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Public sector recruitment process and service delivery in Osun state between 2010 and 2018

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Abstract

This study examined policy instruments used for civil service recruitment, their gains or otherwise on service delivery outcomes in Osun State, Nigeria. It examined the factors, and challenges that influence recruitment in the study area. The study used quantitative and qualitative data. Purposively sampled service providers recruited and clusters of the public, who are recipients of the services, were administered questionnaire. It also used semi-structured interviews with key informants involved in the recruitment exercise. The study revealed that there are policy instruments for civil service recruitment in Osun State, and are not biased. Availability of vacancies and decision of the government are key factors that influenced Osun State's recruitment drive while political interference and unemployment are key challenges facing recruitment process in Osun State's civil service. The study concluded that the recruitment exercise of the civil servant carried out between 2010 and 2018 in Osun State followed established process.

Keywords: Public sector, civil servant, recruitment process, recruitment policy, service delivery outcomes

Introduction

Government embarks on recruitment of civil servants to deliver its expected duties within the public sector effectively. When such employments are on merit, there is always efficiency, effectiveness and high service delivery. This is because; best personnel will emerge when government uses merit for such exercise. On the other hand, when influence, godfathers or political consideration influences recruitment into the public sector, redundant and unqualified public servants are likely to emerge. All these are likely to have positive or negative impacts on the productivity of such staffs. From the above, a connection between the process of recruitment and service delivery outcomes is evident. Thus, human personnel remain an important but complex resource to public sector productivity. Human resource coordinates other resources of the organisation to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

The foregoing view is in line with the view of Bakare *et al.* (2020) ^[6], who noted that the employees attached to an organization are its most essential asset, and their input is a major determinant to the realization of its goals. Thus, the quality of staffs of an organisation is the foundation upon which the effective and efficient performance of that sector relies. As a result, public or private organization requires optimal functionality of its resources to realize its objectives. Therefore, if these resources are to function optimally, human input is required in the right size, quality and appropriately (Bakare *et al.* 2020) ^[6]. Recruitment into the public sector entails the process of assessing potential employees to determine whether it is appropriate to recruit them or not (Akintunde, 2017) ^[3]. Picking the right person for employment is therefore paramount towards achieving organisation's objectives (Viglo, 2014) ^[4].

Public sector are government and all publicly owned or funded agencies through which public goods, services and programmes are delivered (Dube and Danescu, 2011) ^[9]. The roles the public sector plays in the delivery of public goods or services in most countries of the world make it to be the largest employer of labour (Okeke-Uzodike *et al.*, 2014) ^[17]. The public service is the platform through which a category of persons refers to as public servants operate, is the channel through services provided by public agencies are discharged (Bakare *et al.* 2020) ^[6]. In the opinion of Omisore and Okofu, (2014) ^[20] public service covers ministries, departments and agencies of government, including commissions and parastatals.

In essence, public service covers the entire administrative structures through which government performs its functions (Yaro, 2014) ^[28]. According to Yaro (2014) ^[28], civil service is a permanent body of persons, whose duties go beyond the tenure of a particular government. According to him, retirement, transfer of service, death among others are reasons that warrant vacancies and why government recruit personnel frequently. According to Tomorri, Keco & Mehmeti (2020) ^[27], the frequent recruitment is to ensure continuity of government's work. Thus, government uses recruitment of persons with accurate qualification to increase its workforce. Having the requisite skills and knowledge are paramount to any human resources that work in the public service (Osawe, 2014) ^[22]. Mukoro (2005) ^[14] reinforced this position by stating that the public service is the channel through which electoral promises and policy decision of government become actual actions. Hence, it is important to recruit right personnel for each task at appropriate time (Magbadelo (2020) ^[13]). The role of government is to meet the needs and desires of its citizens through the workings of public institutions, ministries, agencies and parastatals that should deliver such services by its efficient workforce.

