

Public Service and Efficiency Challenge in Nigeria



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Abstract. *There is a saying that no country develops beyond the capacity of its public service. Hence, public service provides the total services for the well-being of citizens under the government budget. When citizens' well-being is provided, their reliance on government is assured. In Nigeria, public service has not been able to provide adequate service for the well-being of citizens. This article examined the causes of public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria and offered remedial actions. The study is theoretical and it obtained data from textbooks, journals, newspapers and the internet while the data analysis was done through the descriptive method. Adopting the functionalism theory as the article theoretical framework, public service was identified as structured into ministries and parastatals to properly serve the public; but, it has failed to perform as expected. Among others, the article found bad leadership, crisis of governance, disrespect to rules, institutionalized corruption, poor professionalism, and intermingling public interests with politics as causes of public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria. The article concluded that without a determined and active government leadership who must have public interest; willing to repel bad governance and institutionalized corruption, any attempt to improve efficiency of public service in Nigeria will only result into building a castle on the air. It recommended that Nigeria should have a determined and active leadership who will promote rule of law and good governance among others.*

Keywords: *public service, efficiency, governance, government, leadership, rule of law, development, good leadership.*

JEL: J48, D73, H83.

1. Introduction

In all parts of the world, governments maintain a sustainable and efficient public service that will be competent and good enough to provide services, which are needed to achieve the well-being of citizens and develop the country. Hence, a country cannot develop beyond the capacity of its public service. Again, it is when the needs of citizens are guaranteed that government enjoys their trust. This puts public service in the commanding heights of governance as, without it, the government will be constrained to achieve the goals of the state or properly and successfully serve the public. This means for the government to efficiently govern a country, it must first maintain nation public service to be in proper perspective to provide the totality of services needed to ensure that the socio-political, cultural and economic life of its nation is viable. The public service is structured into civil service that comprises the ministries and the parastatals, which consist of extra-ministerial agencies. All of these consist of institutions and employees of federal, state, and local governments. It is envisaged that with proper maintenance and control of public service, identification of blurring activities; the initiatives and responsibilities for tackling them will earn Nigeria the status of good governance.

However, available literature showed that most ministries and extra-ministerial institutions in Nigeria are defective. This presented the nation's public service as inefficient. Consequently, many people are forced into a hybrid of poverty and insecurity. Hence, Wantu (2019:8) documented that. "Over three thousand, five hundred and fifteen (3,515) IDPs at Mbawa IDPs Camp in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State are crying of hunger, diseases, and lack of accommodation in the face of heavy rains. The chairman of the camp; not less than eight (8) people died recently of hunger. A child by the name Nani got missing in the camp in March 2019 when he went to search for food. A lady in the same camp known as Iorhemba gave birth to a baby girl in the camp's clinic and the only thing she got was a nappy." Similarly, Okebukola was cited by Nwolise (2019:2) saying:

"A situation in which the freedom of people is threatened; social-economic abilities are limited; fear becoming part of their daily living; increased threats to persons of certain beliefs or religion presents grave implications for human security and development. The Boko Haram insurgency in

Nigeria has continued to limit the economic potential of the country. Right to life, freedom of speech, movement, religion and association is hampered. The fear of suicide bombing and invasion of communities by herdsmen and displacing of citizens from their ancestral homes and other armed men now pervade the air. Teenage boys and girls are being used as suicide bombers.”

According to El-Rufai (2013:315) broad consensus amongst Nigerians labelled public service in Nigeria as dysfunctional and broken. As he said, “the quality of public servants and the services they provide to Nigerians are both below expectation and our public service is more recently perceived as an employer of the dull, the lazy and the venal.” But, why does government leadership allow the public to be broken when it is apparent that public service provides services, which take care of citizens from their womb to tomb? Okoye & Oghoghomeh (2011:1) argued that “reliance on efficient service delivery of public service to citizens in most developing countries has always resulted in disappointing results.”

There is an African adage that “if a wall did not crack, a lizard cannot enter.” Also, there is another saying that “if a house did not fall, a goat cannot climb the roof.” From the discourse above, it seems to be obvious that the public service in Nigeria has broken. Hence, none of its structure has been functional. For instance, the Academic and Non-Academic Unions of Universities for the poor educational system by government poor healthcare services; total breakdown of internal security, electricity and water sectors among others have put Nigerian citizens into despair. But, now that public service in Nigeria has crossroads and is broken, what can we consider as the causes and the remedial actions? These are the two issues this article set to address. To achieve these, the article was structured into six. The first is the introductory part whiles the second, third and fourth parts discussed methodology, theoretical and conceptual issues. The last two parts examined the causes, conclusion and remedial actions of the public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria.

