

THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL PATRONAGE ON PUBLIC SERVICE RECRUITMENT IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

In all civilizations, peace, security and development as utmost importance are achievable through the working of public service as the machinery of any government. This study analyzed the impacts of political patronage on public service recruitment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Essentially, it is a literature-based study, descriptive and at the same time analytical and its framework of analysis is the Weberian bureaucratic theory and elite theory. It concludes that for as long as patronage politics continues in Nigeria and interferes in the public sector recruitment and selection process, the public service would continue to perform below expectations and accommodate impunity and corruption. We therefore recommend institutional overhauling that should discourage political interference in public service recruitment system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Politics, Political Patronage, Public Service, Recruitment, Development

Introduction

In all civilisations, peace, security and development are of utmost importance which are achievable through the working of public service as the machinery of any government. Thus, the public service is the heartbeat of public administration of any nation in the modern World. Hence, public service as a bureaucratic machinery must operate within the bureaucratic framework. They are impersonality, hierarchy, specialization, professional qualification, salary and promotion. This bureaucratic framework makes public service as ideal to administer public affairs of any country, particularly democratic countries like Nigeria. According to Oyedele (2015), the public service of "any nation is ... the live-wire or nerve-centre of the state structure" (p.34). Put in a similar sense, if public policies rob well on the public, the praise goes to the public service and if otherwise, the blame as well goes to the public service. This, therefore, explains the importance of professional qualification as the basis of recruitment into the service. In this sense, the quality of public workforce cannot be taken for granted (Akintunde, 2017; Bassey & Edemidiong, 2021).

Politics particularly in Africa is almost generally understood as "contest for political office and its spoils" (Yagboyaju, 2015, p. 167). Hence, political patronage or spoil system is about control over men and national resources for parochial interest rather than national interest. In this sense, central to it is obtaining power and all the goodies that comes with it rather than preoccupation with national development. So, interest of the masses takes the backseat while that of the elite loyalists and sycophants takes precedence (Anyaocha & Umeh, 2019).

Public service takes a central position in the life of any government around the world because their success or failure is directly linked to the quality of services provides and relevancy of public policies formulates and translates to action. As is rightly noted that “the Nigerian public service ... [is] the most critical instrument of the modern state” (Oyedele, 2015; p.33); in like manner, Ola re-echoes Oyedele’s position in these words, “the civil service has been ... an instrument and indeed a virile partner in Nigeria’s march towards national development” (Ola, 2011, p. 48). However, the concern today among Nigerians is the inability of the public service to live up to its public expectations. The argument in some quarters now is that this institution has become self-serving rather than serving the general public as is constitutionally charged and by extension, push forward the frontier of national development.

Public or private sector depends on combination of factors of production for their survival and growth. They are assets to organisations. These factors are labour, land, capital and entrepreneur. The labour is human asset and manipulates other factors such as land, capital and technology for the purposes of manufacturing or service provision (Akintunde, 2017). Thus, the importance of human capital in the life of organisations regardless public or private cannot be ignored. According to Secim and Okoro (2016), human capital is the backbone of any successful organization (p.297). Human capital is all able human being regardless of their sex and willing to work in a given society. Thus, administrative efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector and corporate organisations performance in the private sector require sound workforce through sound recruitment and selection approach. As Secim and Okoro (2016) would insist that recruitment process in an organisation is so significant that it can either make or mar an organisation performance. However, Junaidu and Aminu (2015) argue that poor public sector performance in Nigeria may be traced to violation of code of conduct by public servants and ineffectiveness of the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal to punish erring public officials. In another sense, through the viewing lens of Oyedele (2015), he argues that policy reforms impacts poorly on service-delivery and performance ability of the public service in Nigeria.

Studies (Secim & Okoro, 2016; Junaidu & Aminu, 2015; Akintunde, 2017) have linked recruitment system as partly contribute to enhanced private and public sector performance and service delivery. Similarly, Bassey and Edemidiong, (2021) note that the amount of input factors the Nigerian government commits to provisioning dividends of democracy since 1999 to date relative to the meager output calls for questioning the process of engaging the input factors. And more importantly, the human resource as an integral part of input factors. Thus, there is an urgent need to investigate the process of recruitment in the public service. In this regard, considering the Nigeria public sector underperformance, this paper seeks to understand how political patronage impacts recruitment system in the public service in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. This paper would then direct its analytical focus on how politically-induced recruitment in the public sector encourages corruption; prevents service to the Nigerian public; promotes ethnic disunity, and prevent National development and patriotism. This paper primarily adopts and blends descriptive and analytical approaches in interrogating our study purpose.

