



## **The Impact of Public Service Reforms on the Performance of Federal Civil Servants in Abuja**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examine the impact of public service reforms on the performance of federal civil servants in Abuja. The study sampled 594 federal civil servants out of the estimated 94,511 staff of 29 ministries. Findings from this study show that the needed improvement in service delivery among civil servants through various reforms was not fully achieved due to number of factors. It was equally discovered that workers are not performing as they should despite several reforms across the military and democratic era. The study also found that reforms are not direct causes of poor performance but poor implementation of reforms and its inability to tackle internal issues affecting workers' environment. The study however suggested a number of recommendations among which include: federal government through the bureau of public service reform should endeavor to capture the basic needs of the workers in her reform policies; there should be computerization of service delivery, improved infrastructures, and availability of materials needed for effective service delivery. Such issues as workers welfare, housing, promotion, training and improved salary should be the focal point of the reforms.*

**Keywords:** Civil Servant, Federal, Public Service, Performance

### **1. Introduction**

It is incontrovertible that contemporary Nigeria public service is faced with bureaucratic inappropriateness occasioned by corrupt practices, ineptitude to work, sectional and parochial interests of leaders which have dethroned merits with negative implications on the performances of workers. These challenges account for ineffectiveness in the service delivery resulting to various interventions of the successive governments through reforms (Ake, 2015). Although it has been loaded with barrage of reforms, it has not attained the desired efficiency and effectiveness on service delivery. The greatest challenge facing public sector is inability of the government to execute those policies effectively on public servants. Therefore, reforms are short lived surviving within a transient period without fulfilling the purpose for which it was meant for. This explains why there have been endless reforms on public servants each administration with their own different but related reforms yet little or nothing has been achieved. Lack of reforms implementation has implication for performance, effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery in Nigeria (Eze, 2013; Charles & Batholomen, 2019).

The Nigerian public institutions are confronted with many obstacles posing as challenges to the performances of workers over the years which have hampered with the purpose for the



establishments of those institutions. Successive governments of the federation have responded to these improprieties in the public sector through various reforms. According to Obioji (2019) the Nigerian federal ministries and agencies suffer the worst form of bureaucratic inappropriateness in the world. The federal civil service is increasingly on decadence that no year passes by without government introducing new reforms on the civil servants (Eroke, 2019). The government resentment to reforms is based on general knowledge of the potency to remedy organizational unsuitability. Reforms have been numerous in Nigeria but public sectors have not achieved the desired status. This is an indication that there are issues endemic in the reforms that were being introduced.

Okorie and Onwe (2016) further noted that performances of public bureaucracy in Nigeria is abysmal, full of contradictions- excessive bureaucratization unbridled intrusion by the political class coupled with unprecedented challenges emanating from globalization and anti-democratization routinized which characterised civil service as major limitations to success. Osawe (2013) in addition asserted that public sector has become an epitome of all that is corrupt, mediocre and fraudulent. The state of public sector in Nigeria is deplete and in near total collapse due to weak morale, poor remuneration, inefficiency, incompetence and merit abandonment. Nigeria public service continued to manifest symptoms of bureaucratic inappropriateness and challenges which have hampered with the very foundation and purpose for their establishment. The governments have introduced reforms against this background in an attempt to reposition public sector. The reforms were hoped to improve the dilapidating situation of the public institutions. The public institutions are rated poor due to some prevailing organisational circumstances that are not in tandem with the global best practices. Part of the reasons for its marginal success is prolong military rule in Nigeria coupled with attendant inconsistency of the policies (Eze, 2013; Adebisi, 2014; Okorie & Onwe, 2016). Beyond this background are internal and external factors affecting both private and public organizations unique to Nigeria ecology which undermined performance.

Conversely, this study will bridge the gap in the role of reforms towards achieving high organizational performance which has created a missing link in the reforms. It is observed that the issue of performance continue to posse challenges despite various reforms aimed at promoting workers performance. This study will unravel eminent factors in the reforms or aspect of work which reforms have not sufficiently addressed for effective performance. It is in the light of these inestimable indispensability of public service that this study examine the impacts of public service reforms on employees' performance using the Federal Civil Service (FCS) as a case in point.

