

WORK ETHICS AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian public service is an important national institution. It provides support to constituted government, and also provides the enabling environment that can help public servants contribute to good economic development through effective service delivery. Unfortunately, the unbecoming behaviour of public servants hurts service delivery in Nigeria. It is a matter of grave concern that public service in Nigeria is facing ethical crisis, which manifests in the pervasive absence of accountability, institutionalization of corrupt practices and new forms of cutting corners or what some writers have described as briberisation. Against this backdrop, the study examined work ethics and how it affects quality service delivery in the Nigeria public service. The study adopted consequential list theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. Data for the study were drawn from participant observation and authentic secondary sources. The study identified that unethical behaviour in the Nigeria public service is high and unacceptable and has negatively affected quality service delivery and sustenance of services to the public. The study recommended among others, the imposition of severe punishments on public servants that breach the Code of Conduct in Public Service. The study concluded that public officials in Nigeria should improve on their ethical practices, to enable them achieve their goals of providing sufficient and effective service to the public.

Keywords: Work Ethics, Sustainable Service Delivery, Public Service, Accountability, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The public service of any country is regarded as a transformational institution. This is because of its responsibility for implementing public policies and programmes and also rendering of essential services to the masses. The relevance of public service in any democracy cannot be over-emphasized. The public service is therefore an influential public institution for service delivery and development. According to Omisore and Adeleke (2015), the public service acts as a springboard for public policy, especially

where the political leadership is weak. It provides for continuity in governance and serves as a store house of knowledge of past government decisions and procedures.

It provides support to the constituted government and also provides the enabling environment that will enable the public servants to contribute to good governance through effective service delivery (Ogbonnaya, 2018:33). Public services account for a large proportion of government budgets, but increased spending has often not been matched by improvements in outcomes. In the worst case, public services can be bedeviled by corruption which leads to money intended for books, teachers, dispensaries, medical supplies and infrastructure being syphoned off by officials or private contractors (World Bank, 2004).

Ethics is a branch of philosophy which specifically seeks to address morality. It could be described as a body of standard that the professionals ought to accept and observe. Ethics is specifically concerned with what is right and wrong as well as moral duty and obligation. Work ethics refers to moral values such as honesty, justice, professionalism, that is either present or absent in a worker, official or bureaucrat or in an organization. Work ethics can be described as a set of values, which include the right attitude, correct behaviour, respect for others and effective communication by employees in public service. The aim for applying the ethical codes of conduct in the work environment is to guide the conduct of public servants in the course of discharging their duties. Ikeanyibe (2009:234) posited that rules are meant to ensure accountability and can hardly be effective when the conduct of public officials is not controlled internally by certain ethical values and standards personally cherished and admitted.

In Nigeria, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, the Civil Service Rules, and Financial Regulations have set ethical standards in the Nigerian public service. Ethical principles are enshrined in the rules and regulations to ensure proper conduct of officials, corporate bodies and government organs, to facilitate efficient service delivery, which should translate to societal development. Ethics therefore places an obligation on the Nigerian public service (officials and elected/political appointees) to serve in a manner as to ensure the wellbeing of the citizenry as well as societal development (Bem, 2014:37). Individuals, who exercise power on behalf of the state whether appointed or elected, must be accountable for the actions they take on behalf of the State (Adamolekun, 2002). However, cases abound of public servants, who abuse their bureaucratic power, either for selfish ends (especially for personal or family enrichment) or in the course of their dealings with private citizens. It is interesting to point out that Nigerian government in one way or the other have devised some methods of dealing with problems arising from outright abuse of public offices. Some of these methods are the establishment of Public Complaints Commission popularly known as Ombudsman system. There are also other internal mechanisms and control measures put in place, to ensure that the bureaucracy conduct its business within some ethical parameters, such as the Civil Service Rule (CSR), the Civil Service Handbook, the Code of Conduct Bureau, the Code of Conduct Tribunal and also the fifth schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN, 1999).

In spite of all these control measures put in place to ensure an ethical bureaucratic system, the work ethics have been abandoned and all forms of unethical behaviour have become the norm. It was as a result of this that the subject area of ethics and service delivery in the Nigerian public service has been recently, gradually attracting attention and interest of scholars in public administration, management, social sciences and related discipline. The sudden focus of attention on ethics is as a result of ethical crisis which the public service of Nigeria is currently undergoing. These ethical crises, according to studies carried out by (Rasheed, 1995 and Ezeani, 2006), have manifested in behaviours such as “absence of accountability, unethical behaviour and institutionalization of corrupt

practices and new forms of cutting corners or what can be described as briberisation”. Given such situation, service delivery in all sectors gets hurt and unsustainable.

The general objective of this study is to examine the work ethics and find out its effect on the delivery and sustenance of services in the Nigeria public service. In doing this, we shall identify some prevalent unethical behaviours of Nigerian public servants. The study will also ascertain some factors responsible for unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public service and attempt to offer explanations on the relationship between the work ethics and service delivery in Nigeria public service. Ways of promoting ethics for effective and sustainable service delivery in the public service will be discussed and put forward.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual of Work Ethics

Pollitt (2003) defined ethics as rules of conduct and behaviour, which relate to questions of right or wrong, good or evil. Maesschalck (2004) sees ethics as a proposed lever to restore trust in government. He discussed ethics under two approaches namely, compliance and integrity. Compliance implies that an individual can choose to follow rules which he called ethical, or refuse to follow the rules which he described as unethical. Integrity focuses on internal control (self-control) exercise by each public servant.