2. Methodology

This article is a theoretical study. Hence, it adopted a survey design to look at the causes of the public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria and its remedial

actions. Data for the study were obtained from relevant published textbooks, journals, newspapers and the internet. The data collected was analysed through the descriptive method.

3. Theoretical Framework

The article adopted the functionalism theory as the theoretical framework. Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, David Easton, and Herbert Spencer included the frontier associates of the theory, which covers a range of issues and perspectives. In all, two of its assumptions were related to this paper. First, it described organised societies as complex entities with established institutions to maintain them (Talcott, 1937). This is exactly the situation in Nigeria. The government, therefore, established and maintained public service to provide the totality of services to properly manage the diverse interests of Nigeria. As Ayida (1987:47) describes it, public service “is aimed at making Nigeria a united, strong, and self-reliant; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian; a bright and full opportunity for all citizens; a free and democratic society.”

But, how can the citizens’ well-being and national survival be guaranteed when the nation’s public service is defective? Again, how will a country whose citizens have been living in fear of being attacked, kidnapped, killed, bombed, and displaced by Boko Haram Islamic sects and herdsmen alleged to be Fulani be strong, great and united? To be more liberal, can a nation that is full of marginalised, injustice, nepotism, or agitating for separation has a dynamic economy or equal and bright opportunity for progress? This supported Nwolise (2019) that Nigeria is beset with hunger, squalor, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and lawlessness, and the youths are running away in thousands abroad through the desert of Morocco to Spain to struggle for their survival. In their unanimous opinions, Odekunle (2014) and Udende (2014) described all of the above as clear manifestations of the dysfunctional status of public service in Nigeria.

The second assumption, which is related to this article, is that disorder, lawlessness, and decay in the value system are effects of broken public service (Durkheim, 1933). Ayida (1987) was alarmed because public service in Nigeria is at a crossroads and nothing is working fine in Nigeria. This was supported by Akowonjo (2004:1) when he said:

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“It is a known fact to everybody that the security situation in Nigeria has degenerated to an epidemic proportion. Nobody seems safe any longer. The upsurge in crime, degeneration of public order and the very disturbing level of threat to peace and stability in recent times has been a source of concern and challenge to democracy, national survival, integration and development. The list of criminal acts in this country is endless. Among others, it includes assassination, kidnapping, arson, organised armed robbery, vandal, ritual acts, financial crimes, fraudulent acts, impersonation, economic sabotage, political brigandage, prostitution, cultism, women trafficking, drug abuse, examination malpractices, bullying, rapping and assault in all parts of Nigeria.”

The repercussion of the government’s failure to maintain an efficient and functional public service has continued to develop and grow dreadful daily. Okere & Adedipe (2022:1-2) documented the lamentation of the Monarch of Uromi, Anslem Odaloighe Eidenojie II, over the reckless killings of his subjects when bank robbers invaded Uromi. As he was quoted, “the situation was like a war zone. It lasted for over two hours. The robbers took control of the area and killed my subjects.”

4. Conceptual Issues

The clarifications of conceptual issues that intermingle with the subject of discourse are what were examined in this part to add value to this paper.

4.1. Public Service

In his attempts to locate its meaning, Erediauwa (2004:169) said “public service in its technical sense is used to refer to all posts for which financial provision is made in the government budget.” For Mbah (2003:51), public service is made up of civil service and parastatals. It means the services of employees either political or technocrats in federal, state, or local governments are called public service. This is similar to Nwizu & Nwapi (2011:20) who cited Adamolekun saying that “the totality of services organised under government authority.” But Egugbo (2020) said public service can be used in two senses. The first sense is as the institution of government to serve the public while the second sense is as a service delivered by government to the citizens.

Section 318 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria defined civil service of the Federation, civil service of the State, public service of the Federation and public service of the State one by one.

Firstly, the Constitution defined civil service of the Federation as service of the Federation in a civil capacity and it includes the staff of the office of the President, the Vice-President, a ministry or department of the Government of the Federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the Federation (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

As defined by the Constitution, civil service of the State means service of the Government of a State in a civil capacity and it includes the staff of the office of the Governor, Deputy Governor, or a ministry or a department of the Government of the State assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the State (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Secondly, the Constitution described public service of the Federation as the service of the Federation in any capacity in respect of the Government of the Federation, and it includes service as:

