

Government bureaucrats and ethical conduct in Nigeria's fourth republic: Implications for good governance

Aparatur pemerintah dan perilaku etis di republik keempat Nigeria: Implikasi bagi pemerintahan yang baik

Samuel Oni^{1*}, Celestine Okwudili Abasili², Moyosoluwa Dele-Dada¹ & Charles
Osarumwense³

¹Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University

²Department of Social Sciences, Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos

³Yaba College of Technology

Address: ¹KM. 10, Idiroko Road, Canaan Land, P.M.B 1023, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria 112104

²University Road Lagos Mainland Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria 101212

³Pen cinema, Agege, Agege, Lagos, Nigeria 100283

E-mail: samuel.oni@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Article History: Received 23 March 2022; Accepted 07 July 2022; Published Online 04 October 2022

Abstract

The recognition that ethical conduct is fundamental to accountability, transparency, fairness, equity, and quality service delivery which are the cornerstones of good governance is the reason for rules and regulations in the Nigerian government's bureaucracy. This governmental administrative machinery, however, continues to face a crucial challenge of inefficiency and unethical practices. This study interrogates how ethical conducts in Nigerian Civil Service have impacted the country's quest for good governance. The study anchors on the Weberian bureaucratic theory and engaged secondary data from fifty-one (51) articles gathered and analyzed using systematic review (SR) conducted between August 2021 and February, 2022. Findings reveal the misdemeanor and objectionable manifestations among civil servants despite legal instruments, efforts and reforms by the various successive governments aimed at repositioning it for effective and efficient service delivery. The consequence is the continuous weakening of public institutions, collapse of infrastructures, public distrust of government agencies and a sense of despair by the public. The study argues that building a vibrant civil society through public enlightenment and active and independent media is necessary to perform the crucial oversight role on civil servants in the country. This is pivotal to achieving the much needed good governance in the country.

Keywords: good governance; Nigeria; public service; service delivery; sustainable development

Abstrak

Pengakuan bahwa perilaku etis merupakan dasar untuk akuntabilitas, transparansi, keadilan, kesetaraan, dan kualitas pelayanan yang merupakan landasan tata kelola yang baik adalah alasan untuk aturan dan regulasi dalam birokrasi pemerintah Nigeria. Namun, mesin administrasi pemerintah ini terus menghadapi tantangan penting dari praktik yang tidak efisien dan tidak etis. Studi ini menginterogasi bagaimana perilaku etis dalam Layanan Sipil Nigeria telah berdampak pada pencarian negara untuk pemerintahan yang baik. Studi ini mengacu pada teori birokrasi Weberian dan menggunakan data sekunder dari lima puluh satu (51) artikel yang dikumpulkan dan dianalisis menggunakan tinjauan sistematis (SR) yang dilakukan antara Agustus 2021 dan Februari 2022. Temuan mengungkapkan pelanggaran ringan dan manifestasi yang tidak menyenangkan di kalangan pegawai negeri meskipun secara hukum instrumen, upaya dan reformasi oleh berbagai pemerintah berturut-turut bertujuan untuk memposisikan ulang untuk penyampaian layanan yang efektif dan efisien. Konsekuensinya adalah melemahnya institusi publik secara terus menerus, runtuhnya infrastruktur, ketidakpercayaan publik terhadap lembaga pemerintah dan rasa putus asa masyarakat. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa membangun masyarakat sipil yang dinamis melalui pencerahan publik dan media yang aktif dan independen diperlukan untuk melakukan peran pengawasan yang penting terhadap pegawai negeri di negara ini. Ini sangat penting untuk mencapai pemerintahan yang baik yang sangat dibutuhkan di negara ini.

Kata kunci: pemerintahan yang baik; Nigeria; pelayanan publik; pemberian layanan; pembangunan berkelanjutan

Introduction

The vital role of government's bureaucracy in the political and socioeconomic development of any state has made the issue of ethics and good governance of great public interest and a subject of considerable scholarly study in recent times (Asorwoe & Klutse 2016, Okpala & Enwefa 2017, Okafor 2018, Ihemadu 2020). The bureaucracy of the government is the pivot for the growth and development of any country. As observed by Mark (2018), the public service particularly, in developing countries, proffers policy advice, regulates emerging economies and societies and delivers excellent services to the citizens. The public service being responsible for the management of national resources on behalf of the people who own them, is an indispensable instrument for enunciating and implementing the policies, programs and projects of government (Olanrewaju et al. 2020). In this regard, the public service of any country is a transformative institution, owing to its enduring responsibility for achieving development goals and objectives and providing critical services to the populace (Ara & Islam 2019). The public service is key to the success of a government to the extent that the disposition of the public servants to the implementation of public policies has a substantial implication for the success or failure of such government (Riany 2021). No matter how well-designed government programs and policies are, they cannot be properly implemented without a well-functioning public administration that has the technical skills, loyalty, and commitment to good governance to make them work (Ehiane et al. 2019). It is in this view that governments, particularly in the developing world, are becoming more concerned about making the civil service proficient in the best way, so as to achieve the increasing responsibilities of government in the modern state.