Literature Review

In this section, we would attempt building conceptual base for the content of the introductory section of this paper, thus, it is focused on explaining some basic concepts that are pertinent and aid deep understanding of the paper's subject matter. These concepts are patronage politics, public service and recruitment. It is essential to make it clear here that it is not within the focus of this paper to provide general definitions of these terms but rather to offer explanations that are useful for the purpose of this paper.

Political Patronage

Political patronage is a household concept in the field of Political Science, democratic settings and political discuss around the World. It is a politics of give and take – ‘compensative politics’ Put simply, it is sharing of “state resources by office holders to loyalist owing to their immense support” (Geofrey & Kungu, 2020, p. 211). For Yagboyaju (2015), it is “politics of the belly ... stomach infrastructure, sharing of money, food items and other materials.” (p. 164). Usually, it is politics laden with corrupt tendencies to gain or retain power for self-serving purpose (Yagboyaju, 2015). In this sense, politicians and political parties for their expected and/or actual victories at the polls are dolling out public and private resources or rewards such as appointment to key public offices, and public projects as compensation to their loyal supporters. Similarly, it is the “abuse of official privileges and the personalisation of the state and its institutions ...” (Yagboyaju, 2015; p. 167). One of the purposes of patronage politics is state-capture as personal property.

Many scholars like Geofrey and Kungu (2020) and Mbabazi and Pyeong (2015) have described political patronage as a dyadic relationship whereby parties involved are interdependent for survival. Politicians and/or parties, thus, use public resources to keep their real and potential supporters' loyalty with a view to cement their stay in office. Political patronage is *quid pro quo* - something for something. Furthermore, political patronage is giving preferential treatment to a selected few within a group of people or ethnic groups. Basically, it involves unjust distribution of state-based resources – disregards for merit system of resource distribution in a political setting (Geofrey & Kungu, 2020; Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016). In another sense, patronage politics is not limited to public officeholders. However, political party leaders or party influencers often use their economic power and connections to tip the scale of resource distribution in favour of their real and potential supporters to ‘buy’ loyalty in kind for present or future electoral victory. Thus, in the Nigeria's political setting for instance, patronage politics have continued to erode the Federal Character principle which remains the constitutional basis for the distribution of public offices owing to multiethnic nature of the Country.

Scholars such as Geofrey and Kungu (2020) and Dubois and Blank, (2018) argue that where there are patrons to give, there are client to receive. Thus, they create a dyadic-based relationship. It is an informal relationship. In politics particularly, two parties - political parties or public officeholders or politicians and their supporters as clients - engage each other loyalty through biased-exchange of rewards. Structurally, dyad is two: corporate and exchange. In the corporate dyad, it is difficult to separate the two parties because they act as one whereas in the exchange dyad, their identities are clear-cut. Thus, in politics, patron-client politics is an exchange dyad. Also, it is important to mention that exchange dyad displays certain

characteristics. They are binding, beneficial and reciprocal. It brings together persons of different occupational or socioeconomic backgrounds as well as those of the same backgrounds. Secondly, it benefits parties to it. And thirdly, the parties reciprocate the good deeds of the other party, though not necessarily in a like manner. This reciprocity may necessarily not be the same since it is 'rob my back and I rob your back exchange' (Geofrey & Kungu, 2020).

Scholars such as Geofrey and Kungu (2020), and Osayi (2015) note the following as evidence of the presence of patron politics in fledging democracies. They are unsolicited gifts, selective access to employment, selective access to public contracts and subjective regulatory rules application. These scholars insist that politicians and political parties gift the masses valuable items such as foods, agricultural implement, and artisan tools and machines before, during and after elections as empowerment. The underlying intention of this unsolicited gifts is to buy the masses support and loyalty before, during and after election. For instance, the Ogun East Senator, Otunba Gbenga Daniel recently provided unsolicited gifts such as food items and artisan tools such as hairdryer machine, tailoring machines and agricultural tools, fertilizer and chemicals. Another pointer to patron politics is the selective access to employment opportunity in government ministries, departments and agencies and by extension, in state-control enterprises. For instance, the human resource departments are filled with party loyalists who then ensures strategic positions in ministries and department are filled by party supporters. Similarly, public contracts and projects are open to and won by a selected few who are known supporters of a ruling party and/or influential politicians.

