



SERVICE COMPACT (SERVICOM) CHARTER AND WORK BEHAVIOUR OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The challenges of governance and development in Nigeria over the years had been compounded by the inefficiency of the nation's public institutions particularly, the Civil Service. The inefficiencies of the public institutions necessitated several public sector reforms initiated by past Nigerian administrations. The reforms were therefore designed to address the institutional inefficiencies, to enhance the delivery of public services, and to accelerate national development. One of the reforms, tagged, Public Service Renewal Programme, which was initiated by the Obasanjo-led Administration in 2003, led to the introduction of the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter. This cross-sectional study investigated the effect of Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter on the work behaviour of federal civil servants in Nigeria. Data for the study were drawn from 1007 staff of 32 federal establishments in Imo State. The study participants were selected using total population sampling technique. A structured questionnaire with a reliability co-efficient estimate of 0.742 was used to generate quantitative data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) aided the presentation and analysis of data with frequency distribution table and Pearsons' r correlation analysis statistic. The study found that the implementation of the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter has had positive effect on employees' work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. A statistically significant positive correlation between the implementation of Servicom Charter and rating of federal civil servants' work behaviour was observed. The study recommends the intensification of the implementation of SERVICOM Charter to further improve the work behaviour of employees of the Federal Civil Service as a means of achieving National Development Plans.

Keywords: Civil Servant, Civil Service, National Development, National Development Plan, Public Sector Reform, Service Compact Charter, Work Behaviour,

Background and Statement of Problem

The Civil Service plays vital roles in the achievement of national development plans. Without the Civil Service, it would be difficult to plan, coordinate and implement policies and programmes that would lead to national development (Schiavo-campo & Sundaram, 2001:12). In other words, the success or failure of development plans, depend on the competence and conduct of the civil servants who initiate and implement the plans. The failure of the Nigerian National Development Plans evinced by economic indicators such as insufficient energy generation of about 4000 megawatts daily (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2019) and about 91.1 million poor persons (World Data Lab, 2018) could be linked to the poor and corrupt implementation of national budgets and public policies (Onyema, 2018), and the poor implementation of developmental programmes and projects by the civil servants. Onyeacholem (2012) believes that the main reason for the poor implementation of public policies and programmes is the Nigerian civil servants' poor attitude to work.

The work behaviour of some civil servants in Nigeria has contributed to the low performance of the Nigerian Civil Service. The state of public infrastructure, and the standard of living in Nigeria in recent time, mirrors the performance of the country's Civil Service. For instance, the public school system in Nigeria has deteriorated to the point where some students learn in classrooms without a roof. In some schools, students sit on the floor to receive lectures. The roads in Nigeria have become deathtraps resulting in high rate of road accidents and fatalities. Successive Nigerian Administrations have introduced reform policies aimed at enhancing the performance of public sector organizations such as the Civil Service. One of the reform policies is the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter which was introduced in 2003 by the Obasanjo-led Administration. The Service Compact Charter was instituted to checkmate over-bureaucratization, and the unethical and anti-organizational work behaviour of Nigerian civil servants (Mgbachi, 2014) which were impacting negatively on the delivery of public services to the citizens and hampering on national development (Onyema, 2018). The Obasanjo-led Government realized that it was pertinent to tackle decisively the prevalent issues of corruption, bribery, truancy, absenteeism, indiscipline and dereliction of duty, in order to achieve meaningful economic growth and social progress.

The major objective of SERVICOM is to make the civil service citizens-centered as hinted earlier. The intention is to ensure that civil servants treat the service users with respect while the service users are expected to monitor the activities of civil/public servants (Olaopa, 2010). However, the utilization of the appraisals of the civil servants by the public (service users) is still a source of worry. Often times, members of the public lay complaints to the relevant authorities such as the Public Complaints Commission or the Office of the Head of Service, concerning the ill-treatment they experienced in the hands of civil servants. Unfortunately, such complaints often do not yield the desired results. The defaulting civil servants usually escape sanction due to factors such as nepotism and the nonchalant attitude of those responsible for taking necessary action. The erring civil servants usually continue to exhibit their unprofessional and less productive work behaviours. Therefore, this calls for an empirical investigation of the effect of SERVICOM on the work behaviour of civil servants in Nigeria.

There are volumes of research output on public sector reforms policies in Nigeria. But, not much has been written on the impact of SERVICOM on private and public sector organizations. More so, very few researchers, for instance, Kirfir, Balarabe and Shantali (2013), and Emejulu, Muo and Chukwuemeka (2014), have dealt specifically with the effect of the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter on service delivery in some public institutions. This study adds to the body of research on the effect of SERVICOM on service delivery in the Nigeria. However, the study differs from earlier studies in that it examines the effect of the SERVICOM Charter on the work behaviour of civil servants in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. In other words, the study has a distinct thematic and geographical scope.

