

Motivation and Effective Civil Service: The Nigeria Experience

Motivasyon ve Etkili Kamu Hizmeti: Nijerya Örneği

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ÖZET

Hizmet kalitesi konusunda müşterilerin beklentilerini karşılamak, hükümetin etkin hizmet sunumunu sağlama çabalarına rağmen, Nijerya kamu hizmetinde gerçekleştirilmemiş bir hedefdir. Bu nedenle, süregelen bu zorluğu aşmak için uygulanabilir önlemler alma çağrısı giderek daha önemli hale geldi. Bu sorunun sebeplerini ve muhtemel çözümlerini arayan bu yazı, sorunun ana nedenini ele almaya yönelik olumsuz bir tutumun izini sürmüştür. Bu çalışma, güdülerin ve ihtiyaçların özellikle işyerinde insan davranışını nasıl etkilediğine dair kavramsallaştırmamızı ve anlayışımızı zenginleştirilmesi amacıyla motivasyon teorilerini incelemiştir. Bu makale, çalışanların performansını iyileştirmede çalışan motivasyonunun etkisini ön plana çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmacı, çalışanların işe karşı tutumları iyileştiğinde, Nijerya kamu hizmetinde etkin hizmet sunumunun artık bir rüya olmayacağını savunmaktadır. Nijerya'da etkili kamu hizmeti elde etmek için hükümet, işçilerin çalışma koşullarını iyileştirmelidir. Bu, ücretlerin artırılması yoluyla sağlanabilir. Etkili kamu hizmeti ile özdeşleşen hükümetler, işgücünü kutlama kültürüne sahiptir. Nijerya hükümeti, her yıl en iyi performans gösteren memurlara teşvikler ve ödüller vererek bu kültürü örnek almalıdır. Hükümet ayrıca performanslarını nasıl iyileştirebileceği konusunda çalışanların görüşlerini almalı ve çalışanları mükemmel fikirlerle ödüllendirmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

*Kamu Hizmeti,
Çalışan Motivasyonu,
İyi Müşteri Hizmetleri,
Nijerya,*

ABSTRACT

Although the Nigerian government has made efforts to enhance efficient service delivery in the civil service, these initiatives have failed to fully meet the public's expectations for high-quality services. Findings revealed that lack of workplace motivation is one of the major issues impeding excellent service performance in the Nigerian civil service. The goal of this study is to highlight the role of motivation in increasing employees' performance and productivity. It also examines theories of motivation with the aim of enriching our conceptualization and understanding of how drives and needs influence human behavior especially in the workplace. The researcher argues that when employees' attitudes toward work improve, ensuring good service delivery in Nigeria's civil service will no longer be a mirage. To achieve effective civil service in Nigeria, the government should improve working conditions of workers. This can be achieved through an increase in wages. Governments that are identified with effective civil service have a culture of celebrating their workforce. The Nigeria government should emulate this culture by giving incentives and awards to best performing civil servants every year. The Government should also seek employees' opinions on how to improve their performances, as well as reward employees with excellent ideas.

Keywords:

*Civil Service,
Employee Motivation,
Good Customer Service,
Nigeria,*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Good customer service has been identified as a tool that assists the public sector and others in meeting and exceeding customers' expectations. In the civil service, this customer service initiative has assisted countries with efficient civil services in providing essential services such as job creation, quality health care, affordable housing, security, and education in a timely manner, thereby retaining the trust and loyalty of their citizens. Concerning the priorities, we should establish in order to achieve excellent customer service, Gronroos (1988:10) explains;

“What is needed is a model of service quality, i.e., a model of how the quality of services is perceived by customers. When the service provider understands how the services will be evaluated by the users, it will also be possible to identify how to manage these evaluations and how to influence them in a desired direction”

In other words, understanding how consumers feel about the service they receive is obviously crucial to providing outstanding customer service. And customers opinion of a company's level of customer service affects their choices and desire to either stick with that business or switch to a different one that has a proven track record of providing exceptional customer service. In other words, poor customer service can cause a company to lose many customers (eCommerce strategy, 1991). This means that meeting consumers' expectations is important for improving a company's reputation, retaining current customers, and attracting new ones. Therefore, the importance of offering top-notch customer service cannot be overstated (Oluwayemisi & Taiwo, 2021; Gibbs & Kharouf, 2022). Scholars have also emphasized the importance of a committed workforce in delivering high-quality service delivery. Van Thang & Nghi (2022) expressed that *“any company that has modern infrastructure and technology while does not have a dedicated workforce may bear a human resource with low efficiency”* for this reason, businesses that value the efforts of their employees continue to outperform rivals in terms of productivity and long-term service quality.