In Nigeria, public servants are officials with varying educational qualifications, training, skills, rankings and the duties they discharge (Bakare *et al.* 2020) ^[6]. The federal military government headed by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida created Osun state, the study area of this study on 27 August 1991 alongside nine other states (Sievert, Vogel & Feeney, 2020) ^[26]. The administration of Osun State civil service is through the Osun State Civil Service Commission inaugurated on 30 September 1991 by Colonel L.S. Ajiborisha, the first military administrator of the state. As noted by Okotoni and Erero (2005) ^[19], appointments, promotions and discipline of civil servants of Osun state are responsibilities of the Commission. The Commission carries out its functions and responsibilities through the Osun State Public Service Rules, which guides the conducts of the entire public service. Some scholars such as Bakare *et al.* (2020) ^[6] alleged that recruitment processes over the years in Osun state have not complied with the recruitment process. They also argued that recruitment patterns are deficient because of absence of merit, which according to them are some weaknesses inherent in the civil service of Osun State. Osun State Public Service Rules (PSR) requires applicants, who are not already in the Osun State civil service to file applications into advertised designated position while the Civil Service Commission process and shortlist applicants for the examination as proscribed by the rule. The content of the filled form and the examination constitute a carefully scrutinized process that leads to the applicants' invitation for interview or appointment. Given the procedures for recruitment into the civil service as stated above, and arguments that the recruitment exercise carried out in Osun State between 2010 and 2018 were compromised, this study probes into the 2013 recruitment process, because it was the only recruitment exercise into the civil service that the former Governor, Rauf Aregbesola carried out. The study ascertained the use of merit or not during the recruitment exercise.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the various policy instruments that guide recruitment into the Civil Service of Osun State,

2. investigate the gains or otherwise of the policy instruments used for recruitment process into the Civil Service and their influence on service delivery outcomes in Osun State, Nigeria between 2010 and 2018;
3. examine the factors that influence the choice of recruitment into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria; and
4. discuss the challenges of public sector recruitment in Osun State, Nigeria.

Working Assumptions

1. Unbiased recruitment has no effect on service delivery of the Civil Service in Osun State, Nigeria
2. Impartial recruitment process does not attract qualified personnel into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria
3. Several factors account for a compromised recruitment into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey design. It used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative sources to collect data. We used questionnaire that are of two sets, and semi-structured interviews. We used the first set of questionnaires with civil servants (service providers) from three MDAs that recruited personnel during the period under study. They are Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Cooperatives and Empowerment, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Hospital Management Board. We used another set of questionnaires for clusters of the public who were recipients of services rendered by the MDAs. We used semi-structured interviews with key informants who took part in the recruitment process into the MDAs. The population for this study is the civil servants and residents of Osun State, Nigeria. The involvement of the respondents was because of their roles as key actors in the delivery of public service and the perception of the quality of service delivered as enjoyed by the service recipients. The selection of the samples multi-stage sampling with purposive sampling. The choice of the purposive sampling technique is because of the identification of MDAs in the civil service provided us top serving or retired public officials that recruited in the sectors of commerce, agriculture and health, and the availability of known beneficiaries of services rendered by the MDAs. We used semi-structured interviews to gather data from selected key government officials, as well as the leadership of the workers' union, who are conversant with the process of recruitment in Osun State. The interview provided the respondents the opportunity to express their views on the subject matter. We analysed the data from the questionnaires with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) using frequency tables and percentages while responses from interviews were recorded, transcribed thematically and content analysed. T 1 below shows the breakdown of the respondents:

Theoretical Framework

This study discussed two theories that are relevant to public sector recruitment and service delivery. They are bureaucratic management theory and new public management theory. According to Max Weber, bureaucratic management theory perceives bureaucracy as an ideal tool necessary for a well-functioning organization; administration (Stroińska, 2020) ^[25].

Table 1: Respondents

| S. No. | Respondents Affiliation | Classification | Number of selected respondents |
|--------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Department of Cooperatives of the State's Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Cooperatives and Empowerment | Service provider | 20 |
| 2 | Department of Produce in Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security | Service provider | 10 |
| 3 | Nurses in the State Hospitals | Service provider | 50 |
| 4 | Administrative Officers recruited in during the period covered by the study | | 21 |
| 5 | Members of Federation of Osun State Cooperatives Ltd (FOCOOP) | Service Beneficiaries | 25 |
| 6 | All Farmers Association of Nigeria Osun State chapter | Service Beneficiaries | 25 |
| 7 | Patients at State Hospitals | Service Beneficiaries | 80 |
| 8 | Chairman and Secretary of NLC in Osun State | Workers' Union | 2 |
| 9 | Government officials (serving or retired) | Policy maker/Policy implementer | 5 |
| | Total | | 238 |

