

EXPECTANCY AND DIALECTICS OF WANING PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS IN KOKONA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Public organizations and members are required to be guided by established ethics in the discharge of their official responsibilities, to ensure credible service delivery to the citizens. The objective of this study is to examine the extent of observance of established public service ethics by employees of Kokona Local Government Council, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study adopts mixed method with a sample of 282 employees drawn from the total staff strength of 352. The study used purposive technique, because of the homogeneity and relatively small size of the target population; while a questionnaire was employed in data collection, in the primary survey research design. Oral interviews were also conducted with respondents, to clarify ambiguities. Vroom (1964)'s Expectancy Theory was adopted in the theoretical framework, in view of the Theory's potency in providing insight into the relationship between employees' effort and the outcome of the effort, in the form of reward. Data were analyzed with simple percentage tools, as is widely applicable in Management and Social Science researches. Salient among the findings were that Kokona Council employees were aware of the service ethical codes; but they were however largely deficient in fully observing the code, due to the deplorable service conditions, including poor remunerations and incentives. Consequently, it was recommended, among others, that Council should improve the service conditions of employees; diversify the revenue base, to support the anticipated higher expenditure profile; and embark on ethical re-orientation of the staff, to regularize the psyche.

Keywords: *Ethics, Values, Expectancy, Observance, Council*

Introduction

Public servants are engaged to render services to the people through the institution of government as the manager of state. In the growing complexity in modern society, public administration is no longer confined to implementation of policies and executing laws enacted by the legislature. Indeed, today, the legislature makes laws which only lay down the broad objectives; while the task of filling any gaps in legislation is left for the public servants. In some instances, public administrators are even saddled with the responsibility of interpreting certain ambiguity and adjudicating on them.

It is worth to note that administrative accountability has grown beyond its original dimension. In describing the role of the public servant however, several expectations have been identified and the ability to satisfy the expectations has become a hallmark of assessing the performance of public servants in contemporary era. Critical among the expectations are responsiveness, responsibility and accountability (Sharma, Sadana&Kaur, 2012). In this regard, the people, who remain the major beneficiaries of service, expect civil servants to respond very swiftly to their demands. Whether the civil servants can meet the citizens' demand or not, government and public administration must recognize the right of the citizens to make reasonable demands and expect favourable responses (Akinsanya&Rosenje, 2016).

With respect to responsibility, the implication is that public officials are expected to adhere to the implicit and explicit values of proper administration and policy (Sharma, et al., 2012). Since responsible public servants know and understand the law and how to properly administer public programmes, the values provide the guide on how to proceed, in the event of any confusion arising from exigent operating situation. This is the foundation upon which the old notion that public bureaucracy acts in the proper administration of the law is premised.

Administrative accountability has a cardinal objective of optimizing available resources, while striving to achieve the set goals of an organization. For efficiency and effectiveness, bureaucracies must be checked, using appropriate controls. Such controls may be internal or external. Irrespective of the type and nature of the control however, inculcating the right values among public administrators is required, as an effective check on the bureaucracy. Implicitly therefore, administrators must have internal compass or values to point them in the appropriate direction (Maheshwari, 1983).

One of the utmost importance in public service is the trio of integrity, ethics and values (Sharma, 2012). Because public service is a national call, there can be no higher service than that to the sovereign state. The administrator must therefore exhibit an integration of universal values, which include but are not limited to honesty, human interest and traditions favoured in the culture of civilization. Very importantly therefore, public service requires a conciliation of personal and institutional values (Sharma, et al., 2012).

Notwithstanding the absolute importance of values in human social, political or economic endeavours, it is worrisome that experience in Nigeria is one of a continual decline thereby taking a devastating toll on public and private systems. In discussing the role of the Church in the restoration of Nigeria's national value system, Okoye (2014, p.37) noted, and aptly, that:

The single most important factor responsible for our miseries, emptiness and shadow-chasing either as

individuals, the Church or as a nation is our distorted sense of value and misplaced priorities. We must learn to put the values of the mind and spirit before all else.