Ethics in the civil service has, in modern times, become of great public interest due to the recognition that standards of professional conduct are imperative for the public sector to fulfill its responsibility of promoting the socioeconomic development of a country (Ehiane et al. 2019). As observed by Uche et al. (2019), human conduct can be classified as either mandatory, banned, or allowed according to the ethical principles that underlie them. According to Ehiane et al. (2019), in relation to character and behavior, ethics refers to reasoned research into the criteria of what is right and wrong, good and evil, that should be accepted by a group of people. As a result, ethics is concerned with the distinction between right and evil; good and bad; duty and obligation; and moral and legal obligations. It is a system of rules and principles regulating the behavior of individuals in private or public organization (Daveis & Egbuchu 2019). Thus, there are certain conducts and activities that could be considered morally wrong and must be avoided by all members of society. In this regard, ethics is considerably intertwined with law, morality and etiquette.

Government bureaucracy is guided by an interplay of extant rules and regulations often referred to as ethical code of conduct in the interest of the generality of the public (Olanrewaju et al. 2020, Bello & Matthew 2021). According to Ehiane et al. (2019), public sector broad principles govern how public officials are expected to conduct themselves and exercise discretion in their official activities. Ara and Islam (2019) also define public service ethics as broad standards that outline how public workers should exercise judgment and discretion in the performance of their official tasks. It encompasses a diverse and ever-expanding set of principles and values, which include objectivity, impartiality, fairness, sensitivity, compassion, responsiveness, accountability, equity, professionalism, integrity, efficiency, justice, and civility, amongst other things (Dobel 2018). The idea of ethics in the public sector centers on the fact that public officials hold a position of trust on behalf of all citizens. Their acts must be transparent to the general public because they are required to use the authority, they have been given only for the purposes stated in the law. They are to act competently and responsibly in the interest of the overall good of the community as a whole and carry out their functional duties according to laid down rules and regulation (Dobel 2018). When public servants accept government employment, they acknowledge a specific obligation to be honest, accountable, fair, and impartial in their dealings with society (Okafor 2018).

Furthermore, the establishment of a robust state bureaucracy has emerged as one of the most crucial and significant characteristics of most modern countries. This has brought up concerns about the potential abuse of bureaucratic authority by bureaucrats in their relations with ordinary people (Davies & Egbuchu 2019). Thus, the emergence of a powerful state bureaucracy in the modern societies has raised the need for rules and regulations to instill ethical practices and prevent abuse of power either for selfish gain or in the course of their dealings with the public individuals. It is, therefore, crucial that public officials act justly and equally to everyone, not merely stating their commitment to ethical behavior but also ensuring that these commitments are obviously and unmistakably demonstrated in action (Hossain et al. 2020). Oni and Oluye (2019) emphasized on the importance of public officials abiding by rules and regulations when fulfilling their duties, stating that the civil service executes its primary task in line with established rules and procedures. In the performance of their official duties, public servants are to remain impartial and avoid conflicts of interest that could impair their objective judgment. In addition, public servants are to abhor favoritism toward family and friends, carrying out their responsibilities without fear or favor (Oni & Oluye 2019). These ethical codes of conduct have endured the test of good governance and shaped the culture of the civil service (Gundu 2011).

The Nigerian Civil Service holds a very paramount and important position in the national polity as it is saddled with the responsibility of implementing government programs and policies for the attainment of sustainable development of the society (Ferdinand et al. 2021). Despite the numerous attempts made by the government to reposition it for effective and efficient service delivery, the Nigerian Civil Service continues to be inefficient and incapable of fulfilling its responsibilities in the country (Asorwoe & Klutse 2016, Okpala & Enwefa 2017, Ihemadu 2020). It has continued to show some signs of deterioration and several undesirable characteristics among which are counter-productive, little or no emphasis on results and concrete performance (Asorwoe & Klutsem 2016, Mark 2018). The aim of this study is therefore, to interrogate ethical conducts in Nigeria's Civil Service and how it has impacted the quest for good governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

