

## **ETHNICITY AND RECRUITMENT IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IN RIVERS STATE**

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**Abstract:** This study examines ethnicity and recruitment in the civil service in Rivers state with a view to determining its prospects and challenges. This is because in Nigerian industrial organizations, ethnic sentiments have overtaken genuine sense of commitment and direction in the recruitment of workforce. Recruitment policy of the civil service hinges on merit principles for thorough fairness. Thus, with the merit concept in view, the efficiency of public bureaucracies will be identified. The merit concept constitutes a rundown of criteria for employment into the civil service. The practicality of the above regulations means that recruitment cuts across class, ethnic and religious lines. In Rivers State, the recruitment in the civil service do not hold water because of the prevailing problems of god-fatherism, favouritism and ethnicity. In this study, survey method, questionnaire and personal interviews were used as the main instruments for collecting the primary data. Questionnaire was based on the research hypotheses are Z test was used to analyze the data based on what transpired in the field. Ten ministries were sampled for the study out of twenty-three, they are ministries of justice, information, education, women affairs, Agriculture, health, transport, finance and culture and tourism. 1000 copies of questionnaire were distributed across these ministries at 100 copies each. On the whole 800copies were properly fill and returned. Questionnaire was based on likert scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), undecided (UD), strongly disagreed (SD) and disagreed (D). The result showed that merit principles is a measure in recruitment for the effective functioning of the civil service. The researcher recommends that the merit concept that constitutes a rundown of criteria for employment into the civil service should be emphasized.

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**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Recruitment, Sentiments, Genuine, Efficiency.

### **Introduction**

The vilification of ethnicity as the scapegoat of all vices associated with the Nigerian body polity has made the subject a dominant theme in the study of Nigerian political economy. No word is deemed “scholarly” that does not consider the salience or relevance of ethnicity in its analysis. Thus, analysts interested in such diverse issues as nationalism, decolonization, national integration, political parties, military intervention, corruption, economic development, structural adjustment, democratization and violent conflict have all considered the ethnicity variable. This was the case in the 1960s and 1970s when the major intellectual tradition felt ethnicity was of

secondary importance as an explanatory variable, at best an epiphenomenon and at worst a mask for class privilege. The result of such interest in ethnicity is proportional to the high level of ethnic consciousness in the Nigerian society.

Be that as it may, ethnicity, therefore, is seen as the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition. Conflict is preferred because it identifies two issues that are central to discussions on ethnicity. The first is that ethnicity as a phenomenon is neither natural nor accidental, but is the product of conscious effort by social actors. The second is that ethnicity is not only manifest in conflictive or competitive relations but also in the context of cooperation. A corollary of the second point is that ethnicity manifests itself in various forms, including voting, community service and even violence. Ethnic groups are groups with ascribed membership usually but not always based on claims or myths of common history, ancestry, language, race, religion, culture and territory, Ahiauzu (1984). Thus, ethnicity is not so much a matter of shared traits or cultural commonalities, but the result of the interplay between extend categorizing and self-identification.

In the Nigerian industrial organizations, ethnic sentiments have overtaken genuine sense of commitment and direction in the recruitment of work force. Recruitment policy of the civil service hinges on merit principles for thorough fairness. Thus, with the merit concept in view, the efficiency of public bureaucracies will be identified. The merit concept constitutes a rundown of criteria for employment into the civil service. The practicality of the above regulations means that recruitment cuts across class, ethnic and religious lines. In Nigeria, the above regulations do not hold water because of the prevailing problems of god-fatherism, favouritism and ethnicity. This is the materialization of the old saying “putting square pegs in round holes”. It cannot fit in well and the final result will be a gradual collapse of the system, Ahiauzu (opcit).

The application of the ‘merit system’ in the process of appointment and promotion reduces the influence of ethnicity, and a welcome exercise for the efficiency and strengthening of public bureaucracy. Failure in the above application creates the features of inefficiency and low productivity because quacks may be recruited due to regional or ethnical influence. Most features of ‘non-merit principles’ finds expression in the attitude of exerting undue recognition on state/region of origin, race, religion etc, while in the process of screening.

‘Merit’ therefore, is the deliberate, careful and sorting out of that person most qualified to perform effectively and efficiently the duties associated with a given position. The merit concept is usually looked at from two perspectives – merit system and merit principles’ in ‘merit system’ the qualifications for applicants are matched to position requirements so that the most effective jobs performance will be achieved. Usually, vacant job positions are advertised in newspapers indicating minimum qualifications for employment. Some screening exercises are regions, progressing from written examination to selection committee, interview and reference checks. The purpose of the water-tight screening method of merit system is to ensure that the best candidate is finally recruited into a suitable position where he will give out his best and most efficiency perform the functions of the positions recruited into, Osenwota 1994).

