

# MOTIVATION AND JOB SATISFACTION IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: ISSUES, PROBLEMS, AND CHALLENGES.

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## Abstract

*The Nigerian State has embarked on series of reforms over the years with the hope of evolving a robust, dynamic, and efficient public service. However, the Nigerian public service have proved incapable of delivering qualitative services as envisioned occasioned partly by employees' de-motivation and job dissatisfaction. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the paper examines motivation and job satisfaction visa-vis the Nigerian public service: the issues, problems and challenges, with submissions that efforts should be made to redesign works and work environments in Nigeria, that there should be an introduction of flexible work schedule arrangements, and that there should be demonstrated commitment to people development, amongst others.*

## Introduction

The tag "Public Service" is somewhat amorphous. Technically speaking, some writers try to distinguish the public service from the civil service, hence, the proposition that all civil servants render public services, but not all public servants engage in civil works. For our purpose, we shall limit out discussions to the civil service. The "Civil Service" is used in the words of Nwosu (1977), to include those public servants who are direct employees of the Federal and State governments, other than the police, armed forces personnel, the judicial personnel and the teachers. Therefore, though a component of public bureaucracy, the civil service excludes employees of boards and statutory corporations. As a body that enjoys continuity of existence, the civil service is an organized institution for carrying out the day-to-day activities of government. The civil service gives legitimacy to the government in power... (Chukwu, 2007:02) hence, civil servants are required by law to assist in formulating and implementing the policies of government.

However, there has been increasing concern over the years as to the ability of civil servants in attending to their constitutional duties and organizational requirements, as envisaged (Imaga, 2003, Okafor, 2009). Put mildly, the efficiency and productivity of the average civil servant has waned considerably. To some people (Okafor, 2009, Okpata et al, 2000), decreasing efficiency and declining productivity of civil servants is part of the degeneracy that have come to characterize our socio-political and cultural systems, to others, such as Nwachukwu (1999), declining performance and productivity are direct consequences of lack of motivation and job satisfaction.

In this paper, we seek to explore motivation and job satisfaction visa-vis the civil service; the issues, problems and challenges. Accordingly, we shall examine the concepts of motivation and job satisfaction, approaches to motivation, and the issues and challenges involved in motivating people to work within the Nigerian environment.

### **Conceptualizing Motivation**

The term motivation is derived from the Latin word "Movere" meaning to move. A motive is a reason for doing something. Motivation has come to be subscribed to mean in the words of Mitchel (1982:110), those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary action that are goal directed "Motivating people entails directing people to move in the direction you want them to move, it can be described as a goal-directed behaviour (Armstrong, 2005:216).

As one of three components of the directing functions of management (others are leading and communication), motivation is a process that arouses, channels, sustains and gives people's behaviour purpose and direction (Kreitner and Kinieki, 2004:258), it is concerned with the 'why' of human action or behaviour. Thus, motivation includes all organizational efforts concerned with what should be done to achieve sustained high levels of performance through people, its chief concerns are the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways therefore, direction, effort and persistence are components of motivation.

### **Types of Motivation**

In modern organizations, motivation can take place in two ways. One, people can motivate themselves by seeking, finding and carrying out work or by setting targets that satisfies their need and expectations. Self-motivation is about setting the direction independently and" taking action(s) to attain ones goals (s). Two, motivation can be activated by management through pay, promotion, praise, job enrichment and job enlargement.

Conventionally, motivation has been classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic. **Intrinsic motivation** refers to forces within the individual, i.e. self generating factors that influence people to act in a particular way. These factors include skills, abilities, and expertise of the employee, challenging work, as well as the degree of autonomy of the employee. **Extrinsic motivation** on the other hand, is "external" and represents efforts to motivate other people. Thus, extrinsic rewards do not come from the work itself- they are given by others. Praise, pay, promotion, punishment, awards and titles come under this category. From this categorization, we identify the factors of motivation to include but not limited to pay, praise, promotion, punishment, skills, abilities, expertise, the work itself, the work environment, awards, titles, selective and preferential transfers and placements, equitable treatment etc.