Weber further notes that bureaucracy is a management model that permits systematic coordination of inputs from a large number of people towards completing administrative tasks. According to Tribe (2019) ^[31], there are two fundamental parts of bureaucratic management theory, which are establishment of hierarchy and having well-defined rules to manage the organisation and its members. There are six critical principles to manage an organization, which are hierarchy of authority, formal rules and regulations that reiterate, division of labor, career orientation, impersonality, and formal selection process. From the above characteristics, Akintunde (2017) ^[3] asserted that the essential aspects of bureaucratic theory are relevant for creating order, efficiency, and progress in modern countries. In other words, bureaucratic management theory according to CEO Pedia (2019) ^[8] focuses on rigid rules and impersonality in an organization. Other features of bureaucratic theory according Reynolds, (2018) ^[24] are impartial promotion, division of labor, and hierarchy of seniority.

The new public management theory is the second theory that came up because of the inability of bureaucratic theory to deliver expected services efficiently to the people. The shortcomings of the traditional approach led to the emergence of the New Public Management (NPM). The NPM is a change of perspective in the management of public organizations. It digressed from rigid adherence to rules and regulations in organisation to one that is liberal and allows for innovation and initiatives (Stroińska, 2020) ^[25]. In essence, the NPM allows for the adoption of private sector mechanisms in the workings of government.

Given the above exposition, the study adopts the bureaucratic management theory in explaining the importance of applying established rules, regulations, and procedures guiding the process of recruiting personnel in the public sector. NPM helps to signpost the importance of efficiency in public sector service delivery. The new public management theory captures efficiency component of public sector.

Presentation of Results

Qualitative Data

Policy Instruments that Guide Recruitment Process into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria

Respondents identified policy instruments for recruitment into the civil service of Osun State, to include the Scheme of Service, Public Service Rules, Circulars and the Federal Character Principle. The former Head of Service of Osun

State captured the policy instruments thus

The policy instruments especially, the Scheme of Service,

spell out the conditions for each applicant before coming into the civil service and nobody can twist the terms for any reason whatsoever.

Corroborating the above position, a former Director with the Civil Service Commission, who is currently a Director with the Office of the Chief of Staff to the Governor, stated that: One of the policy instruments for recruitment into public sector in Osun state is the Scheme of Service. It guides all recruitments nobody can join the civil service of Osun State without meeting the conditions spelt out in the policy books, no matter whom you know.

Summarizing this, the retired Permanent Secretary of the Civil Service Commission of Osun

State, declared: Circulars are for specific urgent needs or reasons while the Scheme of Service is the key recruitment instrument for the Civil Service. Circulars complement the Scheme of Service, and reviewed from time to time with the provisions of the National Council on Establishment.

In terms of procedures for recruitment into the civil service of Osun State, there are steps to follow before a final appointment. As explained by the Coordinating Director of the Osun State Civil Service Commission, the steps are:

1. Identification of vacancies by different Ministries, Department and Agencies; (mdas) of government and collated by the Civil Service Commission;
2. Seeking the approval of the Governor to fill the vacancies via a memo;
3. Issuance of circular for recruitment;
4. Advertisement of vacancies to members of the public;
5. Screening of applicants based on the rules and regulations that guide the different posts applied for; and vi. Selection of successful candidates.

Speaking further on the steps highlighted above, the former Head of Service stated that the process is not as simple as it looks. In his words, he said:

You might think the processes of recruitment are simple but they are tedious because they involve huge human efforts and material to accomplish. It takes time to identify vacancies in different MDAs by the Civil Service Commission. It takes the will of not only the Governor, but also the bureaucrats.