Recruitment along ethnic lines in Nigeria has weakened commitments and productivity in the public service in general. The problem of ethnicity in Nigeria is rooted in what is called ‘representative bureaucracy’ This refers to an administrative measure to ensure that all major groups in society are represented in the public service. This type of administrative measure is called “affirmative action” in the united states, “employment equity” in Canada and “federal character” in Nigeria, Osenwota (Opcit). The argument in favour of

representative bureaucracy viewed it as a tool for promoting public service accountability and the quality of giving all citizens, regardless of ethnic origins social class or language, the opportunity to participate in this source of employment.

In Nigeria, the concept of representative bureaucracy is practicalized in the 'federal character principle'. The aim was to promote national unity, national loyalty and give a sense of belonging to every citizen of Nigeria as expressed in the constitution, Osenwota (opcit). It will be pertinent to mention that the concept of representative bureaucracy deviates notably from the principle of merit bureaucracy. From the Nigerian experience, its purpose has been mainly to deal with the problems of ethnicity and regional differentiation, which are a deviation from the bureaucratic norms of universality and achievement.

In practical terms however, inspite of the constitutional and legal provisions on representative bureaucracy, the Nigerian situation is seen to be crooked. In clear odds, the major ethnic groups are always at the top of the bureaucracy while the minorities wallow at the bottom.

### **Hypotheses**

- There is a significant relationship between ethnicity and recruitment in Rivers state public service.
- There is a significant relationship between recruitment and god-fathers/favoritism /in the civil service in Rivers state.

### **Related Literature**

Obuah (1987) described ethnicity as a process of differentiating collectivities of people on the basis of provenance and other diacritical symbols in the process of social, economic and political development as conditional by shaved historical experiences. To him, the model of ethnic phenomena and evidence obtained in Nigeria demonstrates that empirical variations occur and are largely contingent on situational circumstances.

The essence of ethnic identities are highly associated with cultural affiliations, language differentiating and even development that had posed obstacles to the emergence of a stable alliance and consolidation to the leadership and unity of Nigeria.

Nigeria is a nation of about 374 ethnic groups, Anacto (1998). Some of these are larger as others are smaller, but popular among the ethnic groups includes the Igbos, Hausas and Yoruba's, these ethnic groups in Nigeria were banded together respectively by their traditional poetical, religion, language and culture.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century and till date, the more powerful and influential ethnic groups had been the Hausa, hence she has been strongly bonded together by her religious Islam. Infect, Bestman (1999) asserts that ethnic identification seems to have become entrenched as a permanent feature of the social system and also a very convenient weapon for the intra-inter class struggle within either the ranks of the privileged class or those of the non-privileged classes.

In view of the above analysis, we posit that such ethnic groups or tribal occupational inclination in the country has become an instrument or weapon in the basis for ethnic conflict in Nigeria for instance, the last Nigerian civil war was the result of ethnic identity and conflict in the country. Igwe (2008) is of the opinion that other manifestations have been discriminative employment procedures, political appointments, exploitation of mineral resources to the detriments of a tribe, recruitment base on the establishment of federal character etc.

In recent times most of the people particularly the elites, that fall under the ethnic minority groups display agitation and protest against ethnic majority dominations this has persisted and even intensified to the extent of

resulting into inspired conflict in the country. Iheana (1996) is of the view that ethnic conflicts are protracted social conflict and are long drawn out of social processes which combine ethnicity effectively with a demand.

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However, most developed societies and their governments have devised methods of reducing ethnic conflict which the people create. But, the situation in Nigeria remains unchanged as the people particularly the ruling class have continued to promote those factors that bring ethno-religious crisis. Although, Igwe (opcit) asserts that the privileged access of several ethnic minority leaders to positions, creation of new states and federal character principle ought to help reduce ethnic minority's problems in the system. But the nature of "the indigenous thing" and the politics associated with the 'federal character' over appointments in position of trust have become yet another source of conflict in recent times.