This article focuses on issues hindering good service delivery in the Nigeria civil service. The purpose of this study is to look into the role of motivation in encouraging job performance among Nigerian civil servants. Scholars have identified low motivation in the workplace to be a major cause of poor performance among civil service employees (Ekpe, 2021; Nosike & Nosike, 2022). This article starts with a brief history of the Nigeria civil service, then moves on to the government's efforts to assure successful service delivery in the Nigeria civil service. Furthermore, it looks into public service consumers' impressions of quality service as well as civil service employees' worries about working conditions. Lastly, it looks at Adam's equity theory and Vroom's expectancy theory to demonstrate how workers' motivation tends to either increase or decrease their performance.

2. NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE HISTORY AND REFORMS

Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012:12) assert that *“the Nigerian Civil service is a body of government employees entrusted with the administration of the country and mandated to carry out the policies of the government of the day”*. In other words, Nigerian civil servants have a responsibility to help the government carry out its plans and initiatives. To improve their working circumstances, government employees in one region of Nigeria founded a workers union prior to 1914. But it wasn't until 1914 that this body came to be recognized as the civil service.

The Civil Servants in the Southern protectorates in exercise of their rights to form and join Trade Unions for the protection of their interest, job security and improved conditions of service formed a Union known as the Southern Nigeria Civil Service Union on Monday 19th August, 1912. The essences of the Union according to the founders were contained in the minutes of their first meeting held on Monday 19th August, 1912... After the inaugural meeting, Mr. H. Libert was elected the 1st pioneer President of the Union. In 1914 after the amalgamation of the Southern & Northern protectorates, the Union became known and called Nigeria Civil Service Union. It is a fact of history that the Civil Service Union was the only Union in the Public Service Industry from 1912 to the 1930s (Nigeria Civil Service Union, 2022).

In other words, the Nigeria civil service began during British colonization in Nigeria. And the principal function of the imperial civil service was to ensure that rules and regulation of the state were followed (Sekwat, 2002:500). For Umaru (2016:178);

“The colonial public service was designed to service the interest of the British colonialists in the areas of the maintenance of law and order; ensuring that the natives pay their taxes as and when due and at the same time pay their full allegiance to the British Monarchy; in addition to ensuring that raw materials required by the British industries were supplied on time”.

And during the postcolonial civil service, Sekwat further expressed that changes were made in order to design and implement civil service initiatives that will solely focus on the development a new Nigeria.

2.1. Government Efforts to Promote Effective Civil in Nigeria

Efforts were made in postcolonial Nigeria to improve the effectiveness of the Nigerian civil service. This includes (Sekwat, 2002:500);

“The Elwood Grading Team of 1996 and the Adebo Commission of 1970 constituted the government's early post-independence initiatives to reform the Nigerian civil service. Although less comprehensive in scope, both commissions attempted to upgrade the salaries of civil servants and entrench professionalism and high ethical standards within the civil service. The most renowned civil service reform measures undertaken in post-independence Nigeria included the Public Service Review Commission of 1974 or the Udoji Commission of 1974, and the Ayida Panel of 1994”

However, some scholars have argued that some of the above reforms failed due to poor implementations (Magbadelo, 2016; Ake, 2015). According to Ake, this reform failed to accomplish the desired result because of policies that do not favour employees' working conditions, which in turn causes employee unhappiness. (Ojeifo & Alegbeleye, 2015:58) claimed that when Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999, sound policies were implemented to boost the efficiency of civil service. Some of these fantastic initiatives included the adoption of digital technology and the provision of digital technology training to employees in order to boost productivity. However, these efforts have not resulted in a complete improvement in the services offered by the Nigerian civil service. Nwanolue & Iwuoha (2012:12) explains;