## **2. Literature**

### *The Origin of Public Service in Nigeria*

The history of civil service in Nigeria can be traced to many factors among which, according to Ogunrotifa (2012) include colonialism and the development of capitalism in the 19th century across the cosmopolitan. Specifically, public service originated in Nigeria in 1862, following the annexation of Lagos by the white man in 1860 the British



government transformed the local existing structures into public service with the aim of exploiting the locals of their God given resources for the British advantage. It was designed to actualise a specific purpose, viz; to serve the colonial administration and ensure survival of capitalism in Nigeria. Before the emergence of what is known as public service today the colonial administration made use of the local administrative structure that was on existence. Okene (2010) observed that in the north, there was a system of indirect rules where native authorities were converted to colonial administrators and wage earners.

Ogunrotifa (2012) opined that the history of public service in Nigeria is the history of evolution of Nigeria modern state. The British government established different hierarchical positions of Governor, Chief Magistrate, Colonial Secretary and Senior Military Officers, Offices of Private Secretary to the Governor, Auditor for Public Accounts, Chief Clerk, and Collector of Customs. These public bureaucracies created by Britain serve as essential ingredients, a conduit/means of consolidating the pre-colonial state structure in Nigeria. In 1900 the Niger Coast Protectorate was merged with Lagos Colony to form southern protectorate and this mark the beginning of public service story in the south with Lagos as the head quarter (Modupe, 2015).

The story is not different in the Northern Nigeria as British subtleness and inconsequential gesture was evident, the colonial government transformed local structure for the colonial advantage (Okotoni, 2004). It established a system of indirect rule where the traditional authorities were converted to colonial officials with wages. These officials were in charge of daily administration of the people under colonial authority. Under this arrangement, the emirs retained their caliphates, title and positions. They became the executors of British policy in their respective kingdoms and answerable to British district officers, who held state authority. They became agents of British colonial authority with the responsibility of peacekeeping, tax collection and other duties assigned to them by the officials (Fashoyi, 2010). However, the highest authority and power resides with the colonial official (governor-General) who has the power to fire any erring emir at will. Ogundiya (2007) maintained that the overall objective of the colonial public service in Nigeria was for tax collection and maintenance of law and order.

In 1914, Fredrick Lugard the governor general of the colonial administration merged the two protectorates of Nigeria through a process known as “amalgamation”. This era witnessed significant growth in the public sector and then began the formation and emergence of trade unions. As Obasa (2018) observe that trade unionism originated in the civil service in 1912. The first trade union organization in Nigeria was the Southern Nigerian Civil Service Union (SNCSU). It later transformed into the Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) after amalgamation in 1914 (Okolie, 2010). This was followed later by Nigerian Railway Workers’ Union (NRWU) and by the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) in 1931. About twelve workers’ unions which function more or less like a social clubs existed between 1912 and 1938 (Nwekeaku, 2019).

However, due to rapid growth in the public sector, there was shortage of skilled personnel to manage the emerging bureaucracies. The colonial administration quickly realised the



need for the development of indigenous manpower to ensure effective functioning of the colonial rule. This led to the introduction of Western Education. More schools were built for the natives especially in Southern Nigeria to train workers, doctors, clerks, teachers, local administrators that will function in emerging bureaucracies. In the North, colonial rulers was reluctant to permit missionaries to open schools in order not to offend the Emirs whom the northern administration relied on (Okolie, 2010). The northern leaders had earlier agreed with the colonial officials not introduce western education in the north for the masses to remain subservient to their authority. Only few schools were permitted to operate in the north. The colonial administration legitimatised complete feudalisation of Northern Nigeria but the emirs ensured the perpetuity of Islamic education in order to prevent opposition to their misrule and domination (Adefolaju, 2013).

The 1940s and 1950s were marked by the emergence of the Nationalists and Administrators thereby consolidation of Nigerian public service. This period was also remarkable in the history of public service because it was the beginning of quest for reforms in both the Nigerian political system and public service structure. Elsewhere in this paper is been noted that Nigerian civil service is a colonial heritage. The Nigeria public service as we have today originated in organizations established by the British colonial rule although the colonialists dominated the upper echelon of executive, judicial and legislative powers at that time. Succeeding constitutional reviews increased the stake of Nigerians at the helm of the public service until independence.