The Gains or Otherwise of Policy Instruments used for Recruitment Process into the Civil Service of Osun State

We asked respondents to give their opinions about how effective the instruments have been or not in ensuring a meritorious recruitment process and selection of most qualified applicants. Speaking on the effectiveness of the various policy instruments in the Civil Service of Osun

State, the Coordinating Director and the current Director of the Department of Appointment, Promotions and Discipline in Osun State Civil Service Commission were unanimous in their response. They respectively noted that the instruments are very effective to select best brains. They noted that all entrants into the Civil Service are recruited based on qualifications for each position, as required in the Scheme of Service. The Coordinating Director further stated that requirements for all positions in the Civil Service are clearly stated and followed strictly too. This, according to him is an evident that the recruitment instruments are effective. Speaking further on the gains or otherwise of the various instruments, the former Head of Service noted that there are no better instruments as effective as the instruments. According to him, the instruments when adhered to strictly, as done during the 2013 recruitment exercise in Osun State, led to appointment of best candidates. His words:

During the recruitment exercise of 2013, I gave a directive to the Permanent Secretary of the Civil Service Commission at the time that there should not be a single candidate employed without having the basic requirement that suit such position. I gave copies of the Scheme of Service to the bureaucrats at the Commission for them to be conversant with qualification required for vacant positions.

Corroborating the above position, the retired Permanent Secretary of the Civil Service Commission, remarked that there was no way anybody could have been recruited without having the required qualification, because all applicants were subjected to the rules. He recalled how someone who scored a very high grade during the examination for the recruitment exercise in 2013 but could not secure a particular cadre because he did not possess the basic requirement for that cadre. He narrated the scenario thus:

A particular candidate had the highest score during the exercise, and did well during the interview but could not secure appointment into the Administrative Cadre because he did not possess a first degree in Social Sciences or Art discipline required for becoming an Administrative Officer. Despite pressure and pleas from various quarters, we could not place the candidate in the cadre but to another cadre that suits the qualifications he possessed.

The retired Permanent Secretary also gave credence to the effectiveness of the recruitment exercise. The Secretary of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Osun State chapter, was of the opinion that the rules are effective in ensuring a merit-based recruitment process. According to him, the rules are robust enough to ensure a good recruitment exercise but politicians can subvert them. While referring to the recruitment exercise of 2013 in Osun state, he noted that political interference was minimal or not seen because the then Head of Service, and permanent secretary of the Civil Service Commission, were thoroughbred administrators, and duly applied the rules. The Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Osun State chapter also aligned his position with that of his secretary that only political interference can affect the effectiveness of the various policy instruments used by the State.

Speaking on the effectiveness of the various policy instruments, a former Director with the Civil Service Commission remarked that there are disciplinary provisions in the Public Service Rules that checkmate subversion of the process. Therefore, there are reasons for obeying such rules and regulations. In his words, the former Director said:

The then Head of Service and Permanent Secretary always

remind us of the repercussions of not following the rules and regulations that guide the exercise we carried out... he will ask us to read out the penalties for various act of misconduct from the Public Service Rules and they include dismissal from the Civil Service.

Respondents were unanimous to identify human action rather than the application of the rules and regulations as perceived weakness of the recruitment instruments.

Factors that influence Recruitment Process into the Civil Service of Osun State

The respondents categorised the factors that influence recruitment process into two, which are internal and external factors. The internal factors include vacancies in the civil service and the willingness of the government to employ people. The Coordinating Director of the Civil Service Commission stated that the vacancies in the civil service determines the number of persons to recruit. The vacancies are results of retirements, deaths or voluntary exit from the civil service. In the view of the retired Permanent Secretary, depletion in the staff strength in the civil service through retirement, deaths, and so on determine the size of recruitment into the civil service.

The other internal factor is the desire of the government in power to recruit. The desire, according to them is borne out of the need to fulfil political promise, have legacies and at the same time reduce unemployment in the state. Buttressing this factor, the Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Osun State chapter, stated that the political class is always desirous of carrying out recruitment exercise in order to fulfill political campaign promises. In his words, the Chairman said you know politicians made many promises during campaigns...so when they gained power, they are under pressure to fulfill them. One of which is to employ people. We, as a labour movement always use the political promises to persuade the political class while pressuring them to recruit...Of course; it is also one of the ways of reducing high rate of unemployment and fulfil political debt.