Work ethics is an inherent attitude that an individual possesses that allows him to make decisions and perform his duties with a positive moral value. A work ethic also means being adaptive to economic movements and continually striving to improve the wellbeing of individuals and society (Wustari and Muhammad, 2021). According to Agara and Olarinmoye (2009:12) as the broad norms that stipulate how public servants should behave and exercise judgments and discretions in carrying out their official duties. It is expected that civil servants should apply and exercise certain ethical considerations when carrying out orders of political bosses and also when they are faced with situations where they have to make value judgement that have implications for their professional standing. Therefore, our working definition of work ethics refers to moral values or characteristics that are present in an organization or are exhibited by its employees and certain codes of conduct/morals that are upheld within an organization or a particular administrative system (Ezeani, 2006:381). In public administration and organizations, ethics is codes of behaviour written down to protect public values such as public interest, accountability, justice, impartiality, neutrality, responsiveness, etc.

2.2 Sustainable Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the actual delivery of a service and products to the customer or clients. It is concerned with the where, when and how a service product is delivered to the customer and whether this is fair or unfair in nature. Martins and Ledimo (2015:79) pointed out that in the public sector, service components are often not physical entities, but rather are a combination of processes, people skills and materials that must be appropriately integrated to result in the ‘planned’ or ‘designed’ service. Public service delivery is the mechanism through which the public services are delivered to the public by local, state or federal governments. Some of the examples of public services include, but not limited to public education, health services, street cleaning, sewage and trash disposal.

It is the responsibility of Nigerian government to provide service to her people. The goal of service delivery system is to protect and upgrade the economic and social well-being of the citizens. It therefore becomes imperative that government deliver efficient, effective and responsive services to citizens. Government should try to remove all the blockages to service delivery through strategizing on how to improve the work ethics of public servants in Nigeria. Improving the work ethics in public service will lead

to the delivery of efficient and effective services and this will eventually help in the sustenance of services as well as revitalizing the Nigerian public service.

2.3 Public Service in Nigeria

The public service according to Mokolade (2016) can be defined as a body or department in the executive arm of Government responsible for the execution of policies and programmes of Government. Agba, et. al (2013), described public service as the activities of government employees and institutions aimed at formulating and implementing governmental policies and programmes for the interest of the masses. The public service workers are referred to as public servants. They perform purely administrative functions which entail formulation and implementation of government policies. The public service is divided into departments and each department carries out specific functions. The armed forces, the police, public corporations and government owned companies are not in the civil service. They are collectively called public service, but their workers are called public servants.

According to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (1999), the Public service of Nigeria can be defined to include the following institutions; the Federal Civil Services, the State Civil Services, Local Governments, Statutory corporations of both Federal and State government, Authorities or Commission, business enterprises with full or majority ownership by either the federal or state government. It also includes States and National Assemblies, the judiciary, the armed forces, the police, the paramilitary, Ministries, Department and Agencies. The Nigeria public service functions according to Ogbonnaya(2018:36) include rendering professional and technical advice on government policies based on expertise; experience acquired over a period of service. The public service of Nigeria also ensures the implementation of all government policies and programmes for the achievement of set goals and objectives.

As an important national institution, the public service of Nigeria provides support to the constituted government. It is through the support provided by the public service that the public servants contribute in a fundamental way to good governance. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Principles of responsible Government provide the foundation for public service roles, responsibilities and value. This framework was set up to guide and support the public servants in all their professional activities.

2.3 Theoretical Literature

2.3.1 Utilitarian Model view on Work Ethics

The utilitarian theory, whose original proponents were Jeremy Benthan (1789), John Staurt Mill (1863) and Henry Sidgwich (1907) which was modified by Walter (2019), emphasizes on what is morally good and the principle that should guide man's conduct. According to Mill (1863), acts should be classified as morally right or wrong only if the consequences are of such significance that a person would wish to see the agent compelled, not merely persuaded and exhorted, to act in the preferred manner. Utilitarianism is a species of consequentialism, the general doctrine in ethics that actions (or types of action) should be evaluated on the basis of their consequences. In the notion of consequences the utilitarian includes all of the good and bad produced by the action, whether arising after the action has been performed or during its performance.