Worried by the ineluctable slide or wane in ethical values in public service in Nigeria, this study is conducted, to examine the causes of the vice; and the possible effect on the quality of public service delivery and governance in Kokona Local Government, Nasarawa State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem and Objective of the Study

That Nigeria's national values have been on the decline since attainment of independence, is trite knowledge. Much had been said and written about the worrisome anti-social evil which, unfortunately, has assumed a temporal situation in Nigeria's national life. Across systems therefore, the situation has remained sordid (Okoye, 2014; Nta, 2014; Osofisan, 2014). In effect, literature is replete with discourses in the diverse aspects of the waning ethical values in Nigeria, with all the debilitating effect on public and private lives. Kukah (2014), Anigbogu (2014), Okoye (2014), and Mabogunje (2014) lamented the situation in their respective submissions at an indaba organized to x-ray perspectives on Nigeria's deteriorating national values.

Notwithstanding the enormity of concerns duly expressed about the anti-social scourge of declining national values, much has remained unexplored, both in scope and focus. For example, the perception and worries of the young career civil servants to whom the stigma of a shambolic public service will be bequeathed, has not been exhaustively and empirically researched. In effect, it might be difficult to discern the degree of preparedness and response ability of the young civil servants to the emerging challenges when the mantle of leadership of a "dysfunctional system" falls on their shoulders, after the exit of the present culpable generation. This identified gap is the central focus of this study.

As a corollary to the research problem, the major objective of the study is to examine the causes and implications of the decline in the observance of public service ethical values by Kokona Local Government employees, for proper service delivery, towards meeting public expectations. Other objectives include: to propose a platform for understanding the emerging threat of the waning ethical values among employees of Kokona Local Government to service excellence by the management of the Local Government; and to proffer a response mechanism capable of ameliorating the threat, in order to guarantee considerable improvement in the local government service.

To focus the analysis, the following research questions were framed: whether employees of Kokona Local Government were aware of, and understood, the service ethical values enshrined in the public service code; whether the employees observed the ethical values as enshrined in the code; and the factors that militated against strict observance of the code as subscribed to by employees and expected by stakeholders, including the management of Kokona Local Government Council and public clientele.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section clarified the key concepts employed in this study. A review of related literature and empirical studies is also undertaken.

Conceptual Clarifications

Several concepts are often involved in discourses relating to ethical values. It is needful to begin, by providing clarification on the salient concepts engaged in this study. Scholars: Sharma, et al (2012), Pinto (1989), Maheshwari (1983), Subheyyin, Mawajdeh, Talhouni and Rfou (2017) and Akpan and Okoro (2018) employed several concepts in various literature and empirical works. However, of direct relevance to this study are three fundamental elements, namely integrity, ethics and values, all interacting and synchronizing to define ethics. The concepts are therefore briefly clarified.

Integrity

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2010, 0781) defines integrity as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles”. Thus, Sharma, et al., (2012) posited that “people who join the public service do not anticipate becoming rich and famous”. Instead, the pride is in serving one’s state when a decision to take a career in public service is taken. In this regard, the Greek city-state where a citizen was well fulfilled in nothing but in the service of the state is instructive.

Pinto (1989) referred to J.G Holland’s position that public administrators and indeed public servants should be men with true faith and ready hands; men who the lust of office does not kill; men who have honour and will not lie. Implicit in the foregoing is that public administrators are virtuous men who possess the essential qualities of honesty, selflessness and a strong desire to serve the people and nation, devoid of temptation. These virtues are the traditions which civilization, whether ancient or modern very much cherish.

Values

Values are the driving force that underpins human behaviour. The action or inaction of a man can therefore be gauged in terms of the value orientation, structure or system. Values are vital in determining a man’s norms, standards of procedure and accomplishment and goals. They are instrumental in the selection of the means by which the chosen goals or ends of actions can be realized (Sharma, et al., 2012; Akpan&Okoro, 2018; Nwachukwu, 2016; Yaki, 2015). Expectedly, values differ among individuals, groups, communities and even nations. For this reason, conflict of values among different systems can be expected to arise. Individual or personal values can conflict with institutional values, a dilemma often faced by public servants. In this wise, personal goals often clash with the goals of public service as an institution, resulting in “unethical” conduct of the public servant.