It is imperative to note that several studies in the area of ethical practices in Nigerian Civil Service abound in literature. Much of these scholarly works are concern with the aim of expanding the frontier of knowledge on the obligations of the public service, and the manner it should interrelate and confluence with governments, citizens, civil society and foreign as well as domestic corporations and private institutions (Ara & Islam 2019, Hossain et al. 2020, Olanrewaju et al. 2020). Also, some of the studies are concerned with the impact of ethics on civil service performance (Uche et al. 2019, Afolabi et al. 2021). Some focus their investigations on the implications of ethical practices on civil service accountability (Kwaghga & Beatrice 2013, Anyim et al. 2017, Asseres 2017, Dobel 2018, Abdulrauf 2020). In another dimension some scholars dwell on the effect that such practices portend for public service delivery (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola 2016, Pribadi 2018, Davies & Egbuchu 2019, Ihemadu 2020). While findings of these scholars have been very profound, an obvious gap in literature that requires investigation is the implications of the ethical conducts of the bureaucrats on good governance which is considered to be the essence of performance, accountability and public service delivery. This is the significance of this study as it takes a different dimension to fill this gap in literature by analysing how the ethical conduct of government bureaucrats continues to impact on the Nigeria's quest for good governance in the country's Fourth Republic.

The study is framed through the lens of Max Weber's popularized bureaucratic theory. According to Weberian bureaucracy, a set of systematic rules and procedures, among others, is a requisite for achieving an organization's goals (Drechsler 2020). According to Weber, bureaucracy is the most efficient form of organization because it has a set way of defining official duties; it has a clear hierarchy so each official knows who to report to; it has a stable, comprehensive system of rules that guide operations; it is impersonal, and it has a strict, systematic discipline and control of the people who work there. The Weberian bureaucratic though suffers vehement criticisms from scholars, the contributions remain irrefutable (Ukeje et al. 2019). As observed by Dash and Padhi (2020), the Weberian bureaucratic model as a framework for analysis provides insights into the inner dynamics of governmental institutions and

agencies and the various purposes of the plethora of ethical rules of conducts. The adoption of this model as the theoretical framework for this paper helps in evaluating the Nigerian Civil Service ethical conducts and the implications it portends for good governance.

Research Method

This paper is solely dependent on secondary sources of data such as books, journals, conference proceedings, internet publications, newspaper articles and others. A Systematic Review (SR) was adopted for collection and analysis of data for the study. SR is a concise scientific investigation method that involves collating, summarizing, appraising, analyzing, synthesizing and communicating the results of multiple primary studies relating to a specified research question or questions (Cook et al. 1997, Johnston 2017, Martin et al. 2017). In doing so, secondary data were gathered from peer review journals, both local and international, such as Ebscohost, SCOPUS, Sage Publications, Government Publications, World Bank data, amongst others. In gathering secondary data for this paper, some specific key words were used to narrow down search results to include only articles that specifically examine ethics and good governance in Nigerian Public and Civil Service. The keywords included “ethics,” “public service,” “accountability,” “good governance” and “Nigeria.” From the search exercise, 75 articles were gathered, of which only 51 were selected for analysis.

In considering the articles used for the study, specific conditions were met such as; the article identified the relationship between ethics and good governance, traced the evolution of public service, identified the ethical nature of public service in Nigeria, identified the importance of ethics in advancing good governance, the articles were published in English language and the full contents of the articles were available. Recent articles which provided required data to examine and provide information on the subject of the study were considered. Articles which were generated through this search were exported to a citation management software and those that were not duplicated were subject to further screening in title, abstract, and content, while those articles which were duplicated were removed. Other discrepancies that were discovered during the search were resolved by discussions and clarifications between the authors.

After examining 51 articles selected for analysis, there were no new theme generated from the articles. It was therefore deemed that data collection had reached a saturation point. For the purpose of reliability and discussion, the scope of the research was defined, followed by the search for relevant literatures, selection of appropriate publication within the scope of the research and finally, the selected literature was analyzed and findings were presented. The study was carried out within a period of six months between August 2021 and February, 2022.

Results and Discussion

Ethical conducts in the civil service of Nigeria

Prior to colonial rule, the different ethnic groups and communities that now comprise Nigeria existed in empires, kingdoms, and clans, each with its own set of traditional administrative structures for implementing laws and programs (Omotoso & Oladeji 2019). Administrative machinery and institutions have always existed in these various societies to give directions to community activities by implementing decisions reached in the community. For instance, in the North, there were the Islamic Sokoto Caliphates of Borno, Kano Kanuri and Sokoto, while in the West and East, there were different communities and empires with their set of traditional administrative machinery for carrying out the day-to-day activities of the emir or king (Odorige 2017).

The modern Civil Service in Nigeria, however, evolved from the British colonial government, which was founded to assist the colonial administration in exploiting and exploring the country’s resources (Lawan et al. 2020). The structure of the entire government machinery in Nigeria at the time was

deliberately designed to enable British administrators report performance to their home government rather than to the indigenous people (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola 2016). Public service was structured to facilitate the exploitation of the people and their resources for the benefit of the colonial authority (Omotoso 2014, Ukeje et al. 2019). The British government thus established a variety of high-ranking roles, including Governor, Auditor of Public Accounts, Colonial Secretary, Senior Military Officers, and Private Secretaries to the Governor, Chief Magistrate, Chief Clerk, and Collector of Customs (Mark 2018). By 1906, the British administration had expanded its jurisdiction over the majority of Nigeria and began to establish its instruments of law and order, including the Police, Prisons, Public Works, Judiciary, and Customs, Ports, and Telegraph Departments (Odegowi 2011).