According to Vambe (2013), under this approach, a decision maker is expected to consider the effect of each decision alternative on all parties and select the one that optimizes the satisfaction for the greatest number of people. Hence, an act is judged right or wrong based on its consequences - whether the consequences produce happiness or pain. If an action produces an excess of happiness over pain, then it is right; otherwise it is wrong. In order words, the greatest happiness of the greatest number determines the

morality of an action (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1979; Ezeani, 2005). This theory was the basis for the Federal Government's removal of petroleum subsidy in January 2012. Government has the intention of using the turn-over of the new revenues to build social infrastructure, industries and boost agricultural production in the country. The poor in the society may have experienced hardships due to hikes in transportation fares and commodities in the market, but for a consequentialist approach of this nature, the policy is just and for the interest of the public. This is because at the end, the social and economic standard of everybody will be improved, including that of the least well-off

2.3.2 Aristotle's Virtue Theory on Work Ethics

Aristotle's virtue theory is of the view that what matters in ethical behavior is the integrity of an individual's character or behaviour. According to Eleni (2018), the concept of virtues is considered necessary for the effective delivery of psychosocial care service. Virtue ethics is one of the oldest ethical theories in the western and non-western traditions of thought deriving from the ancient Greek philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), particularly the Aristotelian understanding of a virtuous person and Chinese philosophy (Confucius) (Russell, 2013). Virtue ethics focuses upon what it actually means to be a human being by giving priority to the examination of 'our character and motivations in order to distinguish right from wrong' (Bibus, 2013). Virtue ethics has shown that morality goes beyond rules and duties though does not 'ignore principles or consequences' (Bibus, 2013, pp. 37–38) nor is it 'independent of principles and duties' (Pellegrino, 2007, p. 63). According to Aristotle (2004), virtues are good habits of the heart (soul/psyche) and mind (or learned dispositions) and are essential for developing and maintaining good ethical character and behavior. Following Aristotle's idea of the virtuous person, it is reasonable to think that public officers become virtuous not only by acting virtuously in their workplace, but also by being fully aware that what they are doing is good and being able to go through with it no matter what. In other words, this implies that, if we really want to be good public servant, we must desire and act virtuously in accordance to the Code of Conduct of public service as in the case of Nigeria.

2.4 Empirical Literature

Several studies have been carried out on organizational ethics and employee's performance. (Omisoe and Adeleke 2015; Adeyeye et. al 2015, Nyanbo and Dennis 2015, Million, 2015). These studies showed that strict adhering to organizational ethics and code of conduct in public service has a significant effect on employee's performance and quality of service rendered. Similarly, Omisore and Adeleke (2015) conducted a study on Work Ethics, Values, Attitudes and performance in the Nigerian Public Service using content analysis as a method of data gathering and analysis. The study identified that work ethics, attitudes and values are influenced by the public bureaucracy through the intention of tracing, motivation and coaching. It recommended that public servants should act justly and fairly to its customers, not only paying lip service to ethical conduct but also ensuring that these are manifesting and undoubtedly seen to be done.

Furthermore, Adeyeye et al., (2015) conducted on a study on the "effects of workplace ethics on employees and organizational productivity in Nigeria". The results show that significant relationship exists between ethical standards and organizational productivity, in Nigeria public sector and that integrity cum discipline have a negative impact on the improved productivity level of the organization, which could be attributed to the nature of these virtues being abstract and could only be seen or observed within a specified period.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on Utilitarian Theory, which was originally propounded by Jeremy Bentham (1789), John Stuart Mill (1861), Henry Sidgwick (1907) and later modified by Walter in 2019. John Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory focuses on the practical consequences of an action in order to determine whether that action was right or wrong. An action is considered good when it results in the happiness of the majority of those affected by that specific action (Rossouw, 2010).

The theory emphasizes that unethical conduct in government institutions occurs because of public officials' greed, dishonesty and to a great extent, lack of training and development (Fox et al, 1991; Charles, 2012). These factors (lack of training and development) largely result from lack of or deficient or inadequate control and accountability in a government institution. The negative effect of inadequate control and accountability in government institution, would be dishonest public officials who would exploit the situation for their own benefit and interest. This in a long run will make quality service delivery to suffer as both human resources, time, finance and technological resources will be utilized in the wrong way than for the general welfare of the public served.

Applying utilitarian theory of ethics in explaining work ethics and sustainable service delivery in Nigeria public service implies that the effectiveness of a service delivered should be judged on the extent to which it has the tendency to augment the happiness of the greater number of the public. A deeper reflection into the ideals of utilitarianism will assist government employees to overcome ethical dilemmas which allow for the right choice of professional behaviour that may not only benefit the client/customers but the public who rely on the public servant for the fulfilment of their needs.

3.2 Research Design

The study used a qualitative and descriptive approach. Data for the study were drawn from participant observation and authentic secondary sources. These documentary sources include indexed journal, textbooks, government publication, bulletins, newspapers and internet based materials. Each document was skimmed for relevance and then studied in detail after being deemed to be of potential significance. These documentary materials are complemented with the observation of public service units at the federal, state and local government secretariat.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Some Prevalent Unethical Behaviour of Nigerian Public Servants

Unethical behaviour is an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person, profession or an industry. Individuals as well as businesses, professionals and politicians can behave unethically. Public service in Nigeria, just like any other profession throughout the world, is guided by a set of rules and norms. These rules often referred to as code of ethics are the standard with which professionalism is measured. Notable among these codes are; impartiality, neutrality, objectivity, transparency, frugality and high level of integrity, confidentiality, loyalty to state, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

The collapse of ethical and professional standards in virtually all aspects of our national life cannot be more profound in other sector than in public service. Public servants in Nigeria do not only distort or subvert the ideas and values that they ought to uphold as professionals, they also enrich themselves at the expense of the people and the

state that they are paid to serve. Akpan and Onya (2018:92) rightly pointed out when they wrote that many of them are self-servers, so prompted by purely self-seeking motives that they extort money to render service, sell off public property and steal government money and property. The public service which of course is a reflection of the Nigerian society is bedeviled by various unprofessional and unethical practices. A large number of the Nigerian public servants cannot be said to be disciplined, professional nor efficient and effective in the exercise of their duties.

