

**THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE SYNDROM OF
MONKEY DE WORK, BABOO DE CHOP OR GOVERNMENT WORK
IS NO MAN'S WORK**

GABRIEL FAVOUR EKE (PhD)

**Department Of Political Science And Sociology,
Western Delta University,
Oghara, Delta State,
Nigeria**

Telephone: +2348056175436

E-Mail: ekgabriel favour@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the nonchalant attitude and negative behaviours in the civil service. It stated that the general procedure of doing things in the civil service or the civil service rules and guidelines are no longer followed or either neglected or thrown overboard. The paper was of opinion that most of the production level of most organizations in Nigeria are low because the civil servants or employees are not treated favorably in the area of needs and expectations, therefore the resultant effects are the manifestations of certain behaviours and attitudes which have seriously affected the level of production in the service. The paper discovered other serious factors that have contributed to this negative manifestation in the Civil Service, which include the level of corruption, nepotism, Neo-patrimonial behavior of the elite and those of the political class. The observation in the civil service is that it is a place where monkey works while Baboon eats. This has led to the syndrome of "Government work is no man's work". The paper concluded by recommending a way forward which include proper handling of the physiological factors, needs and desires of the civil servants such as their retirement benefits and the sociological factors which include strengthening of the weak institutional structures and cumbersome administrative procedures which affect compliance to the rules and regulations in the Civil Service.

Keyword: Corruption, Negative behaviour nonchalant attitude, Poor service delivery and cumbersome administrative procedure in the Civil Service

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Public Service has come to a state where many civil and public servants display all manner of behaviors and attitudes to express their displeasure, unhappiness and disapproval of the very situation and condition of service. These attitudes of most civil servants have equally contributed in lowering both the condition of service and the level of productivity (Sowuami, 2004). Today, everybody is complaining of the conditions in the civil service. The Nigerian civil service has become a place of “cash and carry”. It is very difficult for you to get the real services deserved only and unless you pay for it in cash or kind and if he or she is from your place.

The general procedures of doing things are no longer followed. The Nigerian civil service rules and guidelines mean nothing to most of them. It has become clear that most of the people punished for certain offences are the junior workers who do not have anybody to speak for them or do not have any connection to those at the top, no wonder, the laws and discipline are meant for the poor and not for those in the high places in the civil service (James and Olsen, 2000). According to Flippe (1987), the ability of an organization to succeed and meet its target and also achieve increase in production depends on the attitude of the workers in the civil service. Also, for any organization to fully achieve its goals, it must have the staff under its control. In most of the departments in the Ministries or to be specific in most of the Ministries the attitude of the workers are not something to write home about. They display such nonchalant attitude even in a very smallest thing to show that nothing can be done to them. That is the reason why Flipper which we quoted above stated that just as the organization has certain types of behaviors that it wishes to elicit from the employees; the employees have certain wants that the organization is expected to supply. Because of these reasons, rules and regulations laid down by such organization to assist in achieving their goals and objectives no longer succeed in achieving their goals.

The attitude of the civil servants in their work place in Nigeria may bring about positive or negative results, particularly, this period in time when everybody is complaining about economic downturn and economic recession. The attitude of these workers or these civil servants will go a long way to reduce the level of growth and development in the civil service.

The question that rightly comes to mind is what are the real causes of these poor attitude and behavior in the civil service? Is it an embedded culture inherent in them to misbehave and display bad attitudes and behavior or is there a special reason that contributed to this negative behavior.? The reasons are not farfetched; it is very clear and understandable for those who studied physics to know that “like terms attract each other.” Thus, if there are reasons for good things to happen which brought about increase in production, there are equally certain things which have given rise for bad things or bad behavior to begin to happen. Sowunmi, (2004:184), was of the opinion that what we are seeing today manifesting as bad attitude of the civil servants are not much different from what we have during the colonial times It becomes striking to note that social exclusion of the workers from the means of work is more often an unexamined prerequisite of the employment relationship.