Service Compact (SERVICOM)

SERVICOM is an acronym for Service Compact - referring to a social contract between the federal government and its citizens. The agreement stipulates that both government and the citizens have roles to play which must be carried out devotedly, in order to develop Nigeria to its zenith economically, socially and politically. Essentially, the SERVICOM policy was instituted because of the conviction that Nigeria can only realize its full potentials if citizens receive prompt and efficient services from the State (Wordpress, 2013). SERVICOM also gives the citizens the responsibility of helping to curtail the excesses of public servants by reporting any infringement.

SERVICOM was specifically initiated to propel a change in service delivery orientation in Nigeria. The Obasanjo-led Government introduced the SERVICOM policy due to the observed inefficiency in service delivery to citizens caused by the unproductive work behaviour of public officers in its establishments, particularly the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The observed deficiencies include the high level of bribery and bureaucratic corruption, nonchalant attitude to work of civil servants, indiscipline and dereliction of duty by public servants (Mgbachi, 2004; Federal College of Education Okene, 2012). All these contributed to the abysmally poor public services which led to loss of public confidence. In order to rejuvenate the Public Service and restore public confidence, government introduced the SERVICOM Policy. The expectation is that the policy would positively influence civil servants' work behavior leading to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions.

Theoretical Foundation of Service Compact

The Service Compact (SERVICOM) is anchored on the New Public Management (NPM) theory (Onyema, 2018: 829). The New Public Management theory which emerged in the 1980s (Hughes, 2003), proposes the adoption and use of private sector management ideas and models in the management of public sector organizations (Juneja 2019). NPM advocates radical reinvention, restructuring and reengineering of the focus, strategies and work processes of public sector organizations. It promotes the re-conceptualization of the public sector bureaucracies (Jones and Thompson, 1999) and encourages government to focus on the efficient production of quality services (Manning, 2001). The New Public Management (NPM) School claims that the application of NPM principles in the public

sector would bring about efficiency, accountability, reduction of public sector expenditure, and emphasis on result instead of procedure (Hood, 1991). According to Shah (2006), the focus on result-based accountability and client-orientation will encourage the Civil Service to innovate.

The core theme of the NPM theory is greater customer orientation and responsiveness. NPM theory emphasizes the centrality of the citizens or customers, as well as accountability for results (Economic Commission for Africa, 2012: 8). A critical assessment of NPM shows that its successful implementation is dependent on institutional context, which has four parts namely: the national culture as it impacts on organizational culture, the management climate, the socio-technical systems in the sector to be reformed, and the institutional capacity for change (Flynn, 2002). The context helps to explain both the management arrangement in place and also the different goals and problems in achieving them (Flynn, 2002). The critics of NPM have often stressed the contextual difficulties in applying private sector management practices in the public sector organizations (Onyema, 2018: 829), especially in third world countries such as Zimbabwe, Sudan and Nigeria. For instance, Singh (2003) stated that the political context of the public sector (in third world countries) make(s) it difficult to comprehensively apply NPM principles. He emphasized that the goals of public organizations (in developing countries) are shaped by the desires of the political leadership rather than by profit orientation. Polidano and Hulme (2001) claimed that public management in developing countries is afflicted by corruption and nepotism and that, such practices may hinder the implementation of NPM.

Despite the criticisms leveled against the New Public Management (NPM) theory, it remains a veritable framework for reforming the public sector of developing countries. As Hughes (2003) pointed out, NPM offers greater transparency so that unethical or corrupt behaviour can be detected more easily. No doubt, this informed the adoption of the SERVICOM policy by the Obasanjo-led Administration as part of its Public Service Renewal Programme. It could be claimed, that it is for the same reason that post-Obasanjo Administrations in Nigeria have retained the policy.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was designed to investigate the effect of the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter on employees' work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. The researcher hypothesized that the implementation of Service Compact Charter has a significant and positive relationship with the rating of employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. The scope of study was limited to 32 Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) operating in Imo State. In order to test the reliability of the research questionnaire, a pilot study involving 50 Officers of three Paramilitary Agencies namely, Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Prisons Service and Nigeria Immigration Service, was conducted. The pilot study participants and their organizations were excluded from the main study. The reliability test revealed a co-efficient estimate of 0.742. Copies of the research questionnaire were administered on the study target population of 1,086 staff in the 32

Federal MDAs purposively selected for the study. However, only 1,007 copies of the questionnaire were comprehensively filled and returned showing a response rate of 92.7%. The analysis of data was therefore based on 1007copies of the research questionnaire. The questionnaire data were analyzed to address the research objective using frequency table, and to test the research hypothesis using Pearson's r correlation analysis statistic.