According to Onanwu (1996), part of the ethnic conflict in the country is the issue of revenue allocation. The amount of revenue allocation, the level of revenue circulation as it affects communal co-existence has become sources of worry. Revenue allocation has a very great potential for conflicts, especially between rich and poor regions or states in Nigeria. In fact, it was ethnic conflict which largely explained the origin of centralization of fiscal power in Nigeria today. This centralization of the fiscal policy by most regimes according to Onanwu (opcit) has created the platform which the southern people set as the southern agenda for resource control, whereas their Northern counterparts view such demand as an affront to the corporate existence of the federation. Ethnicity in Nigeria has led to lack of accurate census figures in Nigeria as each ethnic group tend to inflate the figure of the population census to its advantage. For example, the result of a population census taken in 1962 was not published because of disputes over its accuracy, Igwe (opcit). Till today, there has been no accurate population figures in Nigeria as each ethnic group tend to inflate the figures of the population census to its advantage. The 2003 census figure was however partially accepted placing the Northern States as the most populated. This has affected the power sharing and shift in the country, placing the north at great advantage.

Bujira (2000) averres that ethnicity factor in Nigeria has been used by the people to create the necessary milieu for exploitation of one group by another, especially when dealing on resources. For example, during the first republic, there were inter-ethnic competitions amongst the regional leaders over socio-economic issues. Another evidence of ethnic inspired conflict resulted in TIV land where they were rioting against Hausa-led NPC oppression in both 1960 and 1964 as demonstrated by the power of an emerging ethnic minority group to clearly demand their rights in the federation. There was also the 1953 Kano ethnic violence over the fears of southern domination.

Kalu (1994) emphasizes on the action of the ruling class in using ethnic appeals to create regional conflict during elections. These political manipulations of ethnicity by our leaders in 1950s and early 1960s prepared the

stage for the ethnic massacres of 1966. For instance, during the post-independence hostility among the regional governing elites, the tension that aroused out of competition mounted from different ethnic groups to a fair share of scarce value such as the satisfaction for economic needs, high status and political ambitions.

Nwaenyi (2008) suggests that when an ethnic group is deprived from having access to wealth, power and comfort, it becomes source of hostility and competition among the competing groups hence it results to inter-ethnic rivalries. For example, conflicts of inter and intra ethnic colourations have continued to engulf the nation since 1999. There was an inter-ethnic rumble in Niger Delta between the Ijaws and the Itsekiri over the citing of local government headquarters where about 200 persons died. The Yoruba and the Hausa clashes in both Sagamu, Ogun State and Kano city respectively claimed about 150 lives. The Kuteb and Chamba in Taraba State violently tackled each other and dropped over 200 people dead. The TIVS and Tukur ethnic crisis in Benue, as well as Taraba and Nasarawa states ethnic crisis claimed several lives. All these violent conflicts were promoted by local elites for their selfish ends, Nwaenyi (Opciyt).

Nnoli (1978) had noted that the press war between the West African pilot, which represented the interest of an Igbo leader Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and the Daily service which represented the views of Yoruba extraction resulted to violence. In 1995, there was an intra-ethnic violence that engulfed Ogoniland in Rivers State, which came as a result of inordinate utterances from leaders of MOSOP group. The Ken Sarowiwa faction of Mosop had accused the pro-government leaders from Ogoni extraction as being ‘vultures’ in their land. It resulted to the killing of the pro-government personalities referred to as the “Ogoni 4” by irate youths from the area.

### **Methodology**

Given the above literature review, an attempt is made to examine the nature of ethnicity relation to recruitment in Rivers State civil service. To achieve this, ten ministries were randomly sampled out of twenty-three in the Rivers State Civil Service namely: ministries of Justice, Information, Education, Women Affairs, Agriculture, Health, transport, Finance and culture and Tourism. Survey method, questionnaire and personal interview techniques were used as the main instruments for collecting the primary data. Questionnaire was built out of the hypotheses and based on likert scale principle of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Strongly Disagreed (SD), and Disagreed (D).

On the whole, 1000 copies of questionnaire were distributed across the ten ministries at 100 per ministry. 800 hundred were properly filled and returned. Z test was used to analyse the hypotheses.

### **Hypothesis I**

#### **There is a significant relationship between ethnicity and recruitment in the Rivers State public service**

To analyze this hypothesis certain items in the questionnaire were devoted it:

- Item 5 - Ethnicity is the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition including recruitment.
- Item 6 Ethnicity is proportional to the high level of ethnic consciousness in recruitment in the civil service in Rivers State.
- Item 7 Ethnic sentiments have overtaken genuine sense of commitment and direction in the recruitment of work force in Rivers State.
- Item 8 Recruitment in Rivers State civil service cut across class, ethnic and religious lines.