- *Clerk or other staff of the National Assembly or of each House of the National Assembly;*
- *Member of staff of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Court, the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the Sharia Court of Appeal of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the Customary Court of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, or other courts established for the Federation by this Constitution and by an Act of the National Assembly;*
- *Member of staff of any commission or authority established for the Federation by this Constitution or by an Act of the National Assembly;*
- *Staff of the area council;*
- *Staff of any statutory corporation established by an Act of the National Assembly;*
- *Staff of any educational institution established or financed principally by the Government of the Federation;*
- *Staff of any company or enterprise in which the Government of the Federation or its agency owns controlling shares or interests; and*
- *members or officers of the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigeria Police Force, or other government security agencies established by law (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).*

According to the aforesaid Constitution, public service of a State means the service of the State in any capacity in respect of the Government of the state and it includes services as:

- *Clerk or other staff of the House of Assembly;*
- *Member of staff of the High Court, the Sharia Court of Appeal, the Customary Court of Appeal or other courts established for a State by the Constitution or by a law of a House of Assembly;*
- *Member or staff of any commission or authority established for a State by the Constitution or by a law of House of Assembly;*
- *Staff of any local government council;*
- *Staff of any statutory corporation established by a law of a House of Assembly;*
- *Staff of any education institution established or financed principally by a government of a State; and*
- *Staff of any company and enterprise in which the government of a state or its agency holds controlling shares or interests (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).*

From the clarification above, it is very clear that public service in Nigeria is made up of civil service that carries out ministerial functions to serve the citizens in the federal, state, or local capacities as well as its allied extra-ministerial agencies that also serve citizens through the federal, state, or local in any capacity, which are financed under government budget (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Erediouwa, 2004).

4.2. Efficiency

To clarify the concept of efficiency as it relates to public service, what comes to mind was the thought of Wilson (1887:197) that efficiency in public service is concerned with, “what government can properly and successfully do, and how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency and at least possible cost either of money or energy.” In this context, government is principal factors that can make public service do things properly and successfully.

So, for public service to be efficient is concerned with the capacity of government leadership to make its public service fit, sound, competent, functional and efficient to serve public interest and wellbeing of Nigeria (Iwueke & Agu, 2012). This informed the argument of Ijiekhuemhen (2013) proper and efficient working of public service is determined by the proper maintenance and effective control of

public service by government leadership. Francis (2021) digressed a little when he said a leader that is preoccupied with his personal interest would not likely maintain a functional public service.

4.3. Governance

As Stoker (2002) noted, governance includes development styles of governing with boundary between public and private domains. In this sense, governance is about mechanism, which do not only rest on the choice of authority and sanction of government, but it rests on the actual toning, ordering and enforcing rules or regulations for things to happen and happen well in an organised system. It is in this aspect that Rhodes (2007) defined governance as process of institutions and actors within and beyond government to collectively involve in decision-making to control and direct public affairs.

In his efforts to locate the meaning of governance, Peter (2000) simply digressed little to discuss the characters of most institutions and actors of governance whose inefficiency have brought about some unfair hardship to common Nigerians. He then, aligned that governance is a process of ordering of things to occur in a public setting. That it embraces more about achieving the greater efficiency in the production of public services for common satisfaction and betterment of people and their nation. This supposes that whatever rule, policy, regulation or direction of government; it must not fail to produce satisfactory outcome for the citizens. Defined in this way, governance entails promotion of productivity in public service to ensure stability, safety, welfare and public order (Waziri, 2009).

4.4. Government

In this paper, government is clarified from the angle of governing institution. Used in this perspective, it is the machinery put in place with vested power to establish and maintain public service to produce all the needed services to govern Nigeria and achieves its ends. These ends are the objectives prescribed in sections 13-24 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For the avoidance of doubt, these ends are often called fundamental objectives of the government (s.13); the government and the people (s.14); political objectives (s.15); economic objectives (s.16); social objectives (s.17); educational objectives (s.18); foreign policy objectives (s.19); and environmental objectives (s.20). Others are defined as directives on Nigerian cultures (s.21); obligations of mass media (s.22); national ethics (s.23); and duties of citizens (s.24). Section 318 (1)

of the extant Constitution directed the federal, state, and local governments or those who exercised government authority to direct public service towards achieving the ends set for Nigeria.

But today, government seems not have taken its proper responsibility in making public service to be functional (Agagu, 2007). To make the matter worse, many top government officials do not tolerate blames on poor performance. Duru (2022:1&6) documented the suspension of Imam, Sheikh Nura Khalid for criticising President Muhammadu Buhari over his poor handling of insecurity challenge in Nigeria. As he puts it, Ademola Kasim said, “Our leaders hate to hear the truth; but, the truth must be told. President Muhammadu Buhari government has failed. He is currently presiding over the worst killings and insecurity ever recorded in the history of Nigeria.” According to Ojoye (2019), the fans of a country’s football blamed the coach for persistent losing marches and not the players.