Motivating people to act in desired ways is a management reality, it is a practice, and cannot be wished away. That probably underscores the many attempts and avalanche of theories of motivation, which in turn have influenced managers in their approaches to motivation.

### **Theories of Motivation**

#### **Instrumentality theory**

The first in the attempt at formulating a theory of motivation is the instrumentality theory; which states that rewards and punishments serve as the means of ensuring that people behave in desired ways. Instrumentality thesis is anchored on the principles of reinforcement as typified by the works of Skinner (1974). Instrumentality theory hinges on the belief that people can be "conditioned" to act in ways if they are rewarded for behaving as required. Instrumentality theory has its roots in the work of Taylor (1911), with emphasis on the need to rationalize work and economic outcomes. Many organizations in Nigeria, the civil service inclusive, still adopt this approach hence, the slogan of some government officials " No work, No pay".

**Content (needs) Theories:**

The second group of motivation theories is the needs (content) theories. Exemplified by the works of Maslow (1954), Herzberg (1957), and Alderfer (1972), needs theories are based on the premise that individuals are motivated by unsatisfied needs. That is that unsatisfied needs create imbalance and tension in an individual, attempts are made to restore balance through identification of a goal and direction of effort that will satisfy the need. Synthesized, the contributions of content theories are that employees have multiple needs (as opposed to the instrumentality assumption that people only work for money) and that satisfied needs do not generate further motivation. The last conclusion is important to the civil service as it can lead the way to developing a model of motivation which, will reject a wholesale, "one stop" 'approach to motivating workers across board.

**Process Theories**

Process theories emphasize the psychological processes or forces that affect motivation. Also known as cognitive theory, process theories are uncomfortable with the idea that behaviour is shaped totally by external forces. Cognitive motivation or process theorists contend that behaviour is a function of beliefs, expectations, values and other mental cognitions, accordingly; behaviour is viewed as a result of rational and conscious-choices among alternative courses of 'actions; Vrooms' (1964), expectancy theory, equity theory of Adams (1965) and the goal setting theory of Latham and Locke (1979) represent the process perspective of motivation theories.

Aggregating the expectations, values, and beliefs etc of employees in a large and heavily "divisionalized" organization like the civil service, could be Herculean; however, process theories provide useful insights with an implication that there could be the need for managers to customize their rewards and recognition programmes to meet employee's expectations, values and goals. If properly articulated,, a process oriented motivation package may help in reducing the endemic incidence of corruption among public servants. For instance any motivational package designed to ensure adequate compensation of retiring and retired servants may douse some tension, and possibly lead to a reduction in their propensity to get corrupt. The logic here is that where expectations of civil servants are likely to be met, the likelihood that the urge to embezzle will reduce.

**Job Design Model of Motivation**

Job design is used when it is suspected that the type of work an employee performs or the characteristics of the work environment are causing motivational problems. Job design entails changing the content or process of a specific job to increase job satisfaction and performance. Job design approach is based on the idea that the task itself is key to employee motivation. Proponents of this approach (Hackman and Lawler (1971), Hackman and Oldham, (1975) and Dunham, et al, (1977) are of the view that a boring and monotonous job stifles motivation to perform well, whereas a challenging job enhance motivation (Kreitner and Kinick, 2004). Job characteristic model (JCM) is a proposition that any job can be described in terms of five core job dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feed back (Robbins, 2005). By altering any of these variables, it is expected that an employee will be motivated.

A command kind of structure, a largely repetitive and monotonous job as experienced in the civil service could stifle innovation as little or no provision is allowed for innovation and creativity. An application of the job characteristic model of motivation may provide the needed tonic for most public servants. However, job design or redesign may lead to redundancy and retrenchment, which trade unions will likely oppose.