The external factor, as stated by respondents, is the high rate of unemployment in the country. In order to reduce the burden of unemployment, government injects new hands into its public sector. The external factor is therefore due to the expectation by members of the public that government must recruit. Thus, the identification of unemployment as a factor for government recruitments affirms the finding of Okeke Uzodike and Subban (2015)^[32], that the public sector is widely regarded as the largest employer of labor, to ensure that all races, ethnicities, groups, and genders equitably represented.

Challenges of Public Sector Recruitment Process in Osun State

There was uniformity in the opinions of respondents on the challenges of recruitment process in Osun state. One of the major challenges is huge number applications received in respect of the very few vacancies (Odor, Martins-Emesom & Bakwuye, 2019)^[16]. The problem of no job in the country has made unemployment to be on the rise. While speaking on this challenge, the former Head of Service stated that the high rate of unemployment in the State made recruitment exercise to witness high number of participants. Supporting the above, the former Permanent Secretary of the Civil Service Commission, stated that the unemployment rate in the country always complicate recruitment process with

huge number of unemployed but unqualified candidates applying for positions. While referring to the 2013 exercise, he recalled that over 17,000 candidates applied for vacancies that were just a little over 7000.

Speaking on the same challenge of unemployment, but from a different perspective, the former Director in the Department of Appointment, Promotions and Discipline in Osun State Civil Service Commission, stated that unemployment in the country led to having many qualified applicants who successfully passed through all the recruiting stages with exceeding performances. This, according to him, created a huge challenge of who to pick among the available best candidates. To him, no matter the number of criteria put in place as a measure of assessment, there are always more applicants than the vacancies to fill.

Another challenge highlighted by respondents is political interference. Several scholars have identified political interference as a big obstruction (Onuigbo, 2021) ^[21]. This assertion is in consonance with the positions of the leaders of the Nigeria Labour Congress who was of the views that because of pressure, politicians due to the pressure of satisfying their political constituencies always influenced recruitment processes in favour of their preferred candidates. However, speaking with the former Head of Service, on the challenge of recruitment exercise carried out in 2013, asserted that political influence was very minimal during the exercise because of the strong political will of the then Governor, Ogbeni Aregbesola, who adhered to the principle of merit throughout the exercise. In his words, the former Head of Service said:

That exercise was devoid of political interference capable of compromising merit because the Governor told us to do the right thing according to the laid down rules. The assurance gave us the impetus to stick with merit throughout the exercise. This gave us the “gut” to withstand all pressures.

The retired Permanent Secretary also echoed the above position by stating that adherence to the laid down rules and processes adopted by the Civil Service Commission put him at loggerhead several times with the political class at the time. He said:

The State House of Assembly summoned me more than 27 times to answer questions bordering on various aspects of the recruitment. They raised questions on setting of cut off marks for the examination, the composition of the interview panels among others. We did not yield all their advances to make the process political. I always refer them to Mr. Governor who did not shift ground on his position for merit. Without prejudice to the above claims, all respondents agreed that we could not remove political interference from recruitment under any political regime. Speaking on this, the retired Permanent Secretary of the Civil Service Commission stated that we could not divorce political interference from public recruitment because the politicians are under pressure from their constituencies. Such pressure and the need to have a supportive political base make politicians to go extra mile to subvert recruitment exercise.

Quantitative Data

Table 2: Policy Instruments that Guide Recruitment Process into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria

| S. No. | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | U |
|--------|--|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | Osun State has established policies, procedures, and guidelines for the recruitment of civil servants. | 24 (23.8%) | 49 (48.5%) | 12(11.9%) | 9 (8.9%) | 7 (6.9%) |
| 2 | I am familiar with the guiding procedures for the recruitment of new civil servants in Osun State as at when I applied to join the civil service | 48 (47.5%) | 39 (38.6%) | 10 (9.9%) | - | 4 (4.0%) |
| 3 | The Osun State civil service is committed to upholding bureaucratic rules and procedures during your recruitment process into the civil service. | 51, (50.5%) | 18 (17.8%) | 15 (14.9%) | 10 (9.9%) | 7 (6.9%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 above indicate that 72.3% of the service providers agreed that the Civil Service has established policies, procedures, and guidelines for recruitment into the civil service. In addition, 86.1% of them attested that they are familiar with the guiding procedures for the recruitment of new civil servants while 68.3% concurred that upholding bureaucratic rules and procedures is one of the major policy instruments in recruiting to civil service.