The Nigerian public service at post-independence was indigenised and witnessed shortage of local skilled manpower that can assume duties played by the departed foreign personnel (Fashoyi, 2010). This raised more consciousness to education. Nigerian government inherited overwhelmingly, administrative structures of the colonist which were designated to meet the requirements of the colonial powers whose concern were extradition of natural resources than development of economic and human capacities (Corkery, 1995). Nigerian government became confronted with the multiple needs of establishing machineries of government that would promote participation, transparency, predictability, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. Hence, the drift towards public service transformation from the colonial role of tax collection to the role of social service delivery, infrastructural development and nation building capable of assisting the new government to plan and accelerate the pace of Nigeria's socio-economic development.

The post-colonial Nigeria political elites espoused the colonial bureaucratic features and pursued the system of imitative postcolonial reform that was predicated on the colonial heritage of dictatorship, distrust, elitism, paternalism, centralisation, formalism, aloofness, secrecy, hierarchical rigidity and urban bias (Ayodeji, 2012). The collapse of first republic in Nigeria through military coup de' tat in governance in 1966 brought to the lime light the undisputable role of public service to the management of public institutions. Despite the history and politicisation of the Nigerian public service from the earlier post colonization (independent era) to the present time, public service still play active role, an essential means through which government and people reach a compromise. It is with the help of the



public institutions state that policies and programmes in both social and economic management in terms of formulation and implementation are executed. Government policies such as gathering and supplying of data for policy makers, ensuring continuity of services and public relations services are possible through public corporations.

*Contributions of Reforms to the Public Service*

Despite the apparent shortcoming of the public sector organizations in Nigeria the public service reforms were not deluded of some impactful contributions to public service. The contention of this study remains that public bureaucracies have not lived to the expectation and purpose of its establishment. However these are some of the changes brought through reforms. Increment of workers salary and guaranteed upward mobility: the various increment of workers salary from the initial seventy five thousand to the present thirty thousand naira of minimum wages was as mile stone achieved through the recommendation of various commissions and effected by the federal government of Nigeria. Establishment of unified salary structure for public institutions across regions and private organization that solved the problem of regional dichotomy in the service reward and setting the bench mark for private organizations. Establishment of the office of minister with specified tenure of office and function (Modupe, 2015).

Establishment of civil service commission and office of head of civil service. Setting up of Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) which is a commission that oversees the affairs of public service giving it some autonomy and direct influence and control of the government. Introduction and establish of federal character commission to ensure employment into the public service reflect the federation of Nigeria to ensure equity among the federating units giving it a federal character in employments and appointments. Implantation of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) which was responsible for elimination of ghost workers. This has resulted in a significant reduction of the burden of civil service wage bill on the budget (recurrent expenditure as proportion of federal government of Nigeria budget decline from over 80% in 1999 to 50% facilitating manpower planning as well as assist in providing information for decision making; eliminate records and payroll fraud, such as the 'ghost workers' syndrome, double dipping and credentials falsification (Bureau of Public Service Reform, 2021).

Right sizing, of the civil service by the way of downsizing and eliminating cost workers and wastage of resources and further ensure efficiency and effectiveness by inculcating principles of Webber's bureaucracy. Monetization of benefits to checkmate stupendous spending of public resource by the officials who indulge in over estimation. Reduction of the over bloated work force, based on some clear criteria. Introduction of contributory pension scheme through which both the worker and employer can contribute and save for employees' retirement. Restructuring of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and restructuring of parastatals for effective performances. Institutionalization of service charters and servicom. Enactment of new rules that takes into cognizance of current issues that are current that are not in tandem with global best practices in public service administration. Formulation of anti-corruption agencies like independent corrupt practices



and other related crimes commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to fight corruption in the public institutions. Introduction of consolidated Salary Structure and pay adjustment. Successful transition from the PAY-AS-YOU-GO (PAYG) Pension scheme to a contributory system in the entire public service (Vanguard Newspaper, September, 10, 2021).

Transformational theory represents the modern views on leadership philosophies. The major argument of the theory is that leadership of organizations have key roles in inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for the organization or unit (Obansa, 2018). The major preoccupation of the theory is the changing roles of leaders in envisioning and implementing the transformation in organization for improved performance. This role is the major stumbling block to the public service in Nigeria. It accounts for poor implementation of policies that would amount to transformation in the public sector. Although there are other leadership views in organization the transformational theory is the most outstanding. It looks up for an organisational situation where every elements are in rightful place for the best performances and output.