Finally, the subjective regulatory rules interpretation and application by party sympathizers that are holding public offices is another confirmation of patron politics. Thus, politicians and their administrative appointees in regulatory agencies tend to interpret and apply regulatory codes in favorable or unfavorable ways depending on the level of cooperation by the concerned companies, where the concerned companies are ready to provide employment slots for party faithfuls or guarantee employees support during election time (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2018; Hutchcroft, 2014).

From the foregoing analysis, it is apparent that political gladiators such as presidents, governors, senators, and a host of other influential politicians and political parties (patron) use their own resources or public resources at their disposal to influence recruitment processes particularly in public enterprises, ministries and departments. It is a politics that devoid pursuits of public interest or service. Rather, it entails the pursuit of private ends (Yagboyaju, 2015, p. 167). Although patron politics which provides basis for sharing local and national resources and offices as personal property is more pronounced in developing democracies such as Nigeria for example, it comes in the form of federal character principle and quota system, at the same time, although to varying degrees, its presence in developed countries such as Germany, US, France, Russia, UK and many other countries around the World is not up for debate.

Public Service

We consider it necessary to clarify the boundary lying between the Public Service and the Civil Service in Nigeria. Accordingly, the concept of public service is broad whereas the concept of

civil service is narrow. The Civil Service is one part of the many parts of the Public Service in Nigeria.

The public service, thus, includes the civil service, Armed Forces, Parastatals, etc. In this sense, every public servant is not a civil servant, but every civil servant is a public servant in Nigeria. The public service, according to Junaidu and Aminu (2015), is an organisation under the management of politicians and appointed officials that serves common interests of a nation. The Public Service is established under section 169 and it is described in subsection 169(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to section 169(1), the public service represents the civil service (Ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, educational institutions, financial institutions wholly or principally owned by government at the State, Local and Federal levels, Nigeria Police or Armed Forces and other organizations in which the Federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest.

It is the service of the government whether Federal or State in any capacity. It is the backbone of any government by which public policies and programs are articulated and administered, public-oriented services are delivered to the masses; revenues are generated into the public pulse; social amenities are provided for the people and international relations are maintained. A few among the services rendered by the public sector include education, supply of water, communications, housing, transportation, roads, health, power, public enterprises and other public utilities with a view to guarantee socio-economic development and justice. According to Junaidu and Aminu (2015), the public service exists for “the benefits of the citizenry” (p. 61). Thus, the Nigerian public service is an important institution to the Nigerian state that keeps her wheel of peace, security, growth and development in place.

Furthermore, Junaidu and Aminu (2015) describe public service from the Weberian perspective of bureaucracy. They note that it is a “typical bureaucratic organisation made up of public servants who are recruited on the basis of their skill/qualification and expertise” (p. 67). Thus, merit should be the basis of engagement in the public service and it should be service-oriented. Thus, the public service is the pivot of nation building (Oyedele, 2015). As these scholars rightly note, the public servants are responsible for the developmental growth of any nation (Junaidu & Aminu, 2015). They are government in action for citizen. The public service is the driving force of public development through formulation and implementation of policies, programs and projects.

Here we are safe to describe the public service as the toolbox of any government in formulating and translating public policies and programs into concrete goods and services for the benefit of all. It is a public bureaucracy that is constitutionally charged with managing public affairs for peace, security and developmental purposes (Oyedele, 2015). Hence, regardless the nature of government in any country, the public service is critical to its success or failure. By extension, the public service is the metaphoric mountain that withstands different weathers - it is immune to revolutions and change of government.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the linking bridge between potential employers of labour and potential jobseekers and an instrument of assessment of the capability of job seekers. As Secim and okoro (2016) note “Recruitment is the process of generating a pool of capable people to apply for employment in an organization” (p. 297). Thus, recruitment exercise is the live wire of any organization including public sector (Lasisi & Asa, 2020). It is one of the integral parts to success or failure of corporate organisations regardless whether they are public or private (Favour & Tamunomiebi, 2020; Ogbogu, 2017) because the caliber of organisation’s workforce contributes to its competitiveness. This position prompts Lasisi (2019) to opine that recruitment process whether in the private or public sector cannot be overemphasized because it reflects the quality of organisations workforce. It is not out of place to argue that private and public organisations need merit-driven recruitment system that would engage quality workforce to achieve predefined goals and objectives of organisations.