**Job Satisfaction**

Job Satisfaction represents an individual's general attitude towards his or her job. It results from people's perception of and their experiences of their jobs and the degree to which there is a good fit between the individual and the organization (Postrel, 1999). Since Job Satisfaction is attitudinal, it follows that not all satisfied employees

will manifest such satisfaction, behaviourally. Nonetheless, positive and favourable attitude towards the job is indicative of job satisfaction, while negative and un-favourable attitudes towards the job presuppose job dissatisfaction. Satisfied employees are more — likely to be friendly, responsive, accommodating, and do go beyond the call of duty because they want to reciprocate their positive experiences.

It is difficult to isolate and discuss all the factors associated with job satisfaction due to individual differences and changing circumstances. Factors believed to be associated with job satisfaction include pay, the work itself, promotion opportunities, supervision; working conditions, job security, recognition (Ivancevich et al, 2005:177, Robbins, 2005:86). An examination of these factors shows that job satisfaction like motivation is a product of intrinsic and extrinsic variables.

### **Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Turnover and Job Performance**

It sounds reasonable to think that motivated workers will experience greater job satisfaction, which will result in job performance and less turnover. This is not always true at all times and in all circumstances. For instance, while the requirements for job satisfaction may include comparatively higher pay, promotion opportunities, participative management, degree of autonomy, task variety... (Armstrong, 2005:240), the degree of job satisfaction is largely a function of individuals' needs, expectations and the working environment.

Again, it was believed that motivation leads to job performance and effectiveness. While research results show a positive relationship between motivation and job performance (Oshoff 1997), it is not always so since happy workers are not necessarily productive workers. This is partly because job performance could be a function of other variables such as skills, expertise, and level of technology.

Motivations and job satisfaction are known to negatively correlate with turnover i.e the rate at which people move into and out of an organization as participants/employees". With particular reference to the civil service in Nigeria, motivated and satisfied workers exist in their minority; yet, the rate of turnover is relatively low. This could be on account of lack of expectations of job opportunities, lengthy years of being in the service, and the deplorable labour market conditions.

Conclusively, while we are yet to fully understand the role of job satisfaction, there is no doubt that it affects a number of important performance variables. Absenteeism, turnover, and decreasing performance and productivity will likely correlate with motivation and job satisfaction negatively, while increasing performance, job satisfaction and employee productivity are more likely to have a positive relationship with motivations.

### **Motivation and Job Satisfaction in the Nigerian Public Service: Issues, Problems and Challenges.**

Issues, problems and challenges of motivation pertaining to the public service in Nigeria is partly traceable to the historical origin of the service. Historically, these problems and challenges are hinged on three planks. First, the public service like the colonial state and all other of its paraphernalia, were externally determined and imposed without recourse to the peculiarities and needs of the Nigerian environment and its people. Nwosu (1977:42) reports that:

*The imposition of alien and a unified civil service... without giving much thought to its impacts on the Nigerian traditional communities with their conflicting values, intents, norms and authority..., largely accounts for the myriad of problems of the civil service.*

A people alienated from a service that was expected to attend to their needs would hardly be part of that system. Part of the effects of the alienation is the perception of the public service as 'Olu Oyibo' - white man's Job. This alienating influence still pervades today creating problems of employee commitment and job satisfaction.

Secondly, colonial administration in Nigeria by creating a command structured and unified system inadvertently was stifling innovation and creativity. Till date most memos and circulars emanating from 'public servants' normally begin with "I am directed" ... therefore, neither growth nor originality consciously flows from such an inflexible system. Any efforts at motivating workers through participative management and job characteristic models remain a mirage.