The civil servants are part and parcel of the executive arm of government. There is no modern government that does not depend on a virile civil service to make input into the policy making process and the implementation of such policies. By definition, civil servants are permanent government officials, they enjoy continuity of service and are protected by the public service rules (PSR) which specify the conditions for appointment into the federal civil service under PSR 02205; and 02206, and situation, under which an officer may leave the service particularly, officer in the pensionable establishment under section 8 of chapter 2 of the PSR.

Also according to Das (1998:1) the idea of a civil servant as a platonic guardian, though very old as the name itself suggests, totally dominates the modern literature in public administration even today. The standard prescription deriving from this view has been to select good officers for public office and give them the knowledge and power to do what they believe is in public interest. This idea underpins the dominant discourse that good people insulated from political and economic pressure will act in public interest. From the quotation above it shows that if you are employed as a civil servant, you are expected to act in the interest of the public and not for a parochial personal purpose and he is not there to be treated anyhow by any government that comes to power. The civil servants are part of the greatest thing that the state and government are known for since they are universal (Olusanya, 1975). But unfortunately, this is not the case in the Nigerian context. Because of the way the civil servants are now treated, they have resorted to all manner of behaviors. The rules of the service have been thrown over board and the civil service has been given various dirty and nasty names.

However, Adebanyo (2002), states that the reason for all these is the fact that most of the political departments are headed by people or workers who are so immersed in constituency squabbles and pressures that there is hardly any time left to spare for getting to grips with work in the organization and department let alone laying down guidelines. According to him in society ridden with poverty and ignorance, the people from his constituency will be coming to look for one assistance or the order and in many a time trying to satisfy them, corruption might set in. Until the rules of the public service are properly adhered to and implemented, the problem of corruption that has eaten deep into the root of the civil service will not stop.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The constitutional provisions, the civil service rules and the handbook gave legal backing that protects the civil servants in Nigeria. It also gives rise to the passage of relevant laws that guide and protect workers interest. Furthermore, the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (1999) cap IV section 40 guarantees every Nigerian "Rights to peaceful assembly and association". Also, the ILO convention 151 titled Labour Relations; Public service convention 1978 came into force on 25th of February 1981 ratified as at December 1995 by 29 countries. With these legal grounds that solidify freedoms and safe guides, the civil servants have become a certificate for exhibition of poor attitude to work and entrenchment of corruption in the service.

Some of these poor attitudes to work may be described in several ways such as sleeping in the office, thus neglecting the work, leaving the office without permission, nonchalant attitude to work and forged sicknesses in order to be permitted to leave the office to receive medical care. While some may even claim that their father died, when in actual fact their parents or father may not have died or may have died more than 10-20 years ago. Some equally disobey senior officers and lay aside the instructions given to them to do. The recent ones now are the manner of extorting money from the members of the public, receiving visitors and escorting them to places of their choice without adequate permission from the superior. Some unnecessarily delay to attend to visitors in order to compel them to give them money. Sometimes, if a visitor comes, they will tell him that there is no trace of his file until the visitor has to pay for it, before the file will come out.

There is no way any organization can put in the best with these kinds of behaviors as effective performance is linked up with workers attitude to their jobs. There have been a lot of complaints and criticisms against the attitude of the Nigerian workers in the public service. Many see them to be irresponsible, week, unproductive, Lazy and always seeking monetary rewards. Fashina (1984), states that despite the various reforms carried out, to change the situation in the civil service, the situation still remain the same. He went on to state that the Nigerian civil servants or workers still show poor attitude to work thereby performing below average and unproductive. Below are some of the statements often used by the Nigerian civil servants?