Scholars such as Suwanto and Subyantoro (2019) and Lasisi and Asa (2020) have rightly noted that recruitment and selection process in organisations determine their alertness to challenges as they arise and decision-making efficiency which in turn determines their performance in all facets of organisation life. According to Kanu (2015), the primary goal of organisations recruitment exercise is to engage qualified personnel on no other basis than merit to fill vacant positions that are critical to organisation successes. Similarly, recruitment exercise in the public sector is necessary to draw from the pool of labour market professionals that are capable to deliver administrative and welfare activities of governments (Lasisi & Asa, 2020).

According to scholars such as Lasisi and Asa (2020), Anitha and Kiruba, (2020) and Delgadová, Gullerová and Ivanová, (2017) classify recruitment into internal and external. They argue that organisations and governments are guided by varying work philosophies and as a result, they prioritize one mode of recruitment over the other. So, they describe the internal recruitment mechanism as the process of engaging the labour of an already member of an organisation in an entirely different and new position within the organisation. However, the external recruitment mechanism is the process of bringing into an organisation a new employee who is entirely new to the organisation to occupy a vacant position often at the entry level.

Recruitment process in the public service system determines the caliber of workforce in the system and by extension with the state-of-the-art technology and other factors of production in place, they tend to determine the productivity of the public service (Lasisi & Asa, 2020). These scholars note further that a merit-driven recruitment process improves public service efficiency because qualified hands are employed. In this sense, happy and qualified workforce are capable of helping the government to live up to the public expectations in service delivery and policy implementation.

Lasisi and Asa (2020) argue further that patron politics erodes merit-driven recruitment and selection process in the public service in Nigeria. They note that political patronage promotes nepotism, tribalism, favouritism, ethno-chauvinism, and corruption. For instance, under the Administrations of Goodluck E. Jonathan (2011 -2015), Muhammed Buhari (2015-2023) and Bola A. Tinubu (2023 - till day) respectively, civil service organisations, political analysts and many Nigerians have continued to allege their Administrations of nepotism, tribalism and ethno-

chauvinism as the driving force of employment in the public service. For Nigeria to become a true welfare State, Lasis and Asa (2020) argue, recruitment and selection procedures in the public service must be disconnected from political influence.

Conventional recruitment activities, thus, help organisations to attract, identify, examine and select qualified workforce to meet preset goals of an organisation whether in the private or public domain. According to Akintunde (2017), “It constitute the process of soliciting, contacting and interpreting potential employees and then establishing whether it will be appropriate or suitable to appoint them” (p. 533). Hence, we would describe recruitment as a systematic approach to drawing the best workforce for an organisation from the pool of labour market with the grand purpose of achieving predefined goals of the organisation.

Theoretical Perspective

In the social sciences, particularly political science, the important role of theoretical perspectives as the compass of research activities is no longer a subject of debate (Akintunde, 2017). It provides clear guide and direction to research efforts with the view to broaden the frontier of knowledge. On this truth, we, therefore, adopt the Weberian Bureaucratic theory and the elite theory as the knowledge compass of this paper. These theories would help to sieve the wheat from the chaff in terms of identifying and understanding anomalies in recruitment exercise in the public service and by extension, how they affect the sector’s service delivery in Nigeria.

Bureaucracy as an indispensable theory in the political science was coined by Vincent de Gournay (1712-1759), a French economist. Its application to politics, however, came in 1895 in the work of Gaetano Mosca “Elementi di Scienza Politica” and its English version “The Ruling Class” was published in 1939. According to Mosca, bureaucracy is indispensable to success of any government. Thus, a government can attempt to do away with bureaucratic institution at its own peril. The popularity and universal applicability of bureaucracy beyond the public realm came through Max Weber (1864-1920), the father of Sociological School of Bureaucracy. According to Weber, there are no other rational routes to achieving organizational objectives other than the bureaucracy (Avasthi & Maheshwari, 2012). The Weberian bureaucratic theory is built on legal-rational authority. Weber places premium on legal-rational authority in the bureaucratic theory. The legal-rational authority is described as “the rightness of law” (p. 130). Avasthi and Maheshwari (2012) agree with Max Weber that the bureaucracy is legal and rational as exercise of authority follows from a system of rules and procedures (p. 130). Thus, the bureaucracy and the legal-rational authority are siamese twins – they are inseparable.