“The Civil Service has been undergoing gradual and systematic reforms and restructuring since May 29, 1999 after decades of military rule. However, the civil service is still considered stagnant and inefficient, and the attempts made in the past by panels have had little effect on the promotion of sustainable human development in Nigeria”

2.2. Perception of Public Service Users in Nigeria

Good quality service as mentioned earlier in this paper relates to activities or measures used by service providers to meet customers' expectations. When customers' satisfaction is achieved, we say effective service delivery has been provided but when service received is below customers expectation, poor quality service is delivered. In every enterprise, both private and public, quality service delivery is a measure that must be adopted if such an organization is determined to succeed. Therefore, it is important to improve customer services in order to meet customers' demands and satisfaction. In government owned establishments, this role is very important as it influences individuals' perception of good governance. Government tasks such as quality health care, job creation, road development, and security are basic human needs, and good service is judged by how these services are delivered fairly. Hence, how efficient civil service employees are in carrying out these functions to meet expectations of citizens influences their assessment of how well the government has performed. However, despite these efforts made so far, quality service delivery has not been achieved in the Nigerian civil service across the nation. The reality on ground is that many Nigerians are dissatisfied with issue of inefficient service delivery in the Nigerian civil service as a result, seek alternative measures. Negative attitude to work no doubt has hindered effective civil service in Nigeria both in federal and state civil service. Poor work habits, including tardiness, absence, and aimless wandering that result in missing document problems, were found to be the root causes of poor service delivery in one state civil service (Ekaidem, 2007 cited in Udeh, 2015).

2.3. Motivation and Concerns of Employees of Nigeria Civil Service

This term motivation refers to certain drives or expectations that prompt our action towards achieving or accomplishing a set up goal. It is *“the willingness to exert high level of effort to reach organizational goals, conditioned by the ability of these efforts to satisfy some individual needs”* (Ismajli et al, 2015).

According to Sekhar et al (2013:472) *“motivation directly links to individual performance that gain to organization performance and as a catalyzer for all individual employees working for an organization to enhance their working performance or to complete task in much better way than they usually do. Organization runs because of people working for it, and each person contributes toward achieving the ultimate goal of an organization”* Hence, the importance of motivation in workers performance in workplace cannot be overemphasized. Aside encouraging hard work mentality, it goes a long way to increase productivity. Commenting on this, Oyetola (2012:3) explains;

“People who are committed to achieving organisational objectives generally outperform those who are not committed. Those who are intrinsically rewarded by accomplishments in the workplace are satisfied with their jobs and are individuals with high self-esteem. Therefore, an important part of management is to help make work satisfying and rewarding for employees and to keep employee motivation consistent with organisational objectives. With the diversity of contemporary workplaces, this is a complex task”

Civil servants in Nigeria are not satisfied with the present condition of service. Some of these concerns are due to low salaries, issues of insecurity etc. This is especially true when we reflect back on the number of times they have gone on strike or threatened to do so. Scholars cited in this work have tried so much in tracing causes of inefficient service in the Nigerian civil service. In this study, attempt is made to examine expectancy theory of motivation and equity motivation theory. The aim is to determine the effectiveness of these theories in improving workers performance, especially civil service employees in Nigeria.

3. THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION THEORIES IN IMPROVING WORKERS PERFORMANCE

For over a decade, theories of motivation have continued to gain relevance in human resource management and related disciplines such as public administration, psychology, sociology etc. Scholars like Maslow, Hersberg, Vroom and Adams in their works disclosed what happens when people are motivated (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). For the purpose of this study, Adams Equity Theory and Vroom’s expectancy theory are examined with the aim to broaden our understanding of the role motivation theories play in promoting employees’ job performance.

3.1. Adam’s Equity Theory of Motivation

Adam’s argues in his theory of motivation that employees perform well in an environment that promotes fairness in rewarding workers effort. He further stated that it is habitual for people in a workplace to compare what they receive with that of others and feel dissatisfied if there is no balance between their reward and that of others, especially when they have worked for the same number of hours. In other words, Adams equity theory of motivation argues against inequality in the workplace. For Adams (1965 cited in Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012:159) *“inequity exists for person whenever he perceives that the ratio of his outcomes to inputs and the ratio of others outcomes to others inputs are unequal”* in other words, employees expect to receive the same salary with another worker in the same position and will be sad and disengaged if reverse is the case.