Presentation of Data and Discussion

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data analysis reveals that when the respondents were asked whether the introduction of Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter has helped to reduce the rate of bribery, 57.3% of the respondents said yes, 26.7% said they were not sure, while 16% said no. When the respondents were asked whether the introduction of SERVICOM Charter has helped to reduce the rate of employee truancy, 48.9% of them said yes, 351 (34.9%) said they were not sure, while 164 (16.3%) said no. Data analysis shows that when respondents were asked which aspect of your work behaviour has improved due to the introduction of SERVICOM Charter, 22% indicated punctuality to work, 15.1% indicated work attendance, 59.7% indicated relationship with clients, while 3.1% indicated no aspect of work behaviour (See Table.1).

Table 1: Respondents' views on effect of SERVICOM Charter on federal civil servants' work behaviour

Questionnaire item and Response categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Has the introduction of Servicom helped to reduce the rate of bribery?		
Yes	577	57.3%
No	161	16%
Not sure	269	26.7%
Total	1007	100.0
Has the introduction of Servicom helped to reduce the rate of employee truancy?		
Yes	492	48.9%
Not sure	351	34.9%
No	164	16.3%
Total	1007	100.0
Which aspect of your work behaviour has improved due to Servicom?		
Punctuality	223	22%
Work attendance	152	15.1%
Relationship with clients	601	59.7%
No aspect	31	3.1%
Total	1007	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Test of Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between the implementation of SERVICOM Charter and the rating of employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State.

Table 2: Pearson's r Correlation Analysis of Hypothesis 1

Correlations			
		rating of employee work behaviour based on relationship with clients	Implementation of SERVICOM
rating of employee work behaviour based on relationship with clients	Pearson Correlation	1	.173**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1007	1007
Implementation of SERVICOM	Pearson Correlation	.173**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1007	1007

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Dependent variable: rating of employee work behaviour

Table 2 contains a correlation test of hypothesis 1, which states that there is a significant and positive relationship between the implementation of SERVICOM Charter and the rating of employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State. The correlation analysis reveals a statistically significant and positive correlation (P -value = .000, $r = .173$) between the implementation of SERVICOM Charter and rating of employee work behaviour. It shows that high level of implementation of the SERVICOM Charter is correlated with high rating of employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State. Hence, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the effect of Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter on the work behaviour of federal civil servants in Imo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the introduction of SERVICOM Charter has had positive effect on employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State Nigeria. The findings revealed that the introduction of SERVICOM Charter has helped to reduce the rate of bribery and the rate of employee truancy, and to improve employee-client relationship, in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. These assertions are premised on the responses of the highest percentage (57.3%, 48.9% and 59.7%) of the respondents to questionnaire items addressing the research objective.

The research hypothesis, which states that there is a significant and positive relationship between the implementation of SERVICOM Charter and rating of employee work behaviour in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria, was tested using Pearson's r correlation analysis statistic. The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant (P -value = .000) and positive correlation ($r = .173$) between the implementation of SERVICOM Charter and rating of employee work behaviour. Hence, the research hypothesis was accepted. This means that high level of implementation of the SERVICOM Charter is correlated with high rating of employee work behaviour. In other words, the increase in the level of SERVICOM implementation leads to increase in the effect the policy has on the employees' work behaviour. Consequently, the intensification of SERVICOM implementation will further enhance the work behaviour of civil servants in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The Service Compact (Servicom) Charter was introduced by the Obasanjo-led Administration to reengineer the work orientation and behaviour of Nigerian civil servants in a bid to improve public service delivery and to accelerate national development. The specific objective of the SERVICOM Charter is to tackle the deficiencies hampering public service delivery such as the high level of bribery and corruption, indiscipline, and dereliction of duty, within Nigeria's public institutions. The effect of the SERVICOM Charter, which is still operational in Nigeria, has been the subject of debates and reviews by scholars and reformers. This study therefore considered it pertinent to contribute to the discourse by investigating the effects of the SERVICOM Charter on the work behaviour of federal civil servants in Imo State, Nigeria.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that the Service Compact (SERVICOM) Charter has had positive effect on the work behavior of federal civil servants in Imo State, Nigeria. The SERVICOM Charter has helped to reduce the rate of bribery and employee truancy, and to improve employee-client relationship in the Federal Civil Service, Imo State, Nigeria. It could be deduced that the positive change in the work behaviour of federal civil servants has brought about some level of improvement in public service delivery. Based on this, the researcher recommends that the government and all relevant agencies should intensify the implementation of the SERVICOM Charter so as to further improve the work behaviour of public servants and to accelerate national development. The researcher equally recommends that further research should be carried out to investigate the actual effect of SERVICOM Charter on public service delivery in Nigeria.

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