In line with the above, Ojoye and Folarin (2018:5) documented the lamentation of Ikola Ilumo residents of Lagos that “they got bills which did not reflect their power consumption adding that when there was power, the current was either ‘too high or too low.’” Like the security, is it not the federal government that superintend the electricity supply? Or is it not the President that appointed the minister who is answerable to him. The inability of the government to maintain the Nigerian public schools has made elites Nigerians to abandon public schools to taking their children to schools abroad.

On the aspect of insecurity, Dada (2021) reported that on September 7th, 2021, a bus that conveyed twelve passengers was attacked by bandits on a bad portion of the Ido-Ani, Akoko road. Three out of the passengers were kidnapped while other nine ran into the bus with multiple injuries. Similarly, the Olufon of Ifon, Oba Israel Adeusi was killed by the bandits on the Owo-Benin road at a bad portion. In all of these, who else will the members call for protection? In as much as no responsible government or its leadership would want to fail the people, but the leadership has a duty to take responsibility to tolerate praises or blames.

4.5. Development

The concept of development conveys different meanings to different people. But, Okonkwo (2008) argued that in whichever perspective one tries to define it, one or more words like change, growth, progress, enhancement, improvement,

advancement, and expansion among others must be mentioned. Ake (2001) saw development as a process by which people create and re-create themselves and their life circumstances to realise higher levels of satisfaction and benefits in accordance with their own choices and values.

Rodney (1972) looked at development from the levels of individual and society. At the level of individual, it means increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, self-reliance, self-discipline, improved creativity, responsibility, and material well-being. At the level of society, it is used to refer to an overall social process that is dependent upon the outcome of people efforts to deal with their natural environment. In this regard, the concern of citizens is to efficiently exert their efforts toward achieving better and optimal satisfaction of the environment. In this case, development goes beyond economic and social aspects to include improvement of resources and positive change in all the activities to have increased access to good food, water, electricity, road, shelter, health-care facilities, education, freedom, and justice among others.

As it concerns with this article, it means regular improvement of public service in the proper production of safety and welfare services for Nigerians and assuring their satisfaction. Secondly, it has to do with the reasoning capacity of government leadership to develop and reform public service ahead of complex unforeseen situation for it to properly perform always without challenge.

4.6. Leadership

Section 130 (2) of the aforesaid Constitution, defined the President as the Head of State; the Chief Executive of the Federation; and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation. Therefore, the overall maintenance and assurances of proper functioning of public service in Nigeria is vested on the President as the Chief Executive of Nigeria. So, as leadership of the federation, he is accountable for the rise and fall of the nation's public service. To avoid vacuum and enhance his efficiency, section 171 (1) of the Constitution empowered the leadership to appoint persons to manage the affairs of public service under his watch and to remove persons so appointed especially those who are found not competent.

In Nigeria of recent, public service perform so low. The citizens are suffering perpetually for the acute short of public service delivery to them and the blame has been on the leadership. As noted in Ujo (2002:59) "effective leadership is an

important input to any successful organisation. This in totality supported Drucker (1954) who described leadership as the most important input for every organisation to do well. A leader is meant to lift people's apparition to a better sense and to raise their performance ability to best standard. A leader is also meant to maintain and build workers' personality over and above their normal strengths. Because a leader is saddled with the task of influencing and motivating people to willingly work towards achieving efficiency in every organisation, a leader is defined as a goal getter (Enahoro, 2010).

4.7. Rule of Law

The concept of rule of law is not defined in this article to identify with the legal rule that can be enforced in court. It is rather, about an embodied principle in which power must be exercised for public service to serve the citizens well in Nigeria.

Section 1 (1) and (2) of the excising Constitution described the Constitution as the highest law of Nigeria. It directed all its provisions to be binding on all authorities and persons throughout this country. Subsection (2), directed the Federal Republic of Nigeria not be governed and persons or group of persons should take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Section 13 directed all organs of government and other authorities and persons exercising legislative (s. 4), executive (s. 5), or judicial (s. 6) powers to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of law.

Dicey (1951) described the rule of law as a set of accepted guiding principles in three folds. The first is absolute supremacy of law. This means that everybody is under the law. It is a total subjection to law in which every action taken by every ruler and the ruled is based on law (Hogan, 2008). The second fold is the equality before the law. This means equal application of law to everybody. It prevents discriminate or vindictive treatment by law enforcement agencies. However, section 308 (1) (a), (b), and (c) of the Constitution excused the President, the Vice President, the Governor, and the Deputy Governor from institution of criminal or civil cases while in office. The third emphasised the preservation of individual freedom and frowned against fundamental rights abuses as prescribed in sections 33-42 of the above named Constitution.