Following the political independence granted Nigeria, it was not only important for the Nigerian government to build a whole system of government that was accountable, transparent, predictable and participatory but also to change the civil service's focus from tax collection to community service, infrastructure development, and nation-building. This would help the new government plan and speed up the pace of Nigerian development (Okafor 2018, Ihemadu 2020, Lawan et al. 2020). Since the demise of colonial regime in Nigeria, a repositioning and restructuring of the Nigeria Civil Service to be in tune with democratic values have become highly imperative (Gafar 2017). This informs the many reforms aimed at reviving it so that it can carry out its responsibilities efficiently and effectively (Murana et al. 2016, Mark 2018). The reforms were targeted at improving the quality of public goods and services delivered to the citizens and to improve the public service's ability to carry out important government tasks, which are crucial for Nigeria's long-term economic and social growth (Magbadelo 2016). Attempts have also been made by various successive governments in Nigeria to promote ethicality, values and improve attitude for better performance through the establishment of various agencies and bodies (Etim et al. 2020).

The Public Accounts Committee was set up by the government in 1966 to provide assistance to the legislature in overseeing the expenditure of public funds. Another committee was established in 1975- Public Complaint Commission with the mandate to investigate the failures of the Public Account Committee as well as the fall of Nigeria's First Republic. Presently, agencies like Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Civil Service Commission and SERVICOM have been established and empowered to carry out investigations and prosecute all those found guilty of questionable activities in Nigerian Public Service (Abdulrauf 2020). Although, in some cases, these agencies have been somewhat successful in achieving their objectives as stipulated by the government.

Years after the various reforms, the Civil Service of Nigeria continues to be frothed with lots of misdemeanor and unwholesome manifestations which bother on ethical practices (Murana et al. 2016, Asseres 2017, Okafor 2018). The demise of military dictatorship in Nigeria in 1999 was greeted with euphoria with the hope that a democratic government would usher in ethical practice in the country's public service with its concomitant good governance. Since her return to civilian rule however, one of the key problems confronting the various administrations in the country, just like the previous democratic dispensations, has being the issue of how to address the crisis in the Public Sector (Ibietan 2019, Olanrewaju et al. 2020). Over the years, the Nigerian Civil Service has been recognized to be one dominated by unethical practices and conducts, thereby limiting its effectiveness in the delivery of social services. Some of these unethical practices include corruption, impunity, lack of probity and accountability (Murana et al. 2016, Okpala & Enwefa 2017, Okafor 2018, Ihemadu 2020).

The essence of ethical code of conducts stems from the fact that the sociopolitical and economic environmental context of the public service determines, to a large extent, its character and nature (Ihemadu 2020). Rules and regulations must therefore be designed in order to divest the public servants of these environmental characteristics to ensure efficiency and effective service delivery (Uche et al. 2019). Paradoxically, unethical practices including chronic tardiness to work, loafing, buck-passing, bribery, corruption, embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds, misuse of government property amongst others have continued to be the bane of the Nigerian Civil Service (Pribadi 2018).

The challenges of accountability, use of position for self-enrichment, moonlighting absenteeism, influence peddling, fraud, embezzlement of public funds, corruption in form of solicitation or acceptance, gross indiscipline, and many more, have become institutionalized and accepted as the norm of Nigerian public service (Ijewereme 2015). Recruitment into public service in Nigeria is often influenced by political patronage, nepotism and tribalism, rather than competence and qualification (Ukeje et al. 2020). Integrity in public administration is critical for the state to function effectively, for maintaining public trust in the government, and for fostering circumstances for long-term social and economic progress (Menzel 2017). This essential element is however lacking in Nigeria as civil servants are largely lazy, inaccessible, ineffective, inefficient, and above all, corrupt (Omotoso 2014). The return of Nigeria to democratic governance after decades of military repression had not meaningfully enhanced the efficiency of the nation's civil service, rather It has become a shell of its former self as a result of visible degradation and widespread corruption, as well as defective recruitment, a weakened organizational structure, and extremely demoralized and ineffective workers (Okafor 2018).