Ethics

When a conflict arises between personal and organizational goals, recourse is often made to the established code of conduct or behaviour to which all members of the organization have subscribed. Often, it is required to achieve a conciliation of personal and professional or institutional values. Drucker (1999) noted that “the blending of institutional and personal values becomes the ultimate principle in administration. “Ethics are the moral principles which define the code of conduct or behaviour of all members of an organization.

Implicit in the foregoing is that more than the “techniques” or code, values are the ultimate determinants of the actions of the administrator. It is indeed value orientation that propels the administrator to do the right thing at the right time; to be responsible and accountable for his actions and inactions. The contemporary undesirable experience in Nigeria is therefore, a

reflection of the waning value system, as a result of which flagrant disregard for ethical norms has reigned over conduct (Okoye, 2014).

Major Role of the Civil Service

The key functions of the Civil Service include, among others, to provide the bedrock of the executive arm of government. In this regard, the main task is execution or implementation of policies decided upon by the political leadership. The task also involves providing input in policy matters. Above all, the Civil Service is responsible for the management of the day-day-day duties demanded by public administration or bureaucracy, as noted by Adebayo (2011).

In performing the assigned function, civil servants, and indeed public servants, who are not members of the partisan political class, must strive to be neutral or apolitical, loyal, dedicated, honest, discreet, obedient, anonymous, observe all self-regulations of the Civil Service system, incorruptible, and must stand for continuity, particularly because a civil servant works to foster the progress of the nation, regardless of the ruling political party. The attribute or requirement of political neutrality in the face of continuity of policy is well appreciated by Wilson (1976) in the remark that “the Civil Servant is extremely agile, and politically, almost cynically, dispassionate in reading the electoral portents...” (Adebayo, 2011, 94).

Review of Related Literature and Empirical Studies

Much has been written on, and argued about, the imperative of upholding sound ethical values in every organization whether public or private. Writers and speakers on ethics, are drawn from religious circles and educational establishments whose responsibility and callings fall in the realm of moral instruction. The choice of speakers and authors is based on the belief that unethical conduct belongs to moral subject or discipline; and that expectedly, immorality can be more effectively addressed through moral suasion, which origin is formally and better rooted in religion and philosophy.

Kukah (2014) reflected historically on the nature and implications of the declining natural values across international spheres, particularly from ideological values of part of the Asian Continent, and posited that conformity, obligation, endurance and sacrifice, culture of loss of face and a sense of shame, and imbibing the values of Christianity are critical for national ethical rebirth. Without doubt, Kuka (2014)'s perspective was religious.

In the same wise, Mohammed (2014) traced the history of Nigeria's value system from pre-colonial era and identified several reasons for the failing national values to include lack of well-defined values in nation building, fundamental state of flux in Nigeria, absence of a consensus, wholesale institutionalization of inherited foreign (Western) values upon independence, political instability of governance which militated against entrenchment of an enduring national value system, and the external system of national honours adopted since 1964, with the untransparent selection of beneficiaries. Thus, even with the efforts at “ethical revolution” through structures and policies, such as National Orientation Agency (NOA), Transformation Agenda, Structural Adjustment, etc, the “symbolic programmes” failed to transform or revolutionise the *status quo ante*, because of lacking consensus of the elite which pegged the life span of each programme at the expiration of the initiator. Mohammed (2014) therefore recommended several antidotes including citizen's inclusiveness in the scheme of decision-making; security of lives and property, a revised honour system that guarantees reward for hard work, against the present system which merely patronizes party members or cronies; redressing corruption; and good leadership that will uphold governance through accountability, among others.

Sada (2014)'s contribution delved in the similarities between the scriptures, Islamic and Christian. In conclusion, the position identified three main factors critical in the decline in Nigeria's national value system: socio-economic injustice; loss of confidence in the system, particularly in leadership and judiciary; and pervasive corruption in all aspects of life. In conclusion, Sada (2014) recommended greater sacrifice from leaders and the older generation; reward for hard work and sacrifice; elimination of "connection", tribal, ethnic or religious factors, favouritism and sycophancy. Above all, government must be guided in all actions by the rule of law that must eschew selectivism.