Despite all of the above, many people including government leadership still violate the law. Akpotor (2015:111&112) observed that the Obasanjo presidency of 1999-2007 was a mirage for lack of respect for rule of law. In his word, "under

Obasanjo, the executive was interpreting court judgement in the manners suitable to it only. His third term bid made him to turn Ribadu led Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to a tool of political vendetta.”

4.8. Good Governance

In the world of today, the term ‘good governance’ is now a household name. This emphasised the task of government to maintain its public service to produce service delivery to citizens to live happily and comfortably well in a world without a war. Many extant literatures support this claim. Gisselquist (2012) brings to mind the erstwhile United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, observation that good governance is the main important factor to exterminate poverty and promote progress. Accepted in this sense, bad governance is a root cause of anti-progress, living between hands and mouths, low standard of living, squalor, hunger, and all cankerworm evils bedevilling public service efficiency, growth and development and inability of government leadership to direct public affairs for public interest and better life of people and the nation.

Analytically, almost the above features and other related issues earlier discussed have been used by different public organisations in their attempts to provide efficient delivery to citizens without impressive outcome. The triple ‘H’ efficiency principles of hard-work, honesty, and humility adopted by IGP Suleiman Abba and later reinforced by the IGP Solomon Arase partnership and team-work spirit principles were some few good examples (Abba, 2014; Francis, 2021). Yet, one is very troubled that nearly all the public institutions in Nigeria have continued to function not fairly well and in fact their inefficiency in service delivery are getting worse daily (El-Rufai (2013; Udende, 2014; Nwolise, 2019; Okere and Adedipe, 2022).

5. Causes of Public Service Efficiency Challenge in Nigeria

To determine the actual causes of public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria, the views of intellectuals that have done study related to the subject-matter were considered. Some of them blamed them blamed the causes on corruption, political disorder, and poor remuneration and fringe benefits in the service. According to El-Rufai (2013:322), “the deterioration of pay and fringe benefits relative to the high cost of living has been a contributory factor to deficient public service in Nigeria.

There are some other thinkers who blamed the prevalent socio-economic crunch and insecurity confronting Nigeria as factor. They argued that stable and improved socio-economic situation is a precondition for efficient public service. Akpotor (2015) said it will only be a mirage to expect efficiency of public service in Nigeria that Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen with other criminals cannot allow people to have rest of mind to the extent that they cannot go about their lawful duties and the unending strike, fuel scarcity and total security breakdown have been worrisome.

While this article is aimed at knowing the causes and solutions to the broken of public service in Nigeria, it will not serve its interest to disagree with any of the above factors. At least, if leadership failure and its repercussion for bad governance that is a root cause to all bad things, the causes identified by the thinkers should not be ignored. This also supported Chandan (1989:215) that “the principal cause of organisation failure is ineffective leadership.”

When the principles of professionalism, transparency and accountability in the public service were frustrated by the leadership desires to give job to his thugs boys and party loyalists how will public service not crossroad (Mbah, 2003)? The deficient status of public service and its ministries or parastatals will always deteriorate while citizens will suffer more deprivations where their needs are continually taken for granted by placing priority over politics than wellbeing of people and flurry of unqualified people as public servants.

In addition to the factors discussed above, the article also saw weak Institution of Government, challenge of political leadership, disrespect to rule of law, poor maintenance of public service and effects of bad governance as other causes of public service challenge in Nigeria.

5.1. Weak Institution of Government in Nigeria

The inability of government institution for the past many decades to develop enthusiasm for proper reforms that will be good enough to reposition and ensure a functional public service has had a prolong negative effect on public service efficiency. According to El-Rufai (2013:315/316) the quality of public the servants and services they provide to our country are both below expectations and the pay of Nigerian public servants was too low in relative to the cost of living. It is this debility of government institution that causes the jamboree of lazy and dull people as public servants who become more burdens and liabilities rather than assets to public service in Nigeria.

5.2. Dynamic Problem of Political Leadership in Nigeria

The traits a leadership should possess have been a tropical issue across the world for many decades. As the issue continues to linger, a scientific research around the twentieth century was carried out. Its major focus was on the factors that can make leadership active and efficient. In Nigeria, especially in recent times, leadership inefficiency was more tropical. The process was hijacked into extraordinary warfare where politicians employ offensive means unknown to law to pursue and grab leadership position. Eventually, this habit made politics in Nigeria to be turned into a notorious game in which leaders have become dealers. It is not unlikely that people who do all manners of odd or fetish things and breached law to occupy leadership in government would run anti-people government and this has been a major cause of efficiency problem bewildering public service in Nigeria. This agreed with Nwolise (2019:100-101) who said, “Maybe our leaders in their in-fighting and struggles over natural resources, have not noticed the great malady Nigeria is currently facing.” The question here is for public interest when a politician engaged the services of armed thugs to kill citizens, scatter pooling units and snatch ballot boxes, and violate rules to grab political leadership to govern? Or how has the in-fighting to retain political powers and struggles to share the nation’s natural resources helped to improve maintenance of public service?