Nigeria is endowed with natural resources capable of turning the country to a highly developed country in the world. The country's natural resources which are meant for providing citizens with public goods and services are however, siphoned off by government employees and their political overlords who enrich themselves instead of those they serve. The public sector's allocations of funds are not properly and judiciously used for the intended purposes (Omotoso 2014). In Nigeria, systemic corruption and an improper use of power which seem to be the prevailing values of today's public service have rendered the Civil Service dysfunctional. Corruption continues to be a major problem in Nigeria's public sector and has a significant impact on the society and the way the government operates. A wide range of difficulties in the public sector reveal that there is an absence of transparency and accountability in the public sector, as well as a deterioration in Nigerian laws (Ukeje et al. 2019).

Mechanisms for instilling ethical conducts in the Nigerian Civil Service

There are mechanisms for instilling discipline and ethical conduct in the Civil Service of Nigeria. There are internal and external controls in place to ensure public officials behave ethically by complying with applicable laws and regulations and to ensure that they are accountable to the public (Davies & Egbuchu 2019). These instruments provide ethical environment for the operation of the Nigerian Civil Service. They exist to ensure that things are done according to the laid down rules and regulations for the purpose of promoting and enhancing good governance in the public sector (Paul et al. 2017, Uche et al. 2019).

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, clearly stipulates, in Part 1, section D number 172, that all public servants are to be subject to code of ethics governing the Nigerian Public Service. The Public Service Rules consists of very elaborate rules that cover the entire workings within the public service including recruitment, discipline, promotion, retirement, medical issues, appointments and procedures, allowances, punctuality etc. It controls and checks the total behavior of public servants for the effective and efficient performance of their jobs geared toward efficient service delivery. Chapter 01 section 01 number 01 of the Public Service Rules of 2009 makes it mandatory for every officer to acquaint himself/herself with the Public Service Rules, other regulations and extant circulars. The Code of Conduct has its objective of ensuring public accountability by public officials. It is a comprehensive set of laws, regulations, and norms of conduct that govern, regulate, and steer the behavior of public servants, as specified in the Fifth Schedule, Part 1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic. Notable among these codes are; fairness, neutral stance, objectivity, transparency, prudence, uprightness, discretion, allegiance to state, competence and effectiveness in service delivery. It is expected that every public servant in Nigeria abides by the provision of the Codes of Conduct. The Codes of Conduct Bureau is saddled with the responsibility of checking unethical activities of the public officers. Besides, these legal instruments, there are other various forms of executive control, judicial control, legislative control, control by the public through the Public Complaints Commission (OMBUDSMAN), control by agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) as well as other monitoring agencies, professional bodies and trade unions.

These rules and standards as contained in the nation's Constitution, Code of Conduct, Public Service Rules and Guidelines have bearings on virtually every aspect of the life of government bureaucracy, guiding the daily conducts and functioning of public and civil servants. Nigeria also adopted the Charter for Public service in Africa in 2001. The charter aimed at achieving general rules and principles governing public services in Africa for the purpose of enhancing transparency, professionalism and ethical standards and serving as a policy framework for the public service administration of all African countries and a source of inspiration for the development, strengthening or updating of national codes of conduct (Okpala & Enwefa 2017). All these instruments aimed at ensuring loyalty, accountability, transparency, integrity, openness, effectiveness and efficiency which are the cornerstones of good governance. As observed by Bouckaert et al. (2016), performance of duties in the public sector is in accordance with laid down rules and procedures with the overall objective of enhancing productivity, accountability and service delivery pivotal to achieving good governance.

Ethical challenges in Nigeria's civil service: Implications for good governance

The Weberian Bureaucratic theory of a system of abstract rules for controlling employees' activities in order to maximize efficiency and productivity is the fulcrum for analysing the implications of ethical challenges in Nigeria's Civil Service for good governance in Nigeria. In this regards, exercising control over the civil servants through a system of formulated rules and regulations, standardized principles, patterns, processes and procedures and trained administrative personnel is indispensable for efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and quality service delivery.

The fact that ethics is fundamental to accountability, transparency, fairness and equity brings to the fore, the imperative of ethical conducts to good governance. Good governance refers to a government's ability to create an efficient, effective, and transparent public management process that encourages citizen participation and strengthens rather than weakens a democratic system of government (United Nations 2009). As noted by Singh and Chudasama (2020), good governance is being transparent and democratic, as well as a means of promoting both political accountability and economic expansion that benefits the disadvantaged. In a similar dimension, Addink (2019), explained that good governance entails working for a better system of government, placing a greater emphasis on efficiency and accountability across all institutions, advancement of democratic values, and a more positive interaction between the state and civil society. Good governance is essential for the realization of natural, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the citizens; for moving a society toward greater human development through poverty eradication, environmental protection and regeneration, equality and sustainable livelihoods. Good governance entails that public goods and services are delivered in a way that is responsive to the demands of the general public (Kimura 2015).