The findings above showed that Osun State Civil Service

has policy instruments that pilot recruitment into the civil service in form of guidelines, rules and procedures. Majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of these procedures and rules as the point of applying into the civil service with 86.1% of respondents attesting to this fact. Similarly, 68.3% of respondents believed that bureaucratic rules and procedures for the process were essential before applying for the jobs.

Table 3: The Gains or Otherwise of Policy Instruments used for Recruitment Process into the Civil Service of Osun State.

| S. No. | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | U |
|--------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | The guiding procedures for recruitment into the civil service of Osun State are capable of attracting quality and competent personnel. | 39 (38.6%) | 49 (48.5%) | 10 (9.9%) | 3 (3%) | 3 (3%) |
| 2 | The Osun state civil service was committed to recruiting personnel based on competency during your recruitment processes to join the civil service | 12 (11.9%) | 69 (68.3%) | 9 (8.9%) | 4 (4.0%) | 7 (6.9%) |
| 3 | The Osun State civil service was committed to recruiting personnel and applicants irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, and political affiliation during your recruitment process to join the civil service | 15 (14.9%) | 28, (27.7) | 20 (19.8%) | 31 (30.7%) | 7 (6.9%) |
| 4 | The Osun State civil service recruitment process is transparent and devoid of political interference. | 28 (27.7) | 4 (4.0%) | 21 (20.8%) | 36 (35.6%) | 12 (11.9%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The findings from table 3 above indicated that 87.1% of respondents agreed that guiding procedures for recruitment

into the civil service of Osun State as contained in the policy instrument are capable of attracting quality and competent

personnel. In addition, 80.2% of the service providers also attested that Osun state civil service is committed to recruiting personnel based on competency. From the table 3 as well, 57.4% disagreed that Osun State civil service was committed to recruiting personnel and applicants irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, and political affiliation during your recruitment process to join the civil service while 42.6 agreed to this assertion leaving 6.9% as undecided respondents. Following this line, 56.4% of respondents disagreed that Osun State civil service recruitment process is transparent and devoid of political

interference. We can infer that there is almost a consensus that the policy instruments are indeed capable of attracting qualified and competent applicants. However, a larger percentage of respondents questioned the commitment of the civil service to recruitment while also disagreeing that the recruitment process is transparent and devoid of political interference. The implication of this is that while the policy instruments might be effective and efficient, the process of recruitment is not bringing out the effectiveness especially with respect to prevention of political interference.

Table 4: The Influence of Recruitment Process on Service Delivery of the Civil Service in Osun State

| S. No. | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | U |
|--------|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|
| 1 | The recruitment of employees through merit leads to efficient performance of Osun State civil service | 39 (38.6%) | 51 (50.5%) | 11 (10.9%) | - | - |
| 2 | Recruitment procedures of the Osun State Government are unbiased because they ensure the employment of the best employees in the services | 27 (26.7%) | 49 (48.5%) | 17 (16.8%) | - | 8 (7.9%) |
| 3 | Service delivery of the civil service in Osun State is a function of the employees recruited by the Civil Service Commission | 26 (25.7%) | 37 (36.6%) | 21(20.8%) | 9 (8.9%) | 8 (7.9%) |
| 4 | Service delivery has been Improved because of State’s openness in its recruitment process | 35 (34.7%) | 26 (25.7%) | 26 (25.7%) | 14 (13.9%) | - |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 above showed that 89.1% service providers agreed that recruitment of employees through merit leads to efficient performance of the civil service; 75.2% of them affirmed that recruitment procedures of the Osun State Government are unbiased because it ensured that the employment of the best employees in the services. Furthermore, 62.3% agreed that service delivery of the civil service in Osun State is a function of the employees recruited by the Civil Service Commission and 60.4% agreed that State’s openness in its recruitment process has improved service delivery tremendously. The above views of respondents established a positive link between recruitment process and the quality of personnel as well as the link between recruitment process and service delivery outcomes of the recruited persons. From the data shown above, 89.1% established a positive relationship between merits-based recruitment exercise and efficient service delivery in the civil service. Similarly, 75.2% of respondents linked the good performance of the personnel in Osun State to the unbiased recruitment procedure that brought them in.

