.96</b>		

The result of the distribution of if there a good interest from managers and decision-makers in the Nigerian federal civil service to deal with the cultural diversity is displayed in the Table 2. According to table 2, 'there is cultural diversity among the people a job candidate will meet on his/her first visit to the federal civil service' obtains the highest rank with an arithmetic mean of 4.14, and 0.746 of standard deviation, so it confirms that the new employee can diagnose the cultural diversity in the federal civil service easily. Furthermore, the compatibility of respondents against the questionnaire variables is somewhat good as the grand mean for the distribution equals 3.96. Thus, the researcher can confirm that there is a good interest from managers and decision-makers in Nigerian federal civil service to deal with the cultural diversity.

**Question 3:** What are the challenges hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service?

**Table 3:** Percentage distribution of respondents according to the challenges hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service

Challenges	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank
Lack of ICTs infrastructure	88	73.3	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Low ICTs literacy and usage among management and staff	74	61.7	6 <sup>th</sup>
Problem of digital divide	92	76.7	1 <sup>st</sup>
Inadequate ICTs funding by the government	76	66.3	5 <sup>th</sup>
Epileptic power supply	84	70.3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Poor institutional governance structure to drive ICTs	80	66.7	4 <sup>th</sup>

The result of the respondents' distribution based on the challenges hindering ICT initiatives for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service is displayed in Table 3. The challenges include: lack of ICTs infrastructure (73.3%), low ICTs literacy and usage among management and staff (61.7%), problem of digital divide (76.7%), inadequate ICTs funding by the government (66.3%), epileptic power supply (70.3%) and poor institutional governance structure to drive ICTs (66.7%). According to the study, a significant proportion of the participants (76.7%) identified problem of digital divide as the major challenge. The results are consistent with a study by [38], which found that adoption of ICT is an expensive process. The results are consistent with the study by [39,40], which concluded that access, connectivity, literacy, and cost remain major obstacles to the usage of ICT facilities.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Managing workplace diversity and inclusion in Nigerian federal civil service presents both challenges and opportunities. By recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, addressing systemic barriers, and implementing effective strategies, the Nigerian federal civil service can create inclusive work environments that foster innovation, engagement, and organizational success. Through leadership commitment, diversity training, inclusive policies, and leveraging the benefits of diversity, the Nigerian federal civil service commission can position themselves as leaders in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Furthermore, ICTs usage in the Nigerian federal civil service remains a key factor in enhancing public service delivery in the country. Hence, ICTs application in the federal civil service is no longer an option today but a necessity for improving public service delivery.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Suleiman, U. A., & Saxena, P. (2023). Managing Cultural Diversity in the Nigerian Public Service: An Evaluation of Human Resource Practices. *AAYAM: AKGIM Journal of Management*, 13(2).
- [2] Umemezia, E., & Agbonifoh, B. (2017). Culturally Diverse Workforce and Performance in Nigerian Public Service: Issues and Challenges in People's Management Context. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, 1 (2), 23, 38.
- [3] Obiorah, C. A. & Nwakamma, M. C. (2022). Workforce diversity management and nation building in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance Research*, 4(1), 325-343.
- [4] Onah, F.O. (2015). Human resource management, 4th edition. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd.
- [5] World Bank, (2023). World development indicators. [datacatalog.worldbank.org](https://datacatalog.worldbank.org)