Okoye (2014) recounted the conditions in England in the 18th century similar to the problems in contemporary Nigeria: high rate of crime, widespread corruption, violence, slavery and inefficient aristocratic government, among others. Notwithstanding the poverty level, the elite sustained affluent lifestyle funded through political corruption.

To the rescue, William Wilberforce, a member of the British Parliament, embarked on reformation that involved redirecting societal thinking, in order to re-orient the existing and then fashionable immoral appetite for corruption in business and public service; and skepticism in religious faith. Using literature, social events, religious social functions and legal reforms, Wilberforce effected positive changes in society (Okoye, 2014). Based on Wilberforce's achievement, Okoye (2014) concluded that in Nigeria, the situation is redeemable, only if citizens can learn to put national values over and above shadow-chasing, leading to drastic erosion in values.

In "National Value System and the Decline in Education", Akaruese (2014) stated that "values constitute the 'hub' and the 'supreme' determinant factors upon which both ethics and morality are hinged, i.e, the underlying variables that could necessitate the acceptability of actions of individuals, groups and institutions as either good or bad, right or wrong". To Akaruese (2014), it is the dominant standard of value which determines whether a moral framework could be categorized as ethical or unethical.

Flowing from the standard, if going by example, Nigeria's policy places a high value on qualitative education, it becomes immoral for government functionaries to engage in conduct or activities to the prejudice of providing such standard or quality of education, as prescribed by policy. This position therefore opined that of the root causes of declining ethical values is the denial of citizens such qualitative education as to imbue society with essential ethical virtues required for good citizenship and a morally sound society. The position recommended rejuvenation of Nigeria's public educational system, to enable it perform the fundamental and very important role of providing qualitative moral and indeed education to young people who will succeed the present generation at future dates.

Irrespective of the view point, the elements of Nigerian national values as expectable from the various contributions, include but not limited to, integrity, high ethical and moral standards, accountability, discipline, dignity in labour, equity and social justice, self-reliance, patriotism and tolerance (Section 23, 1999 constitution, Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended).

Empirically, Hamtu (2009)'s study examined the value of loyalty and belonging national development in Palestine. Using descriptive analysis, the study reported that some dimensions of the variables were impactful on national development of the country. These included culture,

citizenship and social customs among others. The study therefore recommended the deepening of loyalty and belonging among the citizens, in order to promote national values.

Al-Otaibi (2019) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of education in promoting national values of citizenship in Saudi Arabia. The study found a high positive correlation between education and citizenship as a value; and recommended provision of quality education as a means of fostering teamwork, moral commitment and a high sense of responsibility.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Al-Amer (2005) in United Arab Emirate, it was reported that belief, history and national orientation were central in interaction among people of a society; and their attitude to national values commitment to social system was also based on these variables. National identity, to “harmonise” the divergent historical backgrounds and beliefs, was therefore recommended, for the unification and common attitude towards a national value system.

A study by Subheyin, Mawaydeh, Talhouni and Rfou (2017) on the status of national values in Jordan, using descriptive analytical approach, found that all the national values, including national unity, moral ethics, respect for others, irrespective of differences in opinion, etc, all contributed to the development of a sound national identity, capable of reducing chaos, strife and terrorism that were prevalent in Jordan and the Arab World. The study therefore recommended the strengthening of the national values and entrenching of same in school curricula.

In Nigeria, a study conducted by Akpan and Okoro (2018) examined the role of national values in enhancing community development. Using descriptive analysis, the study reported that values were useful yardsticks for determining the acceptability or otherwise of behaviour or events in a community. Indeed, values serve as identity and provided guide to individual and communal behaviour.

Related studies conducted in Nigeria by Ajero (2016) and Anigbogu (2016) aimed at examining the strategies for refocusing contents and methods of values education for effective societal development. The study employed a descriptive analytical approach and reported that values were critical in establishing identity, transformation and development or progress of individuals and societies. In a nutshell, values are critical determinants of the direction of peoples’ behaviour as individuals or in societies.