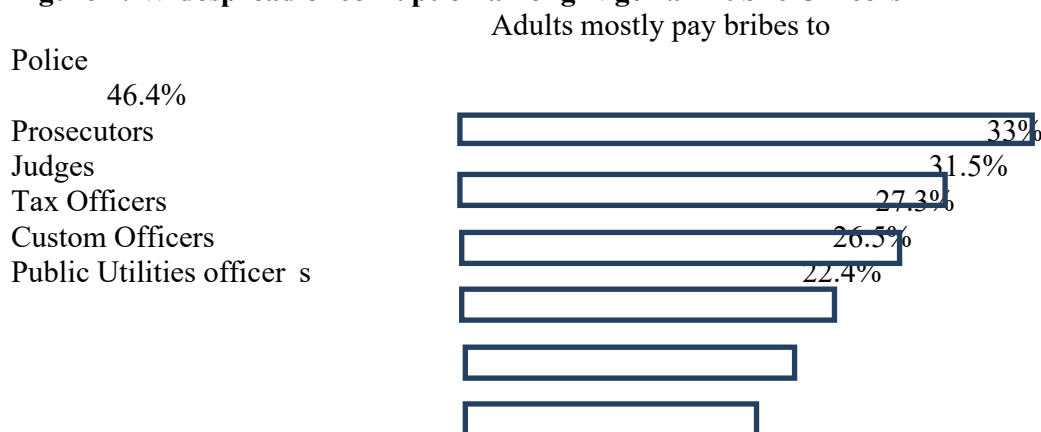
A disturbing but unavoidable fact on organizational life is that employees sometimes engage in ethically questionable activities that harm their companies, their co-workers, and the general public. Unethical behaviour in the work place can take different dimensions ranging from lying, cheating, stealing, sabotage, corruption, to hiding or destruction of official documents (Ugwu, 2011). A public servant can display his/her unethical behaviour by stealing money from the petty cash drawer at work place. Talking or lying against ones co-worker behind his back is also unethical. Using ones position of power at work to sexually harass someone is highly unethical.

Despite the existence of code of ethics and values in the Nigeria public service, research indicates that the Nigerian society still witnesses various cases of corruption, business malpractices, illicit operations, wheeling dealings and unhealthy nexus between politicians and public administrators. Ogbonnaya (2018) citing Dubhashi (2012), maintains that over the years, the media has been awash with cases causing loss to the government by negligence, moral turpitude, acceptance of gift, misappropriation of public funds, abnormal delay in settlement of compensation claims to displaced persons, acceptance of illegal gratification in recruitments, postings, transfers, secondments, and promotions, under-assessment of income tax for pecuniary gains, claiming of false travelling and house rent allowances, irregularity in granting of import and export licences, etc. Enumerated above are some of the examples of unethical behaviour of Nigerian public servant. The public sector in Nigeria is prone to many cases of unethical practices as enumerated.

There are some unethical behaviours usually and often demonstrated among the public servants in Nigeria among which are corruption. The Nigeria's public service suffers from widespread corruption. Government regulations are not kept. Bribes and irregular payments are often exchanged. According to the report by the Business anti-corruption portal (2016), there are indications on the diversion of public funds. The audit in December 2016 found and removed 50,000 ghost workers from the governments payroll, leading to savings quoted as USD636 million. In another report given by Yomi (2017), nearly a third of Nigerian adults who had contact with local public officials in the period under review reported cases where bribes were solicited or paid to public officials. He remarked that on average, Nigerians pay six bribes per year or one every two months. Most often, bribes were paid to facilitate bureaucratic tasks such as obtaining driving license or a land ownership certificate. They were also commonly paid to avoid payment of fines (for breaking traffic laws, for example) and to avoid cancellation of public utility like electricity and water supply.

The NBS as reported by Yomi (2017) found that among the public officer, the Nigerian police officers were the most likely of all the civil servants to solicit and collect bribes. See figure 1 below for statistics of corruption among the Nigerian public officers.

Figure 1: Widespread of corruption among Nigerian Public Officers



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2017).

A critical look at the chart above showed that among the Nigeria public officers, the police were found to be the most corrupt public officers in Nigeria with 46.4% in the ranking list. This was followed by lawyers and judges whose ranks were 33% and 31.5% respectively. The public utilities officers were found to be the least corrupt civil servants in Nigeria with their rank of 22.4%. The rate of corruption is so high that the Federal House of Representatives in Nigeria was contemplating hanging for treasury looters as a solution to corruption (Ige, 2016).