Good governance is released when political and socioeconomic priorities of a country reflect the broad consensus of the people and their voices dictate the decisions regarding allocation of development resources of the country. As noted by Keping (2018), good governance can thus, be defined as the process that improves the system of government through efficient, transparent and accountable conduct and management of public affairs for the overall purpose of delivering quality goods and services to the public. In this regard, the cornerstones of good governance include participation, transparency and accountability, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and the rule of law and effective and efficient utilization of public resources for quality service delivery to the citizens (Kimura 2015).

Despite the realization that ethical conduct is pivotal to good governance, ethical lapses remain the missing link in Nigerian Civil Service and which has continued to negatively impact on productivity, legitimacy, accountability and transparency of government and implementation of government policies (Ijewereme 2015, Magbadelo 2016). As aptly posited by Turangan et al. (2016), ethical code of conduct in the public service is necessitated by the fact that good governance and sound public administration is the pathway to sustainable development. Incidentally, performance and achievements have become difficult to realize by the Nigerian Civil Service, culminating into poor delivery of public service (Ehiane

et al. 2019). Unethical practice in the Nigerian Civil Service is largely the cause of low productivity of the sector and its inability in actualizing the goals and objectives of raising the living standards of the citizenry (Okafor 2018, Pribadi 2018, Afolabi et al. 2021).

Despite that civil servants in Nigeria are trained and are expected to act within the norms of modern organisations, the weight of traditional values continues to exert constant pressure on them such that recruitments and promotions in the public service are often based on primordial factors rather than merits. It is instructive to note that for good governance to be realized, public servants must execute their official responsibilities in correspondence with clearly stated rules and regulations and be directed by principles and standards of veracity, transparency, answerability and responsibility. In fact, the goals of the public bureaucracy are usually accomplished through the application of rules and regulations established to guide the conduct of public servants in the course of discharging their responsibilities.

In Nigeria however, some civil officials struggle to conform to the impersonal, disinterested, and legalistic requirements of modern bureaucracy (Wilson 2021). It is of little wonder therefore, that several years into the new democratic dispensation referred to as the Fourth Republic, the yearning of the citizens for good governance with its fundamental elements of accountability, transparency, equity, responsiveness, service delivery and public participation which democracy is expected to usher in to the country continues to be elusive in Nigeria. The lapses in ethical behaviors among the Nigeria civil servant has resulted in deterioration of public institutions and infrastructure breakdowns, widespread misplacement of public trust and a general feeling of despondency among Nigerian citizens and continue to impede on the realization of good governance the country (Asorwoe & Klutse 2016, Asseres 2017, Ukeje et al. 2019, Etim et al. 2020).

Conclusion

This paper has interrogated the imperative and indispensability of ethical codes of conduct and standard among the Nigerian Civil servants to realizing good governance in the country. For the purpose of attaining good governance, the Nigerian Civil Service is guided and controlled by specific sets of rules and regulations. For the purpose of attaining good governance with accountability, transparency, justice, equity, and quality of service delivery as the hallmarks, and as a path toward sustainable development in every society, the Nigerian Civil Service is guided and controlled by a specific set of rules and regulations. This paper upholds the Weberian bureaucratic theory and argues that ethical values which have largely been lacking in the Nigerian Civil Service over the years, constitute significant hindrance to achieving good governance in the country. In line with the Weberian bureaucracy, to accomplish the goal of good governance, public and civil officials must adhere to pre-established norms and regulations that govern and shape their actions and activities. In addition to morals, public officials are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner, promoting rather than undermining public faith in government institutions.

The goal of this is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery while also encouraging accountability and openness in the performance of public officials' responsibilities. Ethical practice in the public sector promotes and encourages good governance which in turn builds trust from the citizenry on the agenda and ability of the public service to perform optimally. It is through the instrumentality of ethical code of conduct that good governance, recognized as fundamental to ensuring quality of life of citizens and important determinant of the strength of democracy and sustainable development can be achieved.

To uphold ethical conduct in the civil service therefore, it is important that public service codes of ethical conduct is made clear and well-publicized to both public servants and the general public. A brief, unambiguous, and well-publicized statement on the key ethical standards and concepts that underlie public service should be provided. This will establish a common understanding throughout government and the broader society. Public servants should be aware of the fundamental ideas and norms that they

are required to adhere to their work, as well as the boundaries that define acceptable behavior in the workplace. In addition, there should be adequate training on ethics to help public servants develop essential skills for ethical analysis and moral reasoning. Appropriate incentives should be provided to encourage ethical behavior among public servants.

It appears there are adequate legal frameworks for instilling ethical conducts in the Nigeria Civil Service. The issue therefore, is not the presence or adequacy of restraint measures; rather, it is the apparent lack of enforcement and apathy on the part of public officials. In this regards, consistent enforcement of codes of conduct, supervision and coordination of the public service is necessary, more-so, because of the complex nature and ever evolving sphere of the sector. Governments should also strengthen all authorities, institutions and agencies concerned with ethics management, control and enforcement by appointing individuals who are honest, hardworking, and gutsy to manage state affairs.