Theoretical Framework

Literature and empirical studies are in convergence on the critical role of high ethical values without which the conduct of members of an organization will only be shambolic. The reconciled positions of scholars (Nwachukwu, 2016; Yaki, 2015; Onwuchekwa, 1996) that good and honest leadership and employees expectation of reciprocal reward high performance is now trite experience.

The correlational relationship between expectation and effort by employees is grounded in Vroom (1964)’s Expectancy Theory, adopted in this study. The central thesis of Expectancy Theory is that a person’s motivation towards an action would be determined by the expectation that the effort would culminate in a success (Sapru, 2013).

More concretely, Expectancy Theory posits that employees are motivated to exert a high level of effort when they believe that the effort will lead to success in reward, such as a bonus, a salary increase, or a promotion; and that the reward will satisfy employees’ personal goals.

Admittedly, Vroom's Expectancy Theory is a motivation-related analysis, with focus on expectation performance reward relationship (performance-outcome expectancy) and reward-personal goal relationship (outcome value). Analogously, when public employees perform public duties dutifully, and in strict adherence to service "ethical code", the expectation is that such performance would be rewarded with benefits which include higher pay or expansion in incentives, among others; When expectations are however unmet, an alternative approach ("way and means") to survival is pursued in reaction to poor outcome, reflected in unrewarding service welfare policy or practices. The situation is exacerbated where corruption is endemic, as it is in less developed countries, Nigeria inclusive (Okom, 2017).

Notwithstanding the original focus of Expectancy Theory as a guide to understanding employees' reaction to failing expectations or outcomes under specific performance, the Theory is adopted in this study because of the potency in providing insights into the attitude of public servants, with regard to the observance of service values and ethical codes, under conditions of "denial" of, and waning expectation from governments, as is experienced among employees of Kokona Local Government Council.

Methodology

Given the objective to "test" the level of observance by Kokona Local Government Council employees of the established ethics, a primary survey was conducted, with employees of Kokona Local Government Council (KLG) as target respondents. The survey variables included the various elements of public service values enshrined in service ethics, chiefly employee loyalty, punctuality, secrecy (confidentiality), work attendance, political neutrality, dedication to selfless service and incorruptibility.

The population consisted of employees of KLG on Grade Level (GL) 07 to 17, totaling 352 (Kokona Local Government, Department of Personnel Management, 2020). The limitation to the cadres was premised on the need to engage the adequately-informed echelon of the Service who should understand the demands of service ethics on employees. In effect, a sample of the 282, comprising of employees on the Grade Levels was drawn, using purposive sampling technique. The choice of the technique was informed by the small size of the target population and the homogeneity of the characteristics, as employees in the same work environment. The technique is recommended by Sekaran (2000).

Primary data on responses from the target employees were collected using a questionnaire; while data analysis was conducted with simple percentage tool. The technique of analysis is widely used in researches in Social and Management Sciences; and was variously used by Ezennia (1986), Modibbo (2017) and Mahmud and Ogwuzube (2019). To validate responses and clear ambiguities, oral interviews were held with 125 of the respondents.

Analysis and Findings

Data collected from respondents are analysed in this section. To begin, respondents were requested to indicate by 'Yes' or 'No' answer, whether or not they were familiar with Kokona Local Government public service ethical values they were expectedly bound to observe, in line with the research question. Table 1 presents the responses.

Table 1: Responses to Awareness on Ethical Values by Senior Staff (GL07-17) of Kokona Local Government Council of 2019

Number of Respondents	Frequency of Responses			
	Yes	%	No	%
282	282	100	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From Table 1, all 282 respondents (100%) affirmed awareness of the existence and operation of the ethical code for public servants, the content and expectations.

Given that respondents were familiar with the ethical code and expectations, the questionnaire proceeded to enquire about the extent or level of observance of or adherence to the ethics. The demand of the question was for self-assessment by respondents and was intended to elicit information on whether or not respondents abided by and sustained the values enshrined in the ethical code. Table 2 presents the variables or values and the responses. For analytical convenience, the extent or level of observance was classified into frequency classes, with class intervals as 0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-100%, and midpoints or class marks (presented in parenthesis) as (10%), (30.5%), (50.5%) and (80.5%) for the respective classes. The class marks represent the average marks or scores for the respective class intervals, Spiegel and Stephens (2008).