In recognition of the fact that corruption is the worst problem in the Nigeria public service, the past Nigerian leaders put in place different anti-corruption institutions and programme to curb the menace. These include among others War Against Indiscipline (WAI), EFCC, Independent and Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and SERVICOM. Unfortunately, these programmes and strategies made little impact in the war against corruption in the face of enormous corruption in the Nigerian public sector. Ogbewere (2015:1) quoting Ijewereme and Dunmade (2014) observed that recent developments in corruption charges on high profile cases show shame in the application of plea-bargaining. In a situation where punishment for unethical and corrupt practices is light, premised on plea-bargaining (as in the case of the convicted former Edo State Governor, Lucky Igbenedion), people will not be deterred from involving in corruption. See table 1 showing beneficiaries of lenient sentences in Nigeria.

Table 1: Beneficiaries of Lenient sentences in Nigeria

Name	Offense	Sentence	Date	Court
Cecilia Ibru, former CEO of the defunct Oceanic Bank Plc.	25 counts of bank and security fraud	Six months imprisonment and forfeited 190 billion naira (US\$1.2 billion) assets and cash	October 2010	Federal High Court Lagos
Tafa Balogun, former Inspector General of Police	Failing to declare his assets & his front companies were convicted of Eight counts of money laundering	Six months imprisonment and seizure of his assets – reportedly worth in excess of US\$ 150 million	November 2005	Federal High Court Abuja

Lucky Igbinedion, former Governor of Edo State	Failing to declare his assets and his front company was convicted of 27 counts of money laundry	to his	Six months imprisonment with an option of N3.5m fine and seizure of some of his assets acquired with proceeds of corruption.	December 2008	Federal High Court, Enugu
DiepreyeAlamieyeseigha, former Governor of Bayelsa State	Failing to declare his assets & his front companies were convicted of money laundering	to his	Two years imprisonment & forfeited some of his assets	July 2007	Federal High Court Lagos

Source: *Adapted from Ogbewere (2015:10)*

A glance at this table will reveal different offences and sentences issued to these public officials. A closer look at the third row of this table will reveal to you that the former Governor of Edo State, Lucky Igbinedion was sentenced to six months imprisonment with an option of fine of N3.5m, which he immediately paid in the court room. This was an indication that the fine was nothing to him compared to what he had acquired. When the punishment is severe, public servants will be scared in engaging in corruption and unethical practices. Experience shows that civil servants do not see anything wrong in using their offices to enrich themselves as long as the politicians are corruptly acquiring wealth on daily basis. Izekor and Okaro (2018:9) have lamented that corruption have been on the increase despite anti-corruption crusade. While Nyoni (2018) was in agreement with them when he wrote that corruption dynamics in Nigeria revealed that politicians and public office bearer in Nigeria have proven beyond reasonable doubt that they are not able to translate their anti-corruption gospel into action.

Nigerians themselves view their country as one of the most corrupt; it perennially ranks in the bottom quartile of Transparency International’s corruption perception index. See table 2 below for statistics of corruption perception index of Nigeria.

Table 2: Statistics of corruption perception index of Nigeria from 1996 to 2019

Year	Corruption Rankings	Corruption Index
1996	54 of 54	7/100
1997	52 of 52	18/100
1998	81 of 85	19/100
1999	98 of 99	16/100
2000	90 of 90	12/100
2001	90 of 91	10/100
2002	101 of 102	16/100
2003	132 of 133	14/100
2004	144 of 146	10/100
2005	152 of 158	19/100

2006	150 of 163	22/100
2007	32 of 147	22/100
2008	121 of 150	20/100
2009	130 of 150	25/100
2010	134 of 178	24/100
2011	143 of 183	24/100
2012	139 of 176	27/100
2013	144 of 177	25/100
2014	136 of 175	27/100
2015	136 of 168	26/100
2016	136 of 176	28/100
2017	148 of 180	27/100
2018	144 of 180	27/100
2019	146 of 180	26/100

Source: *Adapted from Ogbewere (2015:12) and Countryeconomy.com (2018)*

A critical look at the table will show you the status of Nigeria in terms of corruption compared to other countries. In 2019 for example, Nigeria came 146th of 180 countries and territories ranked and she scored a paltry 26 points out of a possible 100 points. A score of 0 denotes extensive levels of corruption, while a score of 100 mean ‘highly clean’ status

In recent the time, there is an astronomical growth of corruption in the public sector. Corruption scandals and allegations of dishonesty have clearly affected the confidence and trust that citizens have in public representatives and officials. Casmir et. al (2014) have noted that the consequences of high level corruption in Nigeria could be easily observed from the state of the roads, unimaginable poor supply of power, the standard of education, proliferation of churches and militia insurgency. They also noted that Nigerian people have lost trust and confidence on the public sector. They concluded by making a remark that the high level of corruption in Nigeria can be attributed to the whittling down or non-existence or non-adherence of public servants to ethical codes. It is in recognition of this that The Destination (2016) wrote that corruption, wanton waste of public resources, deplorable state of public utilities, nepotism and favoritism seems to be the prevailing values of today’s public service in Nigeria. It is most unfortunate that the Nigerian public service is part of the bane of society, quite unlike its counterparts in other parts of the world. Akpan and Onya (2018:92) had noted that the Nigerian public service is vilified by all and sundry for its indiscipline, ineptitude, corruption dishonesty and criminal tendencies.