As noticed in El-Rufai (2013:314) since 1999, President Obasanjo had intended to reform the public service. In fact, he initially had a Minister for the civil service (Bello Kirfi, Waziri Bauchi), but nothing appeared to have come out of it. In 2001, a human resource audit of the Federal civil service at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revealed that about twenty percent (20%) of the nominal roll consisted of ghost workers. Nothing was done about the audit, and like most other things related to the civil service, these and similar abuses continued quietly growing unabated.

5.3. Abuse of Principles of Professionalism

One other great problem that affects public service efficiency in Nigeria is discontinuation of practice of professionalism. This is one of the benefits of the 1988 Dotun Philips Commission on Public Service Reform in Nigeria. Its introduction has to a large extent tremendously reduced the large number of unskilled public servants as well as ghost workers in erstwhile Musa Yara’ Adua

and Goodluck Jonathan administration. Today, the practice of professionalism is not observed as usual in Nigerian public service. Before now, the posting of Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Ministries or Head of Parastatals are to their field of specialisations. Ajayi (2019:5) documented the maiden visit of Minister of Interior, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola when he told top officials of his Ministry that apart from the stories he read about the Ministry on the pages of the Newspaper, he had no idea of its policies and operations. As he was said to have put it, “My relationship with this ministry is distant. What I know about the ministry is what I read in the Newspaper.” This is in contrast to Wilson (1887:201) saying, “Seeing everyday new things, which the state ought to do, the next thing is to see clearly how it ought to do them.” This seeks for skill of administration to improve the course of government and reform its services production to be purposeful and efficient. If a Minister is posted to head a ministry in public service, which he is not familiar to the policies and operations, is he expected to go and learn everything about his ministry from his subordinates? How will he be able to make decisions on some emerging critical issues? At least, every minister requires intellectual thinking ability to attend to complex policy matters and make appropriate decisions. So, a minister cannot just be posted to a ministry and expected to enter his office just to wear ‘agbada,’ read newspaper and collect salary.

5.4. Disrespect to Rule of Law

The manners in which people abuse law in Nigeria is another cause of public service challenge. There will be no gainsaying the fact that no society prospers without respect to law. It follows that law creates a state and set its objectives; law establishes government, defines its functions and obligations of citizens. It also lay down governance process. Therefore, law is an inevitable instrument of social control. It promotes the proper and successful doing of things in every organised society. In the contemporary Nigeria, most people including top government have no respect for rule of law. To make the matter worse, some government officials behave as if they are even above the law. This makes people to do things that are unknown to law while impunity has become the order of the day. So, it will not be out of place to experience dysfunctional public service in a country that almost everyone is lawlessness. According to Olaniyi & Oyewale (2021), the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, argued that when injustice becomes law, resistance will be a duty. This is in tandem with Apaokagi (2014:118) that “the involvement of

government in subverting the rule of law is why it has lost all moral rights of law enforcement in Nigeria while impunity in high and low places is the order of the day.”

The Election Working Group of the Nigerian Bar Association (2008:3) alleged the Obasanjo administration for showing an uncommon disdain for the rule of law. As it puts it, “decisions of the executive were simply bulldozed through the National Assembly. Powers of the state government were usurped and there was a general feeling that government was above the law.”

This situation has not even improved as at date. According to the 1988, Public Service Reforms, the public has the right to know the operations of the public service (civil service) and to criticise bad and corrupt administration (Akpotor, 2015). But, as noted earlier, in Nigeria today, citizens are not free to complain about their welfare or criticise bad governance. As noted in Olorok (2019), Governor Dave Umahi of Ebonyi State warned his aides through his media assistant, Francis Nwanze either to desist from making any negative remarks against Buhari government, or face dismissal. Duru (2022) also documented the removal of an Imam that criticised President Buhari’s failure to repel the ravaging insecurity in Nigeria, which was discussed earlier in this paper.