**Table I: Ethnicity and Recruitment in the civil Service**

Items	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	SD 2	D 1	Total Responses
5	20	40	50	340	350	800
6	10	50	40	300	400	800
7	60	20	60	320	340	800
8	30	70	55	225	420	800
Frequency	120	180	205	1185	1510	3200
£RanksXfrequency	600	720	615	2379	1510	5424

**Source:** Fieldwork 2016

$$Z_t = \frac{\sum Ranks \times frequency}{Total Responses (n)}$$

$$= \frac{5824}{3200} = 1.82 = 2$$

**Decision Rule:** Accept the hypothesis, if the computed value is greater than the critical or table value. Otherwise reject it.

Based on the above analyses, we accept the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between ethnicity and recruitment in the Rivers State public service. This implies that there is a significant relationship between ethnicity and recruitment in the public service in Rivers State.

This supports the work of Ahiauzu (1984) who asserts that: In Nigerian industrial organizations (Rivers State inclusive), ethnic sentiments have overtaken genuine sense of commitment and direction in the recruitment of workforce... Recruitment cut across class, ethnic and religious lines.

This was supported by Osenwota (1994) who asserts that: ...recruitment along ethnic lines in Nigeria has weakened commitments and productivity in the public service...

Based on the above analyses and the subsequent literature, it is clear that ethnicity has eaten deep into the fabrics of the civil service in Rivers State.

### **Hypothesis 11**

There is a significant nation ship recruitment and god-fatherism/favouritism in the civil service in Rivers State.

To analyze this hypothesis certain portions of the questionnaire were devoted it:

Item 9 Ethnicity is the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition including recruitment. The 'merit concept' which constitutes a rundown of criteria for employment in the civil service does not hold water because of the prevailing problems of god-fatherism, favouritism and ethnicity in civil service.

Item 10 Recruitment is not influenced, hired and fired.

Item 11 Nigerian industrial organizations are acted out in the nature of political patronage for the recruitment of staff.

Item 12 It is a conditioned incentive that helps to establish a new relationship that promotes recruitment into the civil service in Rivers State.

**Table II: Recruitment and god-fatherism/favouritism**

Items	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	SD 2	D 1	Total Responses
9	50	50	100	100	500	800
10	50	70	80	300	300	800
11	40	60	100	300	300	800
Frequency	140	180	280	700	1100	2400
£RanksXfrequency	700	720	840	1400	1100	4760

**Source:** Fieldwork 2016

$$Z_t = \frac{\sum Ranks \times frequency}{Total Responses (n)}$$

$$= \frac{4760}{2400} = 1.98 = 2$$

**Decision Rule:** Accept the hypothesis, if the computed value is greater than the critical or table value. Otherwise reject it.

Based on the above analyses, we accept the hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between recruitment and god-fatherism/favouritism. This implies that there is a strong relationship between recruitment and god-fatherism/favouritism in the Rivers State civil service.

This supports the work of Ahiauzu (1984) who asserts that:

...In Nigerian the above regulations do not hold water because of the prevailing problems of god-fatherism/favouritism. This is the materialization of the old saying “putting square pegs in round holes”. It cannot fit in well and the result will be a gradual collapse of the system

Based on the above analyses and the subsequent literature, it is clear that recruitment in Rivers State civil service is bedeviled by god-fatherism/favouritism.

### Recommendations

- Based on the research findings, the researchers made the following recommendations:
- Recruitment in the public service should be aimed at attaining organizational effectiveness and productivity.
- The efficiency of public bureaucracies will be identified through the application of the ‘merit concept’ in recruitment.
- The application of the ‘merit system’ in the process of appointment and promotion reduces the influence of ethnicity in recruitment and a welcome exercise for the efficiency and strengthening of public bureaucracy.
- Recruitment should not be based along ethnic lines as this will weaken commitments and productivity in the public service.
- Failure in the above applications creates the features of inefficiency and low productivity because quacks may be recruited due to regional or ethnical influence.

### Conclusion

This study reveals that recruitments in Rivers State civil service are based on ethnic lines and god fatherism/favouritism. This has weakened commitment and productivity in the public service. Ethnic sentiments have overtaken genuine sense of commitment and direction in the recruitment of work force.

The 'merit concept' which constitutes a rundown of criteria for employment into the civil service is neglected. The practicability of the above regulations means that recruitment cuts across class, ethnic and religious lines. Recruitment is now influenced, hired and fired. They adopt different work attitudes and behavioural traits in their recruitment exercise in the complex and uncertain work environment. Argument in this direction may even earn more support in the present day Nigeria with over 50,000 graduates unemployed.

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