Furthermore, public awareness of the codes of conduct is important for building a vibrant civil society and an active and independent media to perform their oversight role on public servants. Moreover, there should be firm political and administrative will and dedication to ethical practices by the political leaders to ethical conduct. This demands leadership by example and avoidance of exploiting ethical codes for selfish political gains. The government of Nigeria cannot realize the noble objectives of the country without an effective civil service. The efficient and effective performance of this public administrative body however depends, to a large extent, on its adherence to an ethical code of conduct.

References

- Abdulrauf LA (2020) Using specialised anti-corruption agencies to combat pervasive corruption in Nigeria: A critical review of the ICPC and EFCC. *African Journal of Legal Studies* 12 (3-4):215-241.
- Addink H (2019) *Good Governance: Concept and Context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Afolabi OS, Adebowale A, & Omodunbi O (2021) An Assessment of Unethical Work Behavior Among Police Personnel in Nigeria. In: Pittaro M (ed). *Global Perspectives on Reforming the Criminal Justice System*. IGI Global. 76-85.
- Aladegbola IA & Jaiyeola F (2016) Critique of public administrative reform system: Post-independence in Nigeria. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 4 (1):147-171. <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v4i1.109>.
- Anyim BA, Nwaeke C, Orji MO, & Anyim-Ben FO (2017) Civil servants in Nigeria: Servants or masters? An overview. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1).
- Ara JG & Islam F (2019) Ethical implications and techniques of promoting better governance in Bangladesh Public Service. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal* 10 (1).
- Asorwoe E & Klutse CM (2016) Corruption and unethical behavior in public sector organizations: A specific test of social learning theory. *International Journal of Management and Economics Invention* 2 (1):504-516.
- Asseres GA (2017) *New public management, ethics, and accountability: The case of Addis Ababa City administration, Ethiopia*. Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Bello D & Matthew F (2021) Good governance and civil service accountability in Nigeria-problems and prospects. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3860781>.
- Busenan EM (2021) Human capital and public services performance: The role of accountability as moderating variable. *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 11 (10):723-729.
- Bouckaert G, Peters BG, & Verhoest K (2016) *Coordination of Public Sector Organizations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cook DJ, Mulrow CD, & Haynes RB (1997) Systematic reviews: Synthesis of best evidence for clinical decisions. *Annals of internal medicine* 126 (5):376-380.
- Dash SS & Padhi M (2020) Relevance of Max Weber's rational bureaucratic organizations in modern society. *Management Revue* 31 (1):81-91.
- Davies EO & Egbuchiu SA (2019) Ethics in the public service in Africa: A focus on the Nigerian public service. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences* 5 (2):91-105.

- Dobel JP (2018) *Public Leadership Ethics: A Management Approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Drechsler W (2020) Good bureaucracy: Max Weber and public administration today. *Max Weber Studies* 20 (2):219-224.
- Ehiane SO, Adejuwon KD, & Goyayi MLJ (2019) Enhancing public sector performance in developmental state in Nigeria: Between rhetoric and reality. *AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society* 9 (2):47-66. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1a806bd6fc>.
- Etim RS, Jeremiah MS, & Jeremiah OO (2020) Accountability in the public sector: The role of professional accountants in the present democracy in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management Research* 5 (1).
- Ferdinand EO, Bisong BD, & Inakefe IG (2021) Bureaucracy and public policy implementation in the Nigerian public service: Some salient issues. *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa* 6 (2):39-46.
- Gafar BB (2017) The travail of service delivery and developmental failure in post-independence Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research* 9 (3):26-33. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JAPR2017.0406>.
- Gundu GA (2011) Nigerian's experience in dealing with public service ethical dilemmas. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5 (3):146-151.
- Hossain F, Kumasey AS, Rees CJ, & Mamman A (2020) Public service ethics, values and spirituality in developing and transitional countries: Challenges and opportunities. *Public Administration and Development* 40 (3):147-155.
- Ibietan J (2019) Oscillation of public administration paradigms and the management of public service in Nigeria: Trajectory and lessons. *Halduskultuur* 19 (2):81-105.
- Idike A, Ukeje IO, Iwuala HO, Onele JC, Ekwunife RA, Nwachukwu K, & Udu O (2019) The practice of inclusive representation in Nigeria bureaucracy: The federal character principle experience. *Cogent Social Sciences* 5 (1):1601545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2019.1601545>.
- Ihemadu MC (2020) Ethics and the Nigerian Public Service: A study of Imo state civil service. *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences* 10 (2):272-286.
- Ijewereme OB (2015) Anatomy of corruption in the Nigerian public sector: Theoretical perspectives and some empirical explanations. *Sage Open* 5 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2158244015581188>.
- Johnston MP (2017) Secondary data analysis: A method of which the time has come. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries* 3 (3):619-626.
- Keping Y (2018) Governance and good governance: A new framework for political analysis. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 11 (1):1-8.
- Kimura H (2015) The Role of Governance and Politics in the Development of Developing Countries. *Globalization and Development Volume I*. In: Osubo ST (ed). *Globalization and Development Volume I*. New York: Routledge. 135-168.
- Kwaghga B & Beatrice K (2013) Challenges of ethics and accountability in Nigeria civil service: Implication for counseling. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 9 (2):18-23.
- Lawan BM, Ajadi IA, Kayode AA, & Yaru AU (2020) E-government and public service delivery in Nigeria. *e-BANGI* 17 (5):1-14.
- Magbadelo JO (2016) Reforming Nigeria's federal civil service: Problems and prospects. *India Quarterly* 72 (1):75-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0974928415618755>.
- Mark O (2018) The challenges of implementing civil service delivery reforms in Nigeria. Dissertation, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah.
- Martin F, Ahlgrim-Delzell L, & Budhrani K (2017) Systematic review of two decades (1995 to 2014) of research on synchronous online learning. *American Journal of Distance Education* 31 (1):3-19.
- Menzel DC (2017) *Ethics Moments in Government: Cases and Controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Murana AO, Olayinka SM, & Omotayo IB (2016) The impacts of the Nigerian civil service reforms on effective service delivery. *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 7 (7).
- Odegowi T (2011) From conquest to independence: The Nigerian colonial experience. *Historia Actual Online* 25: 19-29.
- Odorige CE (2017) Historical perspectives of African nationalism: With focus on Nigeria. *Polgári Szemle: Gazdasági És Társadalmi Folyóirat* 13 (4-6):365-374. <https://doi.org/10.24307/psz.2017.1226>.