5.5. Culture of Poor Maintenance of Public Service

The poor staffing and inability of government leadership to reposition public service with its unattractive conditions of service for public servants among others are factors that facilitated the of public service into crossroad and dysfunctional status. Yet, the terrible outbreak of insecurity and poor quality of living conditions, have continued to bite Nigerians harder on daily basis as public service continues to dwindle in efficiency. But, in all of these, it may not be credible to excuse the government and its leadership from the breach of its statutory responsibilities under section 14 (2) (b) of the extant Constitution. To be specific, will the inability of the government leadership to maintain a functional public service not lead to its efficiency problem? Or on a lighter note, why has the government leadership not been able to make public service to serve the need of the public and yet it cannot tolerate public complaint? There is Africa saying that “one cannot beat a man and said he should not cry.” Among others, Duru (2022:1&6) documented how most people were unhappy about the victimisation of some people who criticised government over poor governance. As he reported

it, Joseph Ibeabuchi said: “what we have today is like we do not have a government in place because the President has failed to ensure security for Nigerians. So, what the Imam said in his sermon is nothing but the truth. I even heard that they have removed the Imam for preaching that sermon, but they are wasting their time because the preacher will be vindicated before God and man.” The question here is, who else can people that are held captive by Boko Haram terrorist, herdsmen killers, other banditries and socio-economic predicaments direct their complaints about their state of insecurity and hardship to; apart from government and its leadership? These are contextual issues that have been militating against the efficiency of public service in Nigeria.

5.6. Effects of Bad Governance

The efficiency of public service in Nigeria is being challenged with the effects of bad governance in Nigeria. Bad governance is the root of all evils (Anifowose & Enemu, 1999). Thus, it will be a daydream to expect efficiency from the public service of a country that is being poorly governed. The public service that has been dominated with dull and lazy public servants how will it be efficient? Again, how will intelligent and brilliant graduates be encouraged to work in where public servants are paid low salary, which is far below cost of living conditions in Nigeria? All of these are manifestations of bad governance. Hence, public service efficiency challenge is a feature of bad governance (Gisselquist, 2012). As noted in Duru (2022), the attack on Benue State indigenes by the herdsmen has brought the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps to twenty-seven (27) with about two million IDPs in a State of twenty (20) Local Government Councils cannot be excused from effect of bad governance. With this kind of helpless situation, how can public service function efficiently in that part of Nigeria?

6. Conclusion and Remedial Actions for the Public Service Efficiency Challenge in Nigeria

The article investigated the causes of public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria and offered remedial actions. It found public service as a critical institution of government that provide the totality of services needed by citizens from their womb to their tomb. It discovered that the usefulness of public service was not given enough attention by government as it was poorly maintained and controlled. This in turn has caused its inability to be efficient, which has led to

untold hardship, invasive threats, and pitiable status of life to citizens. However, the paper found lots of leadership lapses as the causes of public service challenge in Nigeria. The public service was allowed to operate with dominance of lazy and dull public servants who are incompetent to work in this essential institution.. Similarly, the conditions of service are very unattractive to encourage brilliant, intelligent, skilled and talented Nigerian graduates to apply for employment. From this study, the leadership does not even know when and where to actually draw a line of demarcation of welfare and political issues for appropriate and proper decision-making as well as necessary policy development, formulation and implementation in public service. This challenge has caused several inconclusive public service reforms and making it difficult to reposition and maintain a functional public service in Nigeria. In all, the article further found among others causes as the weak institution of government, lack of professionalism, disrespect to rule of law, and effects of bad governance as causes of public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria.

In the light of the above findings, the article concluded that unless the competence and efficiency of government leadership are first determined to repel its bad governance that is the root of all the causes found in this study, other remedial actions for public service efficiency challenge in Nigeria will be tantamount to a daydream. The article recommended other remedial actions for public service efficiency in Nigeria as follows:

1. The effectiveness of any government is to a large extent determined by the efficiency and competence of the public service. This is very important when it comes to prompt implementation of policies. Implementation of any policy cannot be meticulous unless there is machinery to monitor the implementation processes and provide feedback to the appropriate authority for assessing the success of the policy that is being implemented. This can only be feasible with a leader who is prepared to serve the public interest and run good governance. Those to lead Nigeria should be people who genuinely have public interest and with ability to reform and maintain a functional public service. The leadership should set up active implementation monitoring machinery for major policy decisions. To do this, there should be surgical reform to reawaken, redefine, reposition, and redesign the framework to activate the present weak government institution in Nigeria. This will require the realignment of some institutions' overlapped functions and duplication, particularly at the federal

government level. This is to avoid wastage of public resources in all ramifications to enhance efficient public service and good governance in Nigeria.