A third historical plank derives from the reason for joining the public service. For Suleiman (1974), prestige of the public service, a dogmatic pursuance of the general interest, securities etc are some of the explanations for a choice of public service as a career in the French public service. In developing countries like Nigeria, this may not be so, as the choice of civil service as a career is mostly for personal and economic reasons. With the take home pay of the average civil servant grossly insufficient to eke a living (dashing the economic hopes/intentions) and the difficulties associated with documentation and collection of gratuity and other retirement benefits, an expectation gap is created. First, there is a gap arising from differences between economic reasons for the choice of civil service as a career and salary earnings. Second, there is a gap in expectation upon retirement and the realities on the ground. Given these expectation gaps, the morale and discipline of the 'public servant' wanes, leading to loss in job satisfaction. Attempts aimed at motivating civil servants anchored on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), amounts to exercises in futility.

A manifestation of the decay in the public service in Nigeria, which ultimately affects motivation, job satisfaction and employee commitment, is seen in certain employment practice. In one instance, hiding under the cover of the provision of Section 14 (3 and 4), of the 1999 Constitution as amended, certain unemployable, unqualified, skill-less and unimaginable persons are known to have found themselves into the employ of the civil service. Section 14 (3 and 4) of 1999 Constitution demands that the composition of the government of the federation and those of the component units and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity. In another instance, recruitment exercises into federal and state agencies and jobs have come to be characterized by winner takes it all mentality. Today, it is common knowledge that an application for job opportunity into any federal or state organization/agency will have to be backed up by the ability to pay Three Hundred Thousand Naira (N300,000.00) for federal or One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira (150,000.00) for state, for such a job seeker to have a glimpse of hope of being employed. Further still, employment into the service may only be guaranteed where one is a relation of a top government official or a descendant of a member of the national assembly. With employment practices anchored on kinship, mediocrity, and "relationship" experiences, the public service largely have rejected a lot of those, who ordinarily should have been accepted - with an implication that majority of those who are employed may not be self or internally motivated due to lack of skill and expertise.

Motivation is a complex and compound process of interlocking variables. This is in line with Nwachukwu's (1999), position that there is no single motivator for everyone. Needs differ and the importance attached to the needs by different people differs. In the same vein, peoples' expectation and psychological drives differs one person from another. Evidence however, suggests that administrators' approaches to motivation in the civil service are underpinned by simplistic assumptions about the people and how it works. When, therefore, confronted with the enormity, realities and complex nature of motivation and job satisfaction, most of these administrators experience psychological puzzle. Again, a problem of motivation and job satisfaction in the public service that revolve around the quality of some administrators is that, some senior servants and administrators find themselves in their positions via 'time framed and mandatory promotions". Emphasis for the purposes of promotion is not excellence driven. The result is that in line with Peters' principle, these administrators are promoted to their levels of incompetence; hence, packaging and implementing motivational strategies are neither sufficiently understood nor appreciated. Non-recognition of excellence is capable of sagging morale, breeding indiscipline and negatively impacting on job satisfaction.

A discussion of issues, problems and challenges of motivation and job satisfaction in the Nigerian civil service will be incomplete without a mention of government policies and practices. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), recognizing the importance and problems of the civil service, had in 1972 through the Udoji commission sought to create

*“the new style Public Service” with a purpose; a service that is geared to achieve well defined and articulated goals, a service whose performance can be measured and assessed... , a service where concrete performance in the achievement of pre-determined or organizational goals and target is the criteria for advancement and not seniority, tribe, language or sex of the officer concerned... a service that constantly updates and keeps itself abreast of the latest techniques and advances in public management... (Imaga, 2003:79).*

These ideals as espoused were rarely allowed to take place and shape before the inauguration of Dotun Philips Panel (1983), the Ayida review Panel (1994), and Obasanjo public sector re-organization (2003), all in the name of civil service reforms. The attempts at reforming the civil service were aimed at evolving our own unique management philosophy with accompanying principles, practices and tools for transforming this philosophy from the realm of theory to the territory of practice... regrettably, our national misfortune is policy shifts, policy somersaults and inconsistencies , which, have been the bane of our management philosophy (Imaga 2003), to a considerable extent, these policy shifts, inconsistencies and misrepresentations have come to present challenges and problems to motivating civil servants. For instance, not too long ago public servants through their labour unions were drawn into disputes regarding the issue of monetization. The monetization policy lacked specific details and was subjected to different interpretations by different "blocks" and groups. For example, what category of staff is entitled to monetization? Is the monetization policy applicable to state employees or is it limited to Federal workers?