The inability of the Petroleum Price Regulatory Agency (PPRA) to ensure that filling stations in Nigeria dispense petroleum products at the approved pump price is another area that has exposed the lukewarm attitude to values, integrity and transparency in the Nigerian public service. At several filling stations across Nigeria, pumps dispensing petroleum products are adjusted to under-deliver fuel (Punch, 2012).

In the Nigerian public service, it is expected that public servants should adhere to the ethical codes that guide the day to day activities of the employees. It is also expected that employees who fail to adhere to ethical codes must receive punishment. But often times, queries are given to those who do not have god fathers and who cannot lobby their way through. Those in the good book of their bosses are treated as sacred cows and would easily get away with acts which normally should have attracted punishment or reprimand. Queries, warnings and suspension have not been effective in checking the incidence of indiscipline in public agencies because most of the leaders or bosses themselves have not been above board.

4.2 Factors Responsible for Unethical Behaviour in the Nigerian Public Service

The efficiency and effectiveness of any organization largely depend on the caliber of the workforce. There is a general agreement among scholars that the Nigerian public sector ever since independence in 1960 has been grappling with weak governance structure, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity and lack of control, redundancy and over-bloated staff structure. All these among others are the common manifestation of unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public service.

One major factor responsible for unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public service is mainly socialization experience. Work ethics is a cultural norm. Like other cultural norms, what makes a person to adhere to ethics is mainly socialization experiences that the person acquired during the childhood and adolescent (Akonti, 2013). Through interaction with family, peers and significant adults, a person learns to place value on work behaviour. As a child matures, these attitudes towards work become internalised and one can even notice that the child's work performance no longer depends on supervision and control. If a child does not acquire the right attitude towards work during the childhood, the child will continually keep exhibiting some funny and unethical behaviour, even as an adult in his workplace.

Another significant factor shaping the work attitudes of people is socialization which occurs in the workplace. As a person enters the workplace, the perceptions and reactions of others tend to confirm or contradict the work attitudes shaped in the childhood. The occupational culture especially the influence of an inner fraternity of colleagues has significant impact on the attitude towards work and the work ethics.

It is also worthy of note that unethical behaviour and practices appears to have been institutionalized as an acceptable and normal behaviour by the majority of the citizens in Nigeria. Leaders do not frown seriously at unethical practices and its negative impact on performance in the public sector. Reason being that in most cases they stand to benefit. Osaghae (1993) argued that colonial heritage is a major factor responsible for ethical decay in the public service. He remarked that during the colonial days, people were fond of stealing government money and property as a way of venting their anger and displeasures with the colonialist. This act was often regarded as patriotic and heroic by the citizens. The same logic that applied to colonial institutions is presently being used in dealing with the States and its institutions in the post- colonial States. It is good to note that as a result of lack of commitment to sound ethics in the public sector, public servants have made it a fundamental policy to pay bribe in return for special favour granted. Receiving of bribes or gratification by public officers has become a vice in the Nigerian public service.

Another factor responsible for unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public sector is faulty placement and promotion of people to leadership positions (Fatile 2013:144). Faulty placement and promotions could arise as a result of inexperienced or insufficient requisite skills and knowledge of the promotion panels, parastatals or board members. It could also be as a result of other factors such as ethnic discrimination. Because recruitment in the public service is being influenced by patronage and political factors, the loyalty, commitment and actions of public officials are often guided and shaped by their primordial loyalty rather than the requirement of impartial professionalism.

One other factor responsible for unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public service is unnecessary political interference in the purely administrative process of government especially with respect to personnel matters. With political interference, simple rules and regulations guiding employment, deployment and promotions are usually abused by public servants, and as a result, the integrity of public service is undermined. Recently, according to Akhakpe (2001), political interference in personnel

matters has resulted to problems of unqualified, incompetent and poorly trained staff in the public service of Nigeria.

4.3 Relationship between Work Ethics and Service Delivery in Nigeria Public Service

In any organization, with a sound working environment, there is an employer and the employee who keep the activities of the institution rolling in order to achieve the predetermined objectives towards an efficient and effective service delivery. In the case of public organization, they were established for the main purpose of rendering of services for the general welfare of the public. Public officials in the discharge of their daily functions cannot execute their authority at will. Their conduct or behaviour is monitored, controlled, supervised and managed for maximum productivity, hence the code of ethics and/or ethical principles. The code of ethics and the ethical principles contain guidelines that relate to body politics such as political supremacy, public accountability and tenets of democracy. It also contains guideline for community value such as religious doctrines and value systems, fairness and reasonableness, balanced decision making, thoroughness, probity and honesty, efficiency and effectiveness. It also contain prescribed guidelines such as legal rules, fundamental rights or code of ethics or conduct, right to information held by the State and administrative justice.