- [6] Adeleye, I., Atewologun, D., & Matanmi, O. (2014). 11 Equality, diversity and inclusion in Nigeria: historical context and emerging issues. *9.78 E+ 12: Country Perspectives on Diversity and Equal Treatment*, 195.
- [7] Udo, B. (2016). Nigeria's unemployment crisis worsens; rate jump by 518,000 in months – NBS. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/203891nigeriansunemployment-crisis-worsens-rate-jumps-518000-3-months-nbs>.
- [8] Onuorah, O. L. & Ntagu, M.P. (2024). Managing workplace diversity and inclusion in nigerian public organization: strategies, challenges and opportunities. *Nigerian Journal of Management Sciences Vol, 25*, 1b.
- [9] Ogbonnaya, U., & Ukpabi, D. C. (2021). Managing diversity and organizational performance in the Nigerian banking industry: the mediating role of innovation. *Journal of African Business*, 22(1), 89-112.
- [10] Abugu, S. O., & Eno, E. J. (2018). Workforce diversity management in Nigeria public service: Problems and prospects. *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6(1), 35-50.
- [11] Ugwuanyi, C. E. (2020). Diversity management skills required in the 21st century public office in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 7(2), 265-273.
- [12] Ojo, O. A., & Owoyemi, O. J. (2018). Diversity management practices and organizational effectiveness in Nigerian banking sector. *Journal of African Business*, 19(3), 317-337.
- [13] Adediran, A., Olaogun, S. A., Oluwadele, M. S., & Oluwadele, L. (2021). Managing ethnic and cultural diversity for political development in Africa: A case study of Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 90, 39-54.
- [14] George, O. J., & de Akaighe, G. O. (2017). Cultural diversity and work engagement in Nigerian civil service. *Journal of Economics & Business Research*, 23(1), 59.
- [15] Klarsfeld, A., Combs, G. M., Susaeta, L., & Belizón, M. (2012). International perspectives on diversity and equal treatment policies and practices. In *Handbook of research on comparative human resource management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- [16] Solheim, M. C. (2022). Making a thousand diverse flowers bloom: Driving innovation through inclusion of diversity in organisations. In *Rethinking the social in innovation and entrepreneurship* (pp. 174-189). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- [17] Anazodo, R. O., Okoye, J. C., & Chukwuemeka, E. E. (2012). Civil service reforms in Nigeria: The journey so far in service delivery. *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 3(1), pp. 17-29.
- [18] Awosika, F. O. (2014). Transforming public service performance in West Africa through innovations: Experiences from Ghana and Nigeria. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 2(4), 72-100.
- [19] Kohanovskaya, I. I., Fatyhova, A. L., Golovneva, E. V., & Golovneva, N. A. (2019). Training of civil servants in the conditions of development of digital economy. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*.
- [20] Shimawua, D. O. M. I. N. I. C., & Iorhemen, P. E. T. E. R. (2018). APPRAISAL OF THE CHALLENGES OF CIVIL SERVICE AND WORKERS' PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA. *LAPAI INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ADMINISTRATION*, 2(1), 18-29.
- [21] Nwachukwu, L.C & Pepple, S. J. (2015). Information and communication technologies and public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service: opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews*, 5(2), 132 – 147.
- [22] Mojaye, E. M., & Dedekuma, S. E. (2015). Influence of communication on industrial harmony in the civil service of Delta State Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication ISSN 2224-3267 (Paper) ISSN 2224-3275 (Online)*, 37.
- [23] Ahmad, S. P., Negussie, D., Hirgo, J. B., Tolani, C., & Japee, G. (2024). The impact of technology on higher education in the 21st century: A systematic literature review. *Gap Interdisciplinaries*, 7(1), 120-126.
- [24] Arimie, P.I. (2024). Knowledge and usage of video conferencing software among post graduate students in Rivers state university of science and technology. *International Journal of Engineering and Information Systems*, 8(9), 31-35.
- [25] Obike, C. A. (2022). E-Governance and Fight against Corruption in Nigeria: The Issues and Challenges. *International Journal of Innovative Legal & Political Studies* 10(2):1-9
- [26] Ilawagbon, O. O., & Mustapha, A. I. (2024). The role of e-administration in enhancing time efficiency in public service delivery: a case study of the federal civil service of Nigeria Post-COVID-19.
- [27] Asoya, N. & Obi, E. (2021). Information And Communication Technology And Local Government Administration In Covid-19 And Post Pandemic Era In Delta State, Nigeria. 5. 1-8.
- [28] Yeh, H. (2017). The effects of successful ICT-based smart city services: From citizens' perspectives. *Government Information Quarterly*, 34(3), 556-565.
- [29] Siddiquee, N. A. (2016). E-government and transformation of service delivery in developing countries: The Bangladesh experience and lessons. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 10(3), 368-390.
-

- [30] Liu, S. M., & Yuan, Q. (2015). The evolution of information and communication technology in public administration. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(2), 140-151.
- [31] Sharmin, S., Faith, B., Prieto Martín, P., & Ramalingam, B. (2017). The contribution of digital technologies to service delivery: an evidence review.
- [32] Aimuan, E. & Aigbe, E. (2019). The Application of Information and Communication Technology in Revitalizing Public Service Delivery in the Nigerian Public Sector. An assessment of the prospects and challenges. 10.17605/OSF.IO/7548D.
- [33] Inakefe, G. I., Basse, V. U., & Amadi, J. O. (2024). Evaluation of the Policy and Institutional Implications of Digital Tools in E-Governance Reforms Implementation for Service Delivery in Cross River State Civil Service, Nigeria. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 21582440241297047.
- [34] Ndema, S. C. (2024). Effect of E-Governance on Service Delivery in Enugu State Civil Service: A Study of Selected Ministries. *International Academic Journal of Advanced Educational Research*, 10(1), 107-125.
- [35] Liu, J., Zhu, Y., & Wang, H. (2023). Managing the negative impact of workforce diversity: The important roles of inclusive HRM and employee learning-oriented behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1117690.
- [36] Akinnusi, D. M., Sonubi, O. O., & Oyewunmi, A. E. (2017). Fostering effective workforce diversity management in Nigerian organizations: The challenge of Human Resource Management. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 7(2), 108-116.
- [37] Ogbeide, U. (1997). Statistical techniques for social and management sciences. *Lagos: Amfitop Books*, 338.
- [38] Mofakhami, M. (2022). Is innovation good for European workers? Beyond the employment destruction/creation effects, technology adoption affects the working conditions of European workers. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 13(3), 2386-2430.
- [39] Olawoyin, S.J. & Akinola, G.O. (2023). Availability and usage of cloud computing technologies for teaching and learning in Nigeria universities. *International Journal of Library Science & Education Research*, 28(8).
- [40] Tanko L, Adeniji OB, Nwachukwu H (2013). Evaluation of the access to and utilization of information communication technology (ICT) facilities among extension officers in Shiroro LGA, Niger State, Nigeria. *J. Agric. Exten. Rural Develop.* 5(1):8-13. Port Harcourt, Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 15 (2), 359-374.