2. The idea of the government privatising core public enterprises such as electricity presumably to increase service delivery to the public and better management of those enterprises should be well reconsidered. While this article is aware that there will continue to be a need for a spirited private sector to complement the public service for good governance, it was out of place to abruptly privatise such sensitive and core public enterprises that are necessary and required to lubricate the socio-economic order, which were distressed by the weak institution of government and with the public service that have crossroad and dysfunctional by defective leadership in Nigeria. The remedial action is based on the fact that efficiency of private sector depends on the efficient of public service. It is not just in terms of provision of infrastructural services but the ability of the appropriate public service to respond well to those complex needs of industry and commerce in the private sector. The conditions of reward in the public should be unattractive. This will stop the experience, best talents, and skilled manpower from migrate in large number to other countries where better labour reward exist.
3. There should be law to prosecute fail leadership in Nigeria. To achieve this, a leader should quietly resign when it is evident that he cannot govern well without penalty. But, where such a leader has failed to honourably relinquish power, he should at the end of his tenure be apprehended to account for his bad governance under the remedial offences including vicarious liability (1) causing death of citizens in Nigeria, (2) causing grievous harm to Nigerians (3) failure to protect and secure the Nigerian citizens and property (4) causing economic sabotage in Nigeria and making life poor and hard for Nigerians (5) corruption and tolerance for bad governance (6) gross negligence (7) failed governance and causing disorder. While in (1) to (4); the offender should be sentenced to death by hanging on conviction and in (5) to (7), the offender should be sentenced to a term of imprisonment for life with hard labour. Any failed leadership of the federation of Nigeria should be arraigned and prosecuted for offences from (1) to (7) while leadership of any State of the federation should be arraigned and prosecuted for offences from (5) to (7). This will discourage bad governance and allow only people who have respect for

rule of law, public interest, and progress of Nigeria with vast experience of governing ability to govern Nigeria. It will also stop politics of “do or die” or bitter politics in Nigeria. There should be Constitutional review to give local government full autonomy like the other levels of government in Nigeria. This will also make failed leadership at the local level to be held accountable (Oikhala, 2018).

4. No nation survives without respect to rule of law. A leader that allows disrespect to rule of law has invited anarchy to consume his government especially the public service. This is because where people are free to do what they like, there is always rain of lawlessness, breakdown of law and order as impunity will become daily affairs. It is in this context that the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde quoted in Olaniyi and Oyewale, (2021) said when injustice becomes the law, and resistance will be a duty. The remedial action here is that public service rules and regulations must be activated to guide public servants instead of directive from political leadership that is impervious to when to draw a line of demarcation of welfare decisions and political decisions in public service. For this to be effective, the government leadership should no longer disrespect court orders, verdicts and decisions. The National Orientation Agency should organize a three day biannual leadership retreats and ethics in governance, rule of law, and role of leadership in public service for good governance should form the three topics for discussion. The facilitators and discussants should be invited from and among University intellectual.
5. This article held the view that in as much as the political leadership quagmire in Nigeria exists, bad governance can never cease, and this will in turn continue to make public service efficiency challenge to be worsened. Therefore, the issue of bad political leadership in Nigeria should be given very serious urgent remedial actions. If leadership defectiveness is rightly addressed in Nigeria, all ills in the public service today will equally disappear eventually like smoke. It is because the subordinate public servants enjoy the backing of the leadership popularly called “Oga-at-the-top” that they commit all sort of disciplinary offences and go free. In fact, most of them are ghost workers. They will be amenable discipline when there is a leadership with zero tolerance to bad governance, indiscipline, poor commitment, and corruption among others. The dominant of the lazy and the dull employers of public service in Nigeria

today are the “Oga boys” known as the political thugs of the leadership. These set of public servants are only burden to public service and they cannot be fired or queried for whatever wrongs they may commit because they are connected with the top leadership. It is in this sense that this article recommended public-oriented leadership who will run good governance that activate public service to become result-oriented where ghost workers, other incompetent workers will be eliminated to promote efficiency.

Finally, one of the major benefits of the 1988 Dotun Philips Commission on Public Service Reforms in Nigeria is enhanced professionalism. This conformed to Wilson (1887) that seeks for skill of administration for the course of government and its services to be efficient. There is no gainsaying the fact that a man’s capability can be best demonstrated in the job he is most familiar to. This has had some improvements in the practices and functions of public service in the past. To make the matter worse, the principle of professionalism in public service has been discontinued at the altar of politics, nepotism and to get job for the “boys of Oga at the top,” Public service has since been returned what it used to be as “jack of trade.”

This corroborated the thought of Charlesworth, (1967:53) saying, “I have earlier lamented the fact that Nigeria’s political leaders do not respect knowledge, and do not value research. This is part of our developmental problem. To worsen things, loyalty to leader is valued more than competence and capacity to do the job and loyalty to the nation and constitution.” The remedial actions suggested here is the restoration of professionalism in public service in Nigeria. All public servants including political heads and accounting officer should be posted to work in the areas of their specialisation. This will promote public service efficiency and minimise waste of public resources.

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