Despite the existence of code of ethics and values in the Nigerian public service, research indicates that the Nigerian society till today are witnesses of all sort of unethical behaviour in the Nigerian public service (Vambe 2013, Akpan and Onya 2018). It may be an understatement to lament that modern day public service lacks moral entitlement to service the public. There is a general agreement among scholars that there is a poor adherence to ethical standards by public servants in most developing countries including Nigeria. Simple rules and regulations that could enhance good ethics and performance in the public service are generally ignored. Non observance of ethics, moral decadence and corruption are the major setbacks that will not allow the public servants to discharge their duties well so as to provide efficient and effective services to the public. Unethical conduct in government institutions has direct effect on efficient and effective delivery of service.

The attitudes of employees in the work place can have a significant effect on the productivity of an organization. Omisore and Adeleke (2015) pointed out that in a sales or service-based industry, negative attitudes are very toxic and could destroy an organization. Employees with bad attitude will always inconvenience and annoy the public that he is serving. If it is a sales industry, his attitude can chase his customers away and can also lead to poor sales, thereby forcing the organization to close down.

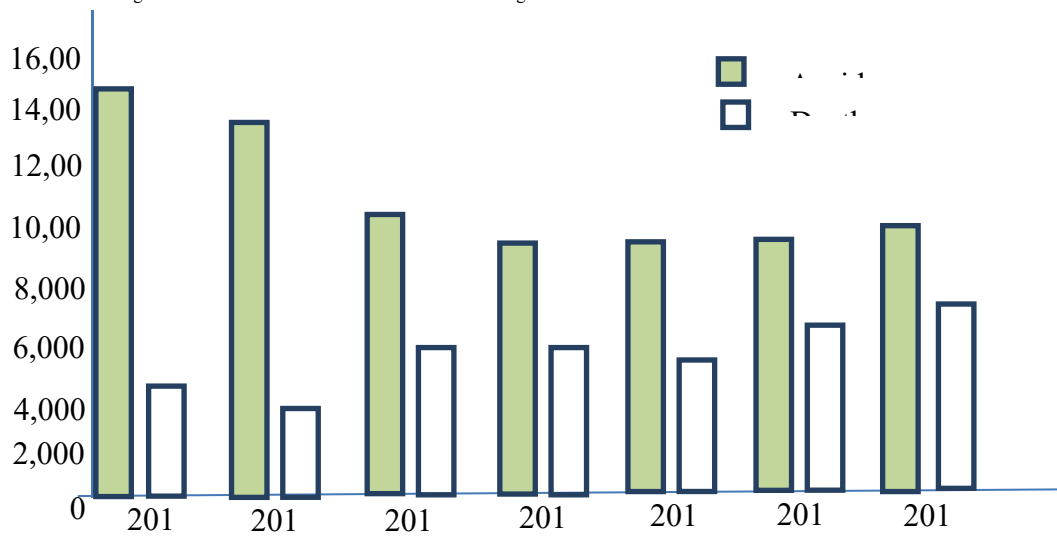
Work ethics which can easily be expressed in the attitudes of human resource can affect the performance of every organization. This is because the human resource is the most important resource in every organization. The performance of every organization is tied to the performance of every member of staff. Our argument is that public servants with good ethical behaviour render efficient and effective services to the public, and also ensures the sustainability of the services. Such officers will always apply the integrated ethical concepts into the daily operations in their various organizations. In other words, public servants with a positive and engaged attitude are likely to result in courtesy, emotional engagement and a real concern for the wellbeing and satisfaction of the public.

On the other hand, negative attitude towards work will always provide opportunity for inadequate control and lack of accountability in government institutions, thereby breeding dishonest public officials who would exploit the situation to their own benefit and interest. Brien (1998) has noted that dishonest public officials will make service delivery to suffer as resources will be utilized in the wrong way than for the general welfare of the community. Lack of accountability usually leads to inefficient

standardized actions, poor planning on the part of top management and help increase malpractices and wastes of available limited resources. The abysmal quality of public service delivery in the Nigerian public service in recent times has been partly attributed to the problem of inadequate control and accountability by institutions of government in execution of their responsibilities (Vambe, 2013). When buildings are not collapsing, roads and bridges are falling-apart or tankers and passenger vehicles are colliding or vehicles are skidding off the road due to pot holes or passenger and cargo planes are crashing on buildings or buses killing hundreds of innocent citizens. Building collapse for instance is due to a number of reasons including but not limited to bad design, faulty construction and use of sub-standard materials, structural failure and a combination of so many other factors. It is clear from this instance that lack of standard denudes and breeds unethical practice with integrity efficient service delivery being undermined.

Few studies that were carried out on corruption and service delivery found that public officials tend to abuse their privileged positions to the detriment of Nigerian citizens (Kayodeetal 2014). Public opinion survey also provided evidence of corruption that affects both citizens and firms operating in Nigeria. Corruption affects delivery of basic services such as education, health and basic infrastructure such as roads. Let us make illustrations with road. Nigerians especially the middle class depends mainly on roads to commute. Nigeria has about 120,546 mile network of roads, and the quality is very low. There is no State in Nigeria that can boast of decent motor-able roads. Government keeps allocating funds to repair roads, but roads seem to be getting worse on daily basis. So where does the money allocated for roads go to if not into their private pockets? Bad roads in Nigeria therefore can be connected to corruption. Unethical behaviours such as corruption can lead to unsatisfactory service delivery which can have devastating negative effect on the lives of the citizens. See figure 2 below, showing data of accidents and deaths in Nigeria from 2012 to 2018.