The term bureaucracy, according to Avasthi and Maheshwari (2012), is understood in two senses as procedures of administration and as a body of administrative officials. In this paper, the former is adopted and applied. Bureaucracy as an organisation corresponding with the public service is characterized with specific assumptions. They are “specialization of labour, defined hierarchy structure, defined responsibility and authority, system of rule and procedures, impersonality of [actions and] reactions, recruitment based on merit as oppose to patronage, discipline and written records” (Akintunde, 2017, p. 535). As Weberian bureaucracy with its defined and sacrosanct characteristics is the only legal-rational system to achieve organisation

goals, recruitment into the Nigeria public service must adhere strictly to meritocratic system. Thus, deviation from merit as the basis of personnel engagement in the Nigeria public service such as political consideration is an invitation to inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the service, and by extension, denial of Nigerians from enjoying the dividend of democracy.

Another useful analytical framework for the purpose of this study is the elite theory. The thrust of this theory is that power flow is unidirectional, from top-down, and that it is concentrated in the hands of a powerful few who occupies the top of social pyramid. It further insists that the “characteristics and action of elites are crucial determinants of major political and social outcomes” (Pakulski, 2018, p. 9). The relative relevance of the elite theory in the field of social sciences is traced to eminent scholars like Vilfredo Pareto (1935), Gaetano Mosca (1939) and Robert Michels (1962).

The critical assumptions of the theory are, according to Shannon and Glasberg (2011), “power is concentrated, the elites are unified, the non-elites are diverse and powerless, elites interests are unified due to common backgrounds and positions, and the defining characteristics of power is institutional power” (p. 35). Thus, the elite is preoccupied with a capture of the State machinery for self-serving purpose. In this sense, Bassey and Edemidiong, (2021) argue that “the capture instinct of the ruling elite has resulted in the relegation of merit and the prominence of patronage in the recruitment process of the Nigerian public service” (p. 75). Thus, who occupies where and does what in the Nigeria public sector are dictated by the elite’s interests rather than the merit criterion and public interests. Job vacancies are distributed in such a manner that disregards merit system and consequent inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the public sector. Elite capture is a recipe for impunity, corruption, nepotism, favoritism and resultant inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the Nigerian public service.

Thus, political interference in the recruitment exercise in the public sector is perhaps a result of institutional weakness where a culture of obeying a body of rules and procedures is weak or absent. It is a break with merit precedence. In this paper, we take a position that institutional weakness appears as the reason recruitment in the public sector is politized. Thus, the Civil Service Commission as the body constitutionally empower to oversee the employment and general affairs of public servants is compromised. Hence, recruitment into the service is noncompliant with Weberian merit prescription but rather political and elite-oriented. In this context, Akintunde (2017) insists that the public service would continue under the constraints of corruption, “indolence, incompetence and dwindling efficiency in the civil service” (p. 535), and by extension, self-serving.

On the final note, recruitment on merit scale (competition and qualification) rather than patronage scale (loyalty and sycophancy) yields competence, efficiency and overall development. Furthermore, employees who secure job in their own right tend to specialize, impersonal, and organised as against those who are recruited on the strength of power that be.

Methodology

The study adopted desk approach or descriptive method (secondary sources) for relevant materials on historicizing women’s political participation in Nigeria’s fourth republic which

provides bases for conclusion and recommendations. The desk approach involves the gathering of relevant and essential data from existing sources such as journal, articles, newspaper, reports, and books. The gathered information were analyzed and served as a foundation for critical thinking and plausible recommendations.

Impact of Political Patronage on Public Service Recruitment in Nigeria' Fourth Republic

Politics has significantly influenced public service recruitment in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic following continuous years of military rule since 1983. The impacts of this phenomenon are multifaceted and it is analyzed accordingly:

Over the years, good and qualified candidates who meet predetermined recruitment criteria and committed to service have been the priority and desire of managements in the private sector and public sector alike with a view to driving organisation goals and objectives to fulfilment. In the public sector before now, merit over politics determines who occupies vacant positions in career and political offices (Agagu & Ola, 2011). However, with the return of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria, recruitment exercise in the public sector faces interference of patron-client politics. In the face of politics of recruitment in the public service in Nigeria Fourth Republic, meritocracy suffers heavy setback while mediocrity take precedence. Political patronage often leads to the appointment of individuals based on their political connections rather than their qualifications or competencies. This undermines the principle of meritocracy, resulting in a public service that may lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively perform its functions. It is, according to Anyaoha and Umeh (2019), "injurious to the state; it weakens the system by stuffing it with those loyal, not to the system but to the party or the leader. It subverts the universal merit system and encourages mediocrity" (p. 826).