We can deduce that 60.4% of respondents agreed that the improvement in service delivery of the Osun State civil service is attributed the good service delivery to the State’s openness in its recruitment process.

Service Beneficiaries Perception of Service Delivery of Osun State Civil Service

Data presented above are from the responses of service providers, who are civil servants, and joined the public service between 2010 and 2018 specifically, in 2013. Given their views especially with respect to service delivery and performance, it is important to present the views of those clusters of service users who are accessing the services rendered by the civil servants who joined the public service under the period covered by this study. We used some selected performance indicators such as accessibility, punctuality, accountability, responsiveness and so to assess the perception of service beneficiaries as presented below:

Table 5: Perception of Service Delivery of Osun State Civil Service by Service Users

| S. No. | Questions | SA | A | D | SD | U |
|--------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Civil servants are easily available and accessible to perform their duties to beneficiaries | 43 (33.1%) | 68 (52.3%) | 9 (6.9%) | 3 (2.3%) | 7 (5.4%) |
| 2 | Civil servants simplify processes of carrying out their functions for beneficiaries | 24 (18.5%) | 89 (68.5%) | 3 (2.3%) | 3 (2.3%) | 11 (8.5%) |
| 3 | Civil servants are always punctual in their duty posts to discharge their duties | 37 (28.5%) | 64 (49.2) | 11 (8.5%) | 11 (8.5%) | 7 (5.4%) |
| 4 | Civil servants display high knowledge and technical ability of their expertise in the discharge of duties | 52 (40.0%) | 52 (40.0%) | 12 (9.2%) | 2 (1.5%) | 12 (9.2%) |
| 5 | Civil servants display a high level of accountability for their actions while discharging their duties | 58 (44.6%) | 39 (30.0%) | 8 (6.2%) | 18 (13.8%) | 7 (5.4%) |
| 6 | Civil servants are friendly and courteous while carrying out their duties | 40 (30.8%) | 68 (52.3%) | 10 (7.7%) | 2 (1.5%) | 10 (7.7%) |
| 7 | Civil servants are very empathetic in the discharge of their duties. | 23 (17.7%) | 74 (56.9%) | 9 (6.9%) | 6 (4.6%) | 18 (13.8%) |
| 8 | Civil servants are very responsive to the needs of clients in the discharge of their duties | 30 (23.1%) | 66 (50.8%) | 11 (8.5%) | 10 (7.7%) | 13 (10.0%) |
| 9 | Civil servants usually display a positive attitude while responding to the complaints of service users. | 39 (30.0%) | 62 (47.7%) | 8 (6.2%) | 5 (3.8%) | 16 (12.3%) |
| 10 | Civil servants are caring and even go the extra mile to resolve customers’ complaints. | 28 (21.5%) | 53 (40.8%) | 19 (14.6%) | 10 (7.7%) | 20 (15.4%) |
| 11 | Service delivery of the civil service in Osun State is a function of the employees recruited by the Civil Service Commission | 70 (53.8%) | 44 (33.8%) | 7 (5.4%) | 4 (3.1%) | 5 (3.8%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 above showed that there is a general positive perception and assessment of the service delivery outcomes of the civil service of Osun State using the various indicators as shown above. The indicators we used are availability, and accessibility of civil servants, simplicity in discharging responsibilities, punctuality, display of high knowledge and technical ability. Others are display of a high level of accountability, friendliness and courteousness, empathy, responsiveness to the needs of clients, display of a positive attitude while responding to the complaints of

service users, showing care and going extra mile to resolve customers' complaints. The least ranked indicator in terms of positive review that civil servants are caring and can go extra mile to resolve customers' complaints with 62.3% of respondents agreeing to this. From the above perception index of the services rendered by the civil servants recruited 2013, we can deduce that their level of service delivery has been impressive.