- ❖ Job doesn't belong to my father;
- ❖ Government work is no man's work;
- ❖ Government work is carried on the shoulder, not on the head so that when it becomes too heavy you bend your shoulder for it to fall-off;
- ❖ It is a system where monkey works, baboon eats.
- ❖ Based on the above statements, how can the behavior of the civil servants in Nigeria change for better so that the purpose and the objective of the civil service work can be realized? How could the poor attitude of the workers change so as to increase their performance and high productivity realized? Can promotional rewards on the job affect the performance of the workers?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The civil servants are part and parcel of the executive arm of government. There is no modern government that does not accept the role and importance of the civil service. Most governments of the day depend very much on the civil servants for proper implementation of government policies. It is the Bureaucracy as it is often called that regulates all aspects of the society. According to the civil service rule PSR 2205 and 02206 they are so strategically located in the functions, resources allocation, performance and implementation of the government policies. According to Ake (1985), the problems of the Nigerian civil service are traceable to the Lack of management consciousness, the non-application of modern techniques of management, the absence of performance emphasis, the absence of systematic evaluation, the lack of emphasis on accountability and responsible managers and chief executives. It is important to note that during the

colonial times, the capitalists believe in minimum investment for maximum output and only very little reforms were carried out when it was totally necessary. Now peoples' primary objective of being in government is to convert power into a primitive accumulation of wealth (Ake, 1985).

More recently in Nigeria, the civil service has been expanded to include permanent officials in the legislative arm of government. This is done through the establishment of National Assembly service commission. By definition civil servants are permanent government officials who enjoy continuity of service and are protected by the public service rules (PSR) which specify the conditions for appointment into the federal civil service. The new encyclopedia Britannica (2004) defines civil service as the body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor judicial. It went on to state that it consists of people employed by the state to run the public service of a country. Abba and Anazodo (2006), argue that civil service in Nigeria comprises workers in the various ministries or departments apart from those who hold political appointments. The civil service reforms on the other hand, refer to the purposeful modification of governmental human resources, management system, with the goal of maximizing important administrative values (Anazode 2009).

POOR ATTITUDE: A CONTRADICTION OF POVERTY IN THE MIDST OF ABUNDANCE

The reason why most civil servants display poor attitudes is as a result of the fact that they have discovered that many government officials are in power because of public funds. The government officials have abandoned the people and are helping themselves with the public funds. The civil servants discovered that most of them are getting richer and richer everyday while the masses including the civil servants are getting poorer and poorer every day. Nigeria is considered the 20th poorest country of the world with over 70 percent of the population classified as poor and 35 percent living in abject poverty Leigh (2007) states that out of the estimated population of 140 million, 98 million people are living on less than one dollar a day.

It is very clear therefore, that Nigeria is not only grossly underdeveloped, it is poverty ridden and thus an indication that Nigeria is far from achieving the objectives of the millennium Development Goals (UNDP2006). This poverty status according to government is a product of multifaceted factors (National planning commission 2004, 30 – 33) These include limited growth of investment, widening income inequality, weak governance, economic and social dislocations caused by incessant internal conflicts, neglect of the rural areas, environmental factors and many others. These problems and their attending effects persist in Nigeria hence one cannot but agree with the recent World Bank ranking of Nigeria as a fragile state. All the social indicators used by the World Bank to assess the effectiveness of the Nigerian state in spite of the acclaimed reforms of the government are enough to confirm the failing status of Nigeria. All the above constitute the reason why the civil servants in Nigeria have taken it upon themselves to display an unbecoming character and attitude to show their

grievances. Since they could not beat the politicians at the top, the only option available for them is to join them.

The civil servants in Nigeria will make things very difficult whenever you visit them, for one information or the other, until you pay them for that particular service. No single information you can receive or obtain from them without paying for it. Some of them while they are in service, they are also operating one business center or the other. They care very much about their business than the very job which they were employed to do. They hardly come to work early, talk of sitting down to do their jobs. They believe that the job is no man's business, it is a place where monkey works, Baboon eats. This also has contributed much to lack of increased productivity in the civil service.

CIVIL SERVICE AND GOVERNMENT

There are two opposing contradictory views which determine the position and function of the civil service, the first which is traceable to Woodrow Wilson's seminar article of 1887, which states that politics and administration are two distinct spheres and each has its own group of functions.