Figure 2: Statistics of accidents and road deaths in Nigeria from 2012 – 2018



Source: Federal Road Safety Corps (2018)

From the figure above, one can easily see the number of accident victims in each year. The figure also showed the number of people that died through road accidents per year. Naturally, there are other factors that can contribute to accidents and road deaths such as over-speeding and drunken drivers. A major contributor to this statistics is the poor condition of the roads. Potholes are numerous. The point we are making is that if money allocated to roads are used judiciously, then the state of the roads can be improved thereby reducing the number of accidents and road deaths in Nigeria.

Igbuzor (2017) remarked that there has been a poor service delivery by the public sector in Nigeria, and that this has led to the launch of the Nigeria Service Delivery Initiative by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo in March 2014. The Federal Government of Nigeria signed a Social Compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM) to improve citizen satisfaction by promoting service excellence in public sector.

Training and development are also elements of work ethics that relate significantly to service delivery. When you train your staff, the staff will be better equipped with skills and knowledge that will help them perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Consequently, public officials are expected to be equipped with necessary skills and professional capacity. When these are compromised, service delivery will be affected adversely. Oyediran and Lawal (2018) were in agreement with this when they wrote that capacity gap especially at the managerial cadre, is one of the factors responsible for poor quality of public service delivery in Nigeria. The point we are making here is that public servants in Nigeria do not receive the required training to equip them with the necessary skills and professional capacity, and because of this, they are not capable in knowledge, attitude and behaviour necessary for transformation of development policies and programmes into reality.

Applying the utilitarian theory of ethics to the analysis of the relationship between ethics and public sector performance implies that the effectiveness of public policy should be judged by the extent to which it has the tendency to augment the happiness of the greater number of people than it has to diminish it. If the public policy makes everybody slightly better-off, even if some individuals are left slightly worse-off in the other way as a result of that policy, then the policy is just as long as it represents the public interest.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined work ethics and sustainable service delivery in Nigeria public service. The central message of this article is that unethical behaviour among the public servants in Nigeria is disgusting. As a matter of fact, there is need to imbibe the good ethical practices in the performance of their daily duties and responsibilities, so as to achieve and sustain the delivery of services to the public. This paper argues that public servants with good ethical behaviour render efficient and effective services to the public and also ensure the sustainability of such service. Whereas public servants with negative attitude towards work make service delivery to suffer.

The study established that there is corruption and lack of transparency in the Nigerian public service occasioned by unethical practices in spite of the institutional mechanism developed to ensure efficient service delivery. It is hereby concluded that for successful ethical standards and practices in Nigerian public service, government should impose heavy sanctions and punishment on public servants that breach the ethical codes. Government should encourage the provision of massive education by including ethical training in the curriculum of primary schools, colleges and universities. Political leaders should as a matter of fact, address the problems causing unethical behaviour of public servants, and also reduce the extent to which they interfere with personnel matters. Last but not the least is that rewards should be given to public servants with outstanding ethical behaviour. Therefore, based on the findings, the study recommends stiff sanctions and punishment for airing public servant. The sanction must be heavy and prompt so as

to serve as a deterrent to other offenders. If offenders are not punished, it tends to encourage other people who have potentials in committing crime. Strict sanctions could be good enough to discourage and curb unethical behaviour and make people obey instructions and guidelines while performing their daily functions in the public service.

Also, inclusion of ethics in the school curriculum right from the childhood education - Since ethics and morality constitute the core of what is good, right and just, it is imperative that government should consider including ethics in the school curriculum right from the childhood training. This demands expansion of the subject areas to include ethics as one of the subject areas right from primary to tertiary institutions. If one acquires ethical training right from the childhood to adulthood, we see no reason that will prevent them from developing into a responsible adult that can perform their duty well without much supervision and control.

Furthermore, political leaders should stop interfering in personnel matters – It is important to note that those problems causing people to behave unethically should be addressed. Issues such as political leaders unnecessarily interfering in administrative matters should be addressed and handled with care.

Again, reward of outstanding ethical behaviour – Individuals who display an outstanding act of discipline in public service needed to be rewarded in one way or the other. Such behaviour should be rewarded in status, cash or kind. This could serve as a motivating factor for other public servants who will like to enjoy such reward in future.

Finally, regular training and development of personnel – To upscale performance and improve productivity, the right people must be engaged and given the right training. The workforce must be subjected to constant training and re-training in relevant fields and sometimes in other areas so they could fill the gap in times of emergency. Training should focus on, but not limited to competences that promote virtues of accountability and control. Such values as respect for individual commitment to community integrity, transparency, self-reliance, hard work and honesty should be given serious attention in all strategies designed to improve the performance of personnel in the public service. Training and re-training of an organizational workforce is an important factor in improving organizational performance.

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