In this sense, recruitment and selection process in the public offices is being heavily influenced by politics rather than merit (Lasisi & Asa, 2020). Similarly, Secim and Okoro (2016) argue that "non-institution of merit" in the recruitment and selection process in the Nigeria Public Sector is the rule rather than an exception (p. 296). Akintunde (2017) on the same track, many other scholars argue that Nigeria's future appears uncertain because mediocrity over merit is the basis of systematic recruitment and selection that determines who occupies public offices such as for example, to mention a few, office of the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, office of Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and office of directors of ministries, departments and agencies in Nigeria.

The issues of policy instability and discontinuity are another potential consequence of politics of recruitment in the public sector. Political interference holds chaotic influence over stability within public institutions because any change in political system leadership may result in the dismissal or reassignment of public servants who are not aligned with the new administration programs and policy. Governance and policy implementation, as a result, are bound to be destabilised and/or discontinued. Scholars have used adjectives to characterize public service delivery, policy implementation process and attitude to work by public servants in Nigeria. These, according to Okon (2008 as cited in Oyedele, 2015), are rightly captured as "chaotic, epileptic, unsatisfactory, shoddy, deplorable, in-sensitive, inflexible, and non-cost effective and insensitivity towards customers and their complaints, lateness; absenteeism, needless delay and

red-tapism; negligence, inexcusable incompetence, unbridled corruption, favouratism, lackluster performance and a general lackadaisical attitude to work (p. 35). Studies have thus blamed these on many factors among which are frequent changes in government, political intervention in the employment process of public servants and absence of willpower to policy commitment by the political elite.

Politically-induced recruitment in the public sector encourages corruption and nepotism. The interplay of politics and public service recruitment has fostered an environment where corruption and nepotism thrive. Positions are frequently awarded to friends, family members, or loyal party members, which can perpetuate a cycle of inefficiency and corruption within the public sector. Thus, scholars have noted that in this environment where recruitment into the public service is 'man know man' then the outcome has always been power and privilege determine who gets and enjoys public services in Nigeria (Oyedele, 2015). For instance, in public corporations, contracts and job vacancy slots are captured and shared among the elite in order that they compensate their praise-singers, ethnic groups and political party loyalists. This practice is often targeted at perpetuating themselves on the corridor of power. In fact, for instance in some quarters accusing fingers are pointing to employee engagement process in the INEC as often done on political considerations to favour ruling party loyalists with the primary aim of aiding future electoral outcomes in favour of the ruling party.

Public trust in government policies and services is shaky. This is consequent upon public service recruitment is based on political patronage and as a result, erodes public trust in government (Bassey & Edemidiong, 2021). With this reality staring Nigerians in the face, public servants lose their credibility in terms of intentions and capability with the Nigerian masses and as a result, government policies and projects are considered as avenues to convert public resources to private wealth.

Furthermore, politically-induced recruitment in the public tends to prevent service to the Nigerian public at the expected time and efficiency. Where public recruitment process is credible, free from political connections it produces dynamic public servants that prioritize public interest over elite interest and hence, the public service becomes accessible, effective and efficient in the service provision and policy articulation and implementation (Oyedele, 2015; Bassey & Edemidiong, 2021). As a corollary of political patronage, the quality-of-service delivery often suffers. Public servants who are not adequately qualified and even if they are motivated tends to perform poorly (Nwodim, 2021), and the overall effectiveness of government programs and services decline. By extension, it, thus, creates disillusionment and low morale among the few qualified officials. Thus, political consideration in public recruitment process has domino effect among public officials, the qualified few who are service committed are negatively affected by the square-peg-in-round-hole officials.

Politically-induced recruitment in the public sector promotes regional and ethnic disunity. It can exacerbate regional and ethnic disunity in public service recruitment. politicians often favour individuals from their own ethnic or regional backgrounds, leading to regional and ethnic tensions. It promotes tribalism and ethnic supremacy in the workplace (Lasisi & Asa, 2020). For instance, the Tinubu-Administration is being alleged of Yorubanisation of Nigeria. Likewise, the

same measure of allegation was levelled against the Buhari Administration. This Administration was alleged of Fulanisation of Nigeria, it engaged Fulani extractions in key public positions without a consideration for competence and qualification. Also, the Goodluck Jonathan Led-Administration was not spared of this very measure of bias in public engagement. We may, therefore, be safe to claim that the Nigeria Government since 1999 is politicising recruitment and selection process in the public sector through abuse of federal power. As a result, ethnic tension and disunity are gathering momentum in the country and this is perhaps capable of tearing apart the social fabric of the Nation.