The second states that no rigid distinction can be maintained between the two (Adamolekun, 2004:14) More importantly, the two schools agree on two critically important principle of government. The first principle states that two distinct groups of people run the executive branch of government in a democratic policy. One group comprises elected political officials who serve for a temporary period of time limited by their terms of office before another election is conducted. The second group consists of officials appointed into permanent career positions expected to serve the successive sets of political office holders (Adamolekun, 2004:14). The second principle accepted by the two schools of thought is the conception of the civil service as an instrument in the hands of the elected political officials with the Latter being the dominated in group and the former, the dominant power structure or equation.

Here, Adamolekun stated theoretically that the term civil service is used to describe two sets of ideals. First, it refers to the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executives in formulating and implementing government policies. In the second sense, the term refers to the ministries and departments within which specific aspects of government work are carried out (Adamolekun, 2002). The civil service handbook produced by the office of the Head of the civil service of the Federation (1997). Edition also stated clearly the nature of the civil service as a body or organ of government which enjoys continuity of existence. It went on to state that its members are not limited to a short term of office, elected members come and go, but the civil servants remain in office. When a civil servant relinquishes his office for whatever reason, his place is taken over by another person who similarly enjoys security of employment.

LACK OF REWARDS LEAD TO POOR ATTITUDE

Most motivation writers believe that money reward motivate workers to put in their best, therefore when these rewards systems are not available, workers

will be discouraged. In Banjoko (1996), people see money as one of the most important weapons for obtaining the best from workers. This is one of the reasons why people struggle to read and get a better qualification so as to get a higher pay, but when this is not present the discouragement set in, the syndrome of government work 'is not my father's property' will always be invoked and applied. Discriminatory reward system, partiality and favoritism make it impossible for employees to show serious concern to work. Other factors include lack of correct work environment, many a time, this determines the extent the employees will put in their best. When this is not available, it will affect the level of productivity, morale discipline, commitment and efficiency. For workers to put in their best, the environment must be conducive, like the presence of common room, canteen, clinics and relaxation places.

Workers should be properly placed in an area where they are fitted. There should not be a situation where one person performs a duty which is so critical and sensitive to the organization. The management must place the workers properly in the job where they are most qualified. If this is not done, inefficiency and dissatisfaction will set in. In any organization where there is complicated work group there must be ineffectiveness. This is the reason why the Nigerian workers in recent times have been seen as irresponsible, Lazy and unproductive, always seeking monetary reward. These poor attitude to work did not just come, it is caused by certain factors like poor salary structure, discrimination, favoritism and nepotism etc with the resultant effect on workers dissatisfaction, protest, lateness to work and wishful disobedience to the authorities. It clearly manifests in the syndrome of Government work 'is not my father's work,' it is a place where monkey works and Baboon eats.

CONCLUSION

There have been much criticisms about the attitude of the Nigerian workers with respect to low productivity, incessant disobedient to the constituted authority, lateness to duty and Lack of commitment to duty and the over stated syndrome of Government 'work should not be carried on the head but at the shoulder' so that if it becomes heavy you throw it away. Many managers of government establishment have become too concerned about this. It has become very clear that the workers psychological needs account for the poor attitude to work particularly truancy and Lateness to work. Some will come to work by Ten 0 clock (10 0' clock) and they will write 7.30 am, while others on duty will go about selling their products like cloths, earrings, food items etc and care very little over the job which they were employed to do.

Part of the reasons, is the management inability to provide training for their workers and even when such workers after attending training and workshops are not provided opportunity to put into place what they have learnt. While some still remained in the same place where training is not reflected in the job they perform. These go on to increase jealousy, backbiting, frustration, Lack of promotion and hatred which on the long run lead to inefficiency and unproductively.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is true that the Nigerian worker in recent times has been seen to be nonchalant and has poor attitude to work. This poor attitude to work can be corrected if the managers of government establishments should look into the needs and problems of the workers with a view to solving these important needs and also seeing that such needs and desires are settled. The Nigerian workers like other workers somewhere else all over the world can put in their best if the followings are put in place.