Table 2: Responses to the Extent or Level of Observance of Values by Sample-Employees of Kokona Local Government Council.

S/No	Variable or Value	Frequency or Responses				
		0-20 (10.0)	21-40 (30.5)	41-60 (50.5)	61-100 (80.5)	Total (100)
1	Loyalty	0	220	40	22	282
2	Punctuality	0	241	30	11	282
3	Secrecy or Confidentiality	0	244	30	8	282
4	Work Attendance	0	191	86	5	282
5	Political Neutrality	0	205	56	19	282
6	Selfless Service or Dedication	0	200	60	22	282
7	Incorruptability	0	168	74	40	282

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From Table 2, it is observable that across the values, the frequency or numbers of respondents who in self-rating observed about 30.5 per cent of the established ethics were 220, 244, 191, 205, 200 and 168, for the various variables at serials 1-7 respectively, out of 282 respondents. On the average therefore, 74.5 per cent of the respondents rated themselves as only observing the established and known ethics up to 30.5 per cent; while about 69.5 per cent of observance as speed across levels below 41 per cent. To be sure, observance at a level of 40 per cent or below is poor, given that the benchmark observance was 100 per cent.

The picture was clearer when the responses were represented in per centage frequencies, as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Frequencies of Responses to the Level of Observance of the service Ethical Values by Employees of Kokona Local Government Council, 2019

S/No	Variable or Value	Frequency or Responses				
		(10.5)	(30.5)	(50.5)	(80.5)	(100)
1	Loyalty	0	78.0	14.2	7.8	100
2	Punctuality	0	85.5	10.6	3.9	100
3	Secrecy confidentially	0	86.6	10.6	2.8	100
4	Work Attendance	0	67.7	30.5	1.8	100
5	Political Neutrality	0	72.7	20.6	67.0	100
6	Selfless Service dedication	0	70.9	21.3	78.0	100
7	Incorruptibility	0	59.6	26.2	14.2	100
8	Average	0	74.5	19.2	25.1	100

Source: Computed from Table 2

From a perusal of Table 3, it is observable that 74.5 per cent of the respondents scored observance of the established ethical values at 30.5 per cent when the percentage scores across the values were averaged; while only 19.2 percent of the respondents reported average observance level of above 60 per cent across the variables.

A total of 125 respondents across the cadres were interviewed, in order to gain insight into the factors critical in the low observance of service ethics by employees. Although different respondents provided different reasons, the summation of the reasons was poor conditions of service, manifested in low financial remuneration, very poor and withering incentives: lack of accommodation; poor medical facilities, lack of transportation, promotion and training; absence of overtime allowance and paid holidays; poor superior-subordinate relationship; and “total lack of care or abandonment” of employees by the council, and indeed, the public service system.

Furthermore, respondents reported that in place of merit, favoritism, based on personal, political, ethnic nepotism and other de-motivating considerations were prioritized in rewarding effort. Respondents further complained that the situation was exacerbated by the pervasive and firmly rooted corruption in the system; and that the evil had continued to rob serving and retired employees of legitimate but meagre entitlements. In the circumstance, respondents held, and very firmly, that employees were often left to fend for themselves, either during the service years or at retirement.

Arising from the analysis, the major findings are that employees of Kokona Local Government Council were aware of the existence and operation of the ethical code for public servants as applicable in the Council, the full observance to which the employees subscribed upon acceptance of offer of employment; and that the employees were however largely deficient in the full observance of the ethics due to the “precarious” circumstance of the poor conditions of service, manifested in low financial remuneration, far below a living-wage; poor incentives; absence of social security; and lack of, or in most cases, denial or delay of retirement benefits, all of which could be encapsulated in poor welfarism.

Discussion

Three interrelated and reinforcing questions posed in the study were answered in the analysis. The question relating to employees’ awareness of the existence of a code of ethics and the

derivative values was answered by all employees in the affirmative. In effect, employees of Kokona Local Government Council were aware of the ethical conduct they were obligated to observe.