Yet there are other issues that can be deciphered from the proposition of the Udoji Commissions report. One is that most activities of the civil service lack specific, well-defined, articulate, and measurable goals. Where goals are diffused, packaging and activating motivational efforts through the goal setting model become impossible, hence, promotions are reflections of other variables than performance and achievement. Such promotions spark of feelings of inequity with attendant loss of job satisfaction and motivation. Two, is that majority of the working tools and machines are obsolete, just as majority of civil servants are ill equipped to face current challenges, occasioned by lack of training. Training of workers motivates and could lead to job satisfaction, but where there is no or insufficient training, motivation and job satisfaction could be adversely affected.

Finally, mention must be made of the twin evils of corruption and embezzlement that have become denominators of our collective existence as a people. Unarguably, resources are limited; regrettably, the available resources are misused and misappropriated. Promotions are delayed; arrears of promotions are scarcely paid. Money meant for payment of leave allowances are lodged into private, unofficial, but interest yielding accounts for a fixed period by accounting, bursary and finance officers . . . etc. the list is endless. Part of the cumulative effect of these "Nigerian factors", is the decreasing confidence of the people in the Nigerian State. When narrowed down, the belief that Nigeria is a failed state, entrenches even gradually, lack of job satisfaction, lack of commitment and motivation in and amongst civil servants. No wonder, to the anonymous commentator, "Nigeria is not worth dying for'.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Nigerian 'Public Service' was envisioned to be a dynamic organization capable of attending to peoples' needs with ruthless efficiency. Unfortunately, the average 'public servant' has become a bureaucrat conditioned to think primarily of salaries, promotions and pensions-expectations that are largely unrealized. The decreasing efficiency of the civil service is indicative of the gap between goals and expectations of civil servants and the realities on the ground, occasioned largely by lack of motivation and job satisfaction. We have in this paper examined the concepts

of motivation and job satisfaction, while not laying claims to an exhaustive treatment; we tried to examine the issues, problems and challenges of motivation and job satisfaction in the public service in Nigeria. Our position is that motivation and job satisfaction are complex and dynamic processes. Any single, one short model aimed at motivating workers will unlikely succeeds.

However, in line with the practices in some other countries and better managed private organizations in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made which, we believe will reduce absenteeism, curb inefficiency, shore up motivation and possibly lead to job satisfaction of public servants.

- Efforts should be made to positively redesign works and work environments in Nigeria. Good policy formulation and implementation may prove helpful; clarity of the policies should be a fundamental concern so that issues of ambiguity are eliminated.
  - The different tiers of government should introduce flexible scheduling of work and benefit plans to reduce the problems associated with rigidity and monotony.
  - Managers and administrative leaders should begin to consider the stock option. This may provide the “life wire” for sustenance of the servants even after retirement.
  - Government should demonstrate commitment to the development of its people. Training facilities, development programs and capacity building initiatives should be made available and vigorously pursued. A developed people are likely to manifest openness, commitment, participation, and experience job satisfaction.
  - There should be periodic review of pay packages to reflect prevailing economic realities. This may help in reducing the spate of agitations for pay increases by employees and their labour unions.
  - Relevant government authorities should embark on the provision of cafeteria services. New cafeteria should be built where non-exists, while old ones should be refurbished and handed over to people who are likely to manage them better.
  - There should be commitment of efforts toward engendering employment practices that not only promote merit but also emphasize excellence.

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