Ogunrotifa (2012) argued that poor leadership system and wrong appointment of personnel into leadership position is the major cause of poor implementation of reforms. These reforms are policies for transformation. Arowolo (2012) insisted that the type of leaders for transformation is unlike any other leader because they inspire their subordinates with a sense of purpose that goes beyond a simple exchange of rewards for efforts provided. The leader takes as utmost priority and responsibility to inspire/persuade their associates to strive for a higher level of achievement as well as higher levels of moral and ethical standards. It goes beyond persuasion to laying foundation for developmental purposes for their associates, they optimize the development of their organization as well. High performing associates build high performing organizations. The theory despite its richness has come under serious scrutiny. It has argued that made some causal assumption that are unverifiable. Like contingency above there are different approaches to organizational circumstance. It place overdue emphasis on leaders. Organisation is made up of several departments every element has a contribution towards the success of the organization.

### **3. Methodology**

The primary objective of this study is to examine civil service reforms and employees performance of the Federal Civil Service in Abuja. Other specific objectives include: to evaluate factors that led to public service reforms in Nigeria and also ascertain the impact of public service reforms on workers of the federal civil service Abuja. Out of 94, 511 federal civil servants in 29 ministries in Abuja, 622 samples were taken using Taro Yamane (1967) formular. Cluster sampling and simple sampling techniques were employed in order to achieve the objectives of the study. This study used interview technique and simple percentage to analyze the response.



#### 4. Result

##### *Awareness and Perceived Benefits of Civil Service Reform on Workers' Performance*

Table 1 shows that respondents who are aware of the civil reforms in Nigeria are higher (77.9%), than those who are not aware of it (13.6%). This represents about three-fourth of the whole distribution.

Table1: Awareness of civil reforms in Nigeria

Aware of civil reforms in Nigeria	Frequency	Percent
Accepted	463	77.9
Rejected	81	13.6
Can't say	50	8.4
Total	594	100.0

Source: Field survey (2022)

The qualitative data further revealed that there have been a number of reforms which contributes to increased awareness of it. A participant said:

*Far back during colonial and military regime there has been a number of reforms introduced, but despite the reforms those problems are still making head ways in the civil service of today. (Male, 59years, administrator, ministry of education and youth development).*

The level of knowledge of civil service reforms among civil servants is quite below expectation. It appears that civil servants are so use to day-to-day routine activities to such an extent that government reforms have no significant effect on them.

Table 2: Awareness of civil service reforms in Nigeria by Sex

Sex	Accepted	Rejected	Can't say	Total
Male	220 (47.5)	11 (13.6)	28 (56.0)	259 (43.6)
Female	243 (52.5)	70 (86.4)	22 (44.0)	335 (56.4)
Total	463 (100.0)	81 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	594 (100.0)

Note: sex (% in parenthesis), ( $\chi^2$  - 40.046; df - 2; p value - 0.000)

Source: Field survey (2022)

Table 2 shows that 13.6% of the male population says they are not aware of civil reforms in Nigeria followed by 47.5% who says yes. 56.0% constitute the highest number of male populations who says "they can't say". Also 44.0% of the population constitute the least among female respondents who says that they "can't say", while 52.5% who agreed that they are aware of civil reforms in Nigeria. However, 86.4% respondents constitute the highest proportion of the female population in the frequency distribution who are not aware of civil service reforms. Those who are aware of reforms are numerous in the study respondents, so the study is not strange and the study questionnaire could be understood well.





Table 3: Civil service reforms by Regimes

Reforms	Frequency	Percent
Buhari reforms	89	14.9
Jonathan reforms	95	16
Obasanjo reforms	94	15.8
Military reforms	83	14
1999 to date reforms	233	39.2
Total	594	100.0

Source: Field survey (2022)

The table above shows that those who are aware of the phenomenon of public service reforms from 1999 to-date are the highest with 39.2%, those that are aware of Goodluck Jonathan reforms are 16%, while that of the military are the lowest. Those who are aware of Buhari and Obasanjo reforms have 14.% and 15.8% respectively. This result is indicative of massive awareness of public service reforms by the workers. The workers indicated various sources of their awareness of reforms but mostly in the civil service where they have witnessed it being introduced. This evidence is supported by data from in-depth interview according to a respondent:

*Reform is not a new thing to our workers here because there are many reforms that have been introduced,. I am sure they will come up with one if you don't know about it or witnessed it yet. My knowledge of it started even before I began to witness it in industry. It's becoming like a national anthem that be sing every day in radio. There is nothing that one will be confused about in the government reforms to the civil service. Nigeria has the highest number of reforms. We are happy thing are gradually getting better. I know certainly one day the civil service functionality will be realized through these reform (Male, 44years, Professional/senior civil servant, works and housing)*

Table 4: Reforms considered Effective

Reforms	Frequency	Percent
Buhari reforms	54	11.5
Jonathan reforms	54	11.5
Obasanjo reforms	71	15.2
Military reforms	52	11.1
1999 to date reforms	94	20.1
Can't say	143	30.6
Total	468	100.0

Source: Field survey (2022)

The table above gives information about the effectiveness of reforms. From all indication majority of the workers denied that forms have not been effective with 30.6% who cannot say, both Buhari and Jonathan have 11.5%, while 11.1% goes to those with the opinion that it was military, 15.2% is for respondents that accepted Obasanjo reforms as effective and 20% said it was 1999 to date that are effective. Looking at the result above it is clear that benefits of reforms or its' effectiveness has not been fully realised or enjoyed by the workers.





Table 5: Results on Reforms addressing all the Issues Affecting Workers Performance

Addressed issues affecting workers performance	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	73	12.3
Disagreed	521	87.7
Total	594	100.0

Source: Field survey (2022)

Table 5 shows the responses on if reforms have addressed all issues affecting poor workers' performance. It can be observed that only 12.3 percent of the respondents hold the view that reforms have addressed issues affecting workers performance. The remaining 87.7% reported that it has not. Data from the qualitative study corroborates the findings that reforms have not addressed issues affecting workers' performance, including other anomalies like poor attitude and ineffective service delivery. For example:

*I wouldn't deny that reforms haven't had any effect on the performance of workers but it hasn't addressed most issues that are related to poor performance of work. When government make policies there are objectives behind these policies. They were supposed to be the panacea behind the anomalies in the civil service like poor performance, poor attitude, ineffective service delivery etc. now the question is has reforms achieved these? The answer is no, it has not (Male, 60years, administrator, ministry of education and youth development). These reforms have not significantly changed anything. The performance of workers is still grossly low and that has affected the development and stability of workforce in Nigeria. Look at the federal civil service here in Abuja and imagine what will be happening in other places (Male, 55years, senior executive officer, ministry of transport)*

Furthermore, participants also revealed that government policies do not capture the basic factors which often leads to problems in themselves. One of the participants has this to say:

*Take for example the new salary restructure has not made workers to meet their basic needs in the society, monetization tends to profit some high-profile workers who indulge in it for massive fraud and so on so forth. Government policies are always deficient and mainly do not capture the basic factors and sometime these policies become problem on themselves to the workers. Until now the public service is still entangled by low productivity. It has never lived up to expectations. The government and workers are to blame for that. The little efforts of the government have not been appreciated by workers they keep making reference to political offices and because of this they became sad, indulge in dubious activities and develop cold attitudes towards their work (female 58years, senior civil servant, ministry of justice).*

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examines the impact of reforms on the work performance of civil servants of the Federal Civil Service, Abuja. The study found that workers are not performing as they should despite several reforms across the military and democratic era. The study also found that reforms are not direct causes of poor performance but poor implementation of reforms and its inability to tackle internal issues affecting workers' environment. There are internal factors inherent yet still pose an unflinching challenge to the workers and these challenges



water down the reforms. These factors mostly border on workers' welfare or needs that are not properly attended to. Reforms should be able to motivate workers to work as well as create enabling environment where workers can put in their best, but this is hardly the case with the several reforms recounted over the years. Okorie and Onwe (2016) similarly reported in their study that the good intentions of civil service reforms were for promotion, growth, stability and development, yet, these have been unrealised, leading to ineffective and inefficient service delivery.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: The federal government through the bureau of public service reform should endeavor to capture the basic needs of the workers in her reforms policies. Such issues as workers welfare, housing, promotion, training and improved salary should be the focal point of the reforms. Work environment must be as conducive as possible; there should be computerization of service delivery, improved infrastructures, and availability of materials needed for effective service delivery.

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