The above theory no doubt enriched our understanding on why employees usually grumble when they feel unjustly treated, especially if their colleagues receive better treatment. From this theory we can deduce that sometimes wages may not be the only reason to get dissatisfied. Environment is also a factor. It is natural to develop job dissatisfaction when a colleague in the same position receives better treatment even when your input is equal or higher. However, relating this to the problem that prompted this study, the problem of poor attitude to work is not mainly due to inequality in terms of distribution of rewards among employees. This is because there are numerous elements that contribute to salary disparities, such as employees' service experience and academic qualifications. Although Adams' theory does not provide a practical answer to the problem of employees' lack of commitment to work in the Nigerian civil service, it does attract attention to issues concerning employees' working conditions and how they affect employee performance.

3.2. Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation

For Vroom, what prompts our behavior are deliberate choices we make among other choices with the aim to augment or achieve the greatest pleasure. In other words, employee's motivation in Vroom's opinion is influenced by factors such as "*expectancy, instrumentality and valence*". Suci et al (2013:184) expressed that "*Vroom states that an outcome is positively valent if the person believes that it holds high instrumentality for the acquisition of positively valent consequences and the avoidance of negatively valent outcomes...The instrumentality is what links an outcome to other outcomes. Expectancy is the strength of a person's belief about whether a particular outcome is possible*" Vroom's expectancy theory has provided insightful reasons on why employees' behavior at workplace tends to either increase or diminish their job performances.

The work of this paper is to examine the above theories and their relevance in improving civil servants work performance. In this study, valence refers to an employee's motivation to perform tasks based on his expectation that he will be rewarded after completing a task, expectancy refers to his confidence in achieving a goal based on the resources at his disposal, and instrumentality refers to his trust in his employer to keep his promise once he has met the expected goal.

- **Valence:** which relates to the belief an employee has regarding rewards that he will receive after completing his task is a primary motivator in this context. The desire to work is prompted with the belief that salary will be paid at the end of the month. Employees value this reward because of many dependants that rely on them for survival. However, one of the top worries of civil service workers in Nigeria is the delay in wage payments.
- **Expectancy:** Civil servants lack confidence to measure with their counterparts that has advanced in modern ways of service delivery. This is because the government has not done enough to provide necessary tools that will enable them advanced in their careers. This goes a long way to demoralize efforts of employees. In most state ministries, manual typewriting machines are still in use. Some that have computers in their offices are usually depressed performing their duty due to interruption caused by epileptic electricity power supply.
- **Instrumentality:** This aspect is the major problem causing job dissatisfaction among government employees. Delay in payment of salaries is a lingering problem in Nigeria. The result is that they abandoned their work and open a private business so as to survive. It is not new to see public school teachers in the market selling when lesson period is not over. When the salary eventually comes, it will be used to pay debts owned while waiting for salary.

4. CONCLUSION

The fact is that employees require some form of motivation to achieve the expected results. It is difficult for an employee to give his or her best when his or her salary is not motivating. To achieve effective civil service in Nigeria, government should improve working conditions of workers. This can be achieved through increase in wages.

Although the government has initiated plans to increase workers remunerations to enable them cope with present recession in the country (Idoko,2021) however, the continues inflation in the country coupled with insecurity issues (Oyadeji, 2021) may not allow the new wage to effect any change by the time it is implemented. Oyadeji further revealed that "*Nigeria's inflation rate is over 16% and the country has continued to battle with the increase in prices of essential commodities*" Another area the government should look into is the pitiable conditions of retirees.

Pensioners are often neglected by the government, and this affects the performance of those in active service. Some retirees are dependents of those in active service. When they are unjustly treated it sends signal to those in active service that someday it will be their turn, and this affects their level of performance. Hence government should improve the condition of retirees.

Furthermore, good services should be appreciated by the government. This aspect of employee motivation is often being taken for granted. This is wrong. Governments that are identified with effective civil service have the culture of celebrating their workforce.

Nigeria government should emulate this culture by giving incentives and awards to best performing civil servant every year. Government should also seek employees' opinions on how to improve their performances as well as reward employees with excellent ideas.

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