- Okafor C (2018) Dysfunctional public administration in an era of increasing public service delivery expectations: A puncture to nation-building efforts. *Journal of Nation-building & Policy Studies* 2 (1):5-24. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-134be1c8a7>.
- Okpala KE & Enwefa C (2017) War against corruption in Nigeria public sector: An analysis of stakeholders' role. *FUNAL Journal of Accounting* 1 (1):204-218.
- Olanrewaju YEF, Sanni MF, & Aliu IDA (2020) Standards of behaviour and performance in Nigerian public sector using mixed method approach. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 5 (3):1169-1180.
- Omotoso F (2014) Public-service ethics and accountability for effective service delivery in Nigeria. *Africa Today* 60 (3):119-139.
- Omotoso F & Oladeji O (2019) Legislative Oversight in The Nigerian Fourth Republic. In: Fashagba JY, Ajayi ORM, & Nwankwor C (ed). *The Nigerian National Assembly*. Switzerland: Springer. 57-72.
- Oni S & Excellence-Oluye N (2019) Leadership and good governance: The Nigerian experience. *LASU Journal of Public Administration and Management* 1 (1):112-129.
- Paul SO, Alih MA, & Audu E (2017) Public administration and traditional administrative system in Africa: An interdependency discourse. *Management* 1 (1):1-15.
- Pribadi U (2018) Ethics in public services. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 191: 560-570.
- Riany KG (2021) Influence of e-government strategies on public service delivery of state agencies in Kenya: The moderating effect of strategy execution. Dissertation, JKUAT-COHRED.
- Singh PK & Chudasama H (2020) Evaluating poverty alleviation strategies in a developing country. *PloS one* 15 (1):e0227176. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0227176>.
- Turangan RB, Pangemanan SS, & Tielung MV (2016) Employee performance analysis through leadership style, motivation & work discipline (at Waroeng charity Manado). *Jurnal EMBA: Jurnal Riset Ekonomi, Manajemen, Bisnis dan Akuntansi* 4 (1).
- Uche CB, Akaighe GO, Oni OA, & Asekun AU (2019) Effects of nepotism on the ethical competence and performance of public institutions in Nigeria. *Unilag Journal of Business* 5 (2):110-120.
- Ukeje IO, Ndukwe C, Emma C, Ogbulu U, & Onele JC (2020) Public service recruitment practices and implications for sustainable development in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Public Administration* 43 (4):361-372.
- Ukeje IO, Ogbulu U, Onyema UE, Obi V, & Obasi VU (2019) Bureaucratization and Service Delivery in Nigeria. *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*. Cham: Springer.
- United Nations (2009) About good governance. United Nations Human Right Office of the High Commissioner. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/good-governance/about-good-governance>.
- Wilson HT (2021) *Bureaucratic Representation: Civil Servants and the Future of Capitalist Democracies*. Leiden: Brill.