Motivational factors; the syndrome is that it is a place where monkey works and baboon eats, something must have led to this statement. In most organizations in Nigeria, Workers promotional exercise has been on tribal or ethnic basis. If this becomes the other of the day, the pace of work will slow down leading to low performance and unproductively.

The workers have physiological needs and others to support and provide for their families where one is working and he is not able to provide for his family and other family members depending on him, this will automatically lead to frustration and poor attitude to work. No wonder some while, on duty still engaged in other things like buying and selling in order to make ends meet. There are two basic sets or causes of poor attitude to work in the Nigerian civil service. One is the psychological factors and the other is the sociological factors. The Psychological factors include; greed, drive of an individual to exploit, insatiable appetite, craft to have more and the fear of unknown.

The culture of ethical behavior and Lack of accountability in government have not only been abused, but also neglected. This explains the neo-patrimonial theory which states that political elites use their position in office and jobs to enrich themselves, relations and friends at the expense of others not minding what the Laws and the provisions of the civil service rules say.

The sociological factors, this is another reason for poor attitude in the civil service in the third world nations. This include weak institutional structures, cumbersome administrative procedures, negative attitude of the bureaucrat, non disclosure of assets, these affect compliance to the rule of law. This makes it easier and possible for the procedure not being dully followed. The compliance theory, according to James and Olsen (2000) maintain that there are certain factors which motivate the individual to obey and not to obey laws including the civil service rules. The compliance theory maintains that the motivation to commit offence increases and becomes "rip" where the possibility of being caught is remote and sanctions are not evenly applied. In order words, offence increases because of environmental reasons, where the institution provided to check offences are weak and the punishment for offences not severe. This will encourage number of people to commit offence.

This is the major reason why in the civil service absenteeism and poor attitude are on the increase. This is because those who disobey the rules are hardly punished. Those who carry things for sale in the offices are not afraid and nobody checks those who come to work late. By the time offenders are punished according to the law of the service, others will be afraid to do same.

Uninterestingly, you can hardly, see or hear of anybody who lost his job in the civil service because of bad attitude, so everybody has taken it as part of the job system to behave anyhow and nothing happens. By the time query is issued and before action is taken the case is closed, that is the reason why civil service is no man's job.

REFERENCES

- Adamolekun, L. (2004). *Public Administration in Nigeria*, Ibadan Spectrum Books Limited.
- Adamolekun, L. (ed) (2002). *Public Administration in Africa. Main Issues and Selected Countries*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Adebayo, A (2004). *Principle and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria*, (2nd Edition), Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Ake, C. (1985). *Political Economy of Nigeria*, New York: Longman.
- Anazode, R.O. (2009). *Civil Service in Nigeria: An Analysis of its Bureaucratic Effectiveness*, Onitsha: Abbot Books Ltd.
- Banjoko A.S. (1996). *Human Resources Management: An Expository Approach*, Lagos: Salam Publishers.
- Faghagba J.Y. (2009). Legislative oversight under the Nigerian presidential system, *Journal of legislative studies* vol., 15, No.1, 4.
- Fashina, S.A (1984). *Theories of Motivation and the Nigerian Situation*. In Ejiogor and Anigor, *Management and the Nigerian Workers*, Ikeja: Longman Nigeria Limited.
- Flippo E.B. (1987). *Personnel Management*, (Sixth Edition), Singapore: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- FRN (n.d) *Guidelines to Administrative Procedure in the Federal Public Service*, Apapa Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Hornby, A.S (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learning Dictionary*, (6th Edition), Oxford: University Press.
- OHCSF (1997). *The Civil Service Handbook: The Federal Government Press*.
- Olsen, D. (1994) *Legislative institutions: A comparative view* Armonk New York: MC Sharp.
- Olsen, J.M (2000). *The legislative process: A comparative Approach*, London: Butter Wealth.
- Sowanmi, B. (2004). *The role of Labour in National Developments in Odion* Achaine, S. (ed) *Governance in Nigeria and the world; centre for constitutional and Demilitarization*.