Over the course of the Fourth Republic, the Nigeria public service have come short of its expectations from Nigerians in terms of life basic needs and national development. This shortcoming has been linked to some factors among which is political interference in who occupies strategic positions in the public service (Seçim & Okoro, 2016). According to Secim and Okoro (2016), the role of public service in driving economic growth and development including good governance through effective and efficient public administration cannot be overemphasized. They argue further that prevalence of civil unrests across the length and breadth of Nigeria may not be disconnected from gradual disintegration of the public service wheels in Nigeria.

Furthermore, students of national development have identified the dysfunctional effects of politicking public service recruitment in Nigeria as socially, economically politically and morally terrible. Negatively, it impacts service delivery of public officials and promote self-serving government at the expense of the general public (Akintunde, 2017). This is perhaps the reason for different administrations in Nigeria with the return of democracy in 1999 keep dashing the hope of Nigerians for good governance. This appears as the reason Agagu (2011) draws our attention to the recent reality about the civil service when he insists that public administration which should be a tool of national development has become a tool of national underdevelopment (p. 172).

In a like manner, Akintunde (2017) notes that this recruitment process is unconventional, unsystematic and detrimental to national development and the bane of patriotism. Hence, patronage politics as the basis of recruitment particularly in the public sector retards National growth and development and relegates patriotism.

Poor governance and a lack of accountability have been linked to politics of recruitment in the public service (Agagu, 2011). Usually, public policy is people-oriented. According to Agagu (2011), “public policy is expected to articulate and translate the citizens demands into government intentions to be transformed into service” (p. 157). However, in the circumstance of skewed recruitment in the public sector, public policy articulation and implementation tend to be elite-oriented. As a result, he notes that “Government over the years have ... fallen short of expectation” (p. 157).

Conclusion and Recommendations

A review of existing literature reveals patron politic as a strategy aims at gaining and sustaining political support by individual politicians and/or political parties. Thus, they engage in bias

distribution of patrimonial goods, services and job placement slots in public corporations, ministries, departments and agencies to real and prospective loyal supporters. This practice and public service efficiency are not synchronous. The former elevates loyalty and sycophancy above merit in public service recruitment. Whereas the latter emphasizes on merit system in the distribution of patrimonial goods and services and job placements. This study, thus, notes that political patronage has profound negative impacts on public service recruitment. It hinders effective management and determination of public affairs and effective public service delivery because round pegs are often not employed in round holes.

This explains the rampancy of high-level corruption, waste and inefficiency in the management and determination of public affairs and delivery of public goods and services in Nigeria. By extension, it promotes a culture of impunity and makes it difficult to punish erring employees in public service because some of them are the anointed representatives of ‘oga-at-the -top’ politicians.

According to Bailey (1980 as cited in Agagu & Ola, 2011, p. 175)

Rules, standards, procedures exist, by and large, to promote fairness, openness, depth of analysis, and accountability in the conduct of the public’s business. Those who frequently by-pass or shortcut established means are thereby attacking one aspect of that most precious legacy of the past; the rule of law.

Put Bailey’s position in the theoretical framework of this paper, we are safe to conclude that politicization of recruitment in the public sector in Nigeria is a deliberate effort that relegates the general will of the higher society for the good of a tiny powerful section of the society – elite class.

We conclude that as subject of maternity is critical to womanhood so is the merit-driven recruitment procedure to public service efficiency and effectiveness for good governance and national development. We recommend, in this study, that to guarantee effective and efficient delivery of administrative and welfare activities of government (ministries, departments, and agencies), there is the need for the Nigeria government at all levels to be committed to merit-driven recruitment and selection strategy in the public sector. Public workforce, thus, should be engaged base on their professional qualifications rather than recommendation or slot from political godfathers. Furthermore, there is the need for reforms in the structure and procedures of recruitment into the public service that is devoid of political influence with a view to ensure public sector efficiency, and effectiveness in the attainment of national developmental goals.

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