Given that respondents were familiar with the ethics, it became imperative that observance should be undertaken fully, in discharge of the obligation. Unfortunately however, employees defaulted largely in the expectation. The poor conduct was in reaction to the circumstance of the prevailing situation of lacking expectation of welfarism from the Local Government Council. This position is supported by the comparatively very significant number of respondent-employees who frankly self-reported poor observance of service ethics. The position is intandem with the observation of Okoba (2015, 116) who noted that “it is the duty of leaders to understand the changing environment and circumstances and respond accordingly as to reflect the welfare expectations of followers”.

Similarly, Johnson (2004) wrote that when an employer “abandons” the welfare of employees, the employers cannot hold the employees to the expectation of good conducts, particularly because nature abhors hunger and situation of poverty. The high preponderance of unethical conduct of Kokona Local Government employees was also congruent with the observations of Mohammed (2014), Sada (2014), Okoye (2014) and Okom (2017), as highlighted in the review.

As to the critical factors in the undesirable behaviour, respondent-employees offered several reasons, the sum total of which is tantamount to pervasive lack of employee and retirement welfare, as expatiated upon in the review. Theoretically and practically, the effort of an employee could be significantly influenced by the expectation, from the outcome of the effort. Where the employee expects unfavourable outcome, to the satisfaction of the personal needs, the effort is highly diminished.

Thus, holding employees of Kokona Local Government to the strict or full observance of ethnics, when the employees had been denied promotion for upward of ten years, when salaries were unpaid for over six months, and when all known incentives are lacking, may be a Herculean task. Instead, it might be expected, in the circumstance, that “survival” will propel or dictate the direction of employees’ conduct, whether it was ethical or otherwise.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines the extent of observance of public service ethics among the employees of Kokona Local Government. The study reveals that employees of the Council understood the imperatives of public service ethics and values; and the need to observe the values, for effective service delivery. Nevertheless, the employees were “incapacitated involuntarily” by the deplorable service condition in the Council. In the circumstance, resort to “way-and-means approach” undermined the obligation to strict observance of the ethnics. As to what should be done to reverse the ugly situation, several policy suggestions have been proffered. To restore employee confidence in the public service and improve the attitude towards the strict observance of service ethnics in Kokona Local Government, the study recommend that Kokona Local Government Council should significantly improve the welfare of the employees through enhanced financial remuneration and improved incentives, in order to guarantee basic essentials of livelihood. Having provided welfare packages capable of taking employees to a level atleast at par with a living wage, the expectation of full observance of the established service ethics would be realistic, and such obligation could be demanded by the Council from the employees.

To be able to meet this pre-requisite for good ethical conduct, the revenue base of the Council must substantially improve. Council should therefore look and go beyond the monthly receipts from the Central Government. Instead, Council should increase the existing fiscal capacity by broadening and diversifying the existing revenue sources; and by strengthening the machinery for a very aggressive revenue drive and collection, within the confines of the constitutionally permissible fiscal jurisdiction. Complementary to improve fiscal paradigm is the imperative of prudent financial management. Thus, embezzlement, mismanagement, poor resource prioritization, corruption, nepotism and all allied practices which are inimical to prudent financial management must be abated, to release funds for enhanced employee packages and other developmental purpose. Very important too, regular payment of monthly emoluments and retirement entitlements should be prioritized and institutionalized by the Council. A situation in which employees feel “hopeless” while in service or upon retirement will naturally plant fear of insecurity and stampede employees at all levels to engage in “self-help”, irrespective of how unethical the action might be; or the danger it portends for poor service delivery to the citizens.

After putting in place the requisite framework of improved conditions of service, Council should embark on ethical re-orientation of the entire staff, in order to change the existing psyche about the undesirable relationship between the employees and Council, to one of mutual cooperation and benefit, so that employees could appreciate the partnership and be obliged to perform assigned roles honourably. In summary, this study recommended substantial improvement in the conditions of service of Kokona Local Government employees, in order to motivate the desired conduct.

The major limitation of this study is narrowness of the scope limiting the scope to one out of the thirteen Local Government Areas in Nasarawa state has considerable implication for generalization of the conclusion and findings in the state. Consequently, further studies covering the other Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State should be conducted, to elicit a more generalized conclusion with regard to the subject matter of this research.

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