Quantitative Data

Table 6: Chi-square test on the Association between Recruitment Process and Service Delivery Outcomes in the Civil Service of Osun State

| The recruitment of employees through merit leads to efficient performance of Osun State civil service | | Service delivery of the civil service in Osun State is a function of the employees recruited by the Civil Service Commission | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| | | Agree | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Total | X ² |
| | N | 0 _b | 0 _b | 0 _b | 0 _b | 0 _b | 27 | 0.000 |
| | % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 20.8% | |
| Agree | N | 19 _b | 9 _b | 8 _b | 6 _b | 0 _{a, b} | 42 | |
| | % | 43.2% | 47.4% | 34.8% | 66.7% | 0.0% | 32.3% | |
| Disagree | N | 1 _a | 0 _a | 1 _a | 0 _a | 1 _a | 3 | |
| | % | 2.3% | 0.0% | 4.3% | 0.0% | 12.5% | 2.3% | |
| Neutral | N | 2 _a | 2 _a | 1 _a | 0 _a | 0 _a | 5 | |
| | % | 4.5% | 10.5% | 4.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 3.8% | |
| Strongly agree | N | 22 _b | 8 _b | 13 _b | 3 _b | 2 _{a, b} | 48 | |
| | % | 50.0% | 42.1% | 56.5% | 33.3% | 25.0% | 36.9% | |
| Strongly disagree | N | 0 _a | 0 _a | 0 _a | 0 _{a, b} | 5 _b | 5 | |
| | % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 62.5% | 3.8% | |
| Total | N | 44 | 44 | 19 | 23 | 9 | 8 | |
| | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Decision rule

Accept null hypothesis if p value is greater than 0.05 otherwise reject. Accept alternate hypothesis if the p value is less than 0.05 otherwise reject

The result showed that the P value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05, so we accept alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, which means that unbiased recruitment has significant effect on service delivery of the civil service in Osun state, Nigeria.

Table 7: Chi-square test on the association between recruiting the best employees due to unbiased procedures and service delivery outcomes in the civil service of Osun State

| Recruitment procedures of the Osun State Government are impartial because they ensure the employment of the best employees in the services | | Service delivery has been improved because of state's openness in its recruitment process | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| | | Agree | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Total | X ² |
| | N | 10 | 1 | 1 | 15 _a | 0 _a | 27 | 0.015 |
| | % | 22.7% | 14.3% | 20.0% | 21.4% | 0.0% | 20.8% | |
| Agree | N | 18 | 2 | 0 | 27 _a | 1 _a | 48 | |
| | % | 40.9% | 28.6% | 0.0% | 38.6% | 25.0% | 36.9% | |
| Disagree | N | 7 | 0 | 0 | 11 _a | 0 _a | 18 | |
| | % | 15.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 15.7% | 0.0% | 13.8% | |
| Neutral | N | 3 | 1 | 3 | 10 _{a, b} | 1 _{a, b} | 18 | |
| | % | 6.8% | 14.3% | 60.0% | 14.3% | 25.0% | 13.8% | |
| Strongly agree | N | 6 | 3 | 0 | 4 _b | 2 _{a, c} | 15 | |
| | % | 13.6% | 42.9% | 0.0% | 5.7% | 50.0% | 11.5% | |
| Strongly disagree | N | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 _{a, b} | 0 _{a, b} | 4 | |
| | % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 20.0% | 4.3% | 0.0% | 3.1% | |
| Total | N | 44 | 7 | 5 | 70 | 4 | 130 | |
| | % | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Decision rule

1. Accept null hypothesis if p value is greater than 0.05 otherwise reject
2. Accept alternate hypothesis if the p value is less than 0.05 otherwise reject

For the second assumption the p value is 0.015 which is less than 0.05, so, we accept alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis which means that impartial recruitment process does attract qualified personnel into the civil service of Osun state, Nigeria.

Discussion

As presented above, the objectives and assumptions of the study were tested and analysed based on data collected from the interviews as well as the sets of questionnaires administered to the purposively sampled service providers and service users. It is therefore important to discuss these findings to confirm or refute the study's working assumptions.

Looking at the first objective, it is evident from the analysis of data that there were policy instruments used for recruitment exercise into the civil service of Osun State.

This discovery gives credence to the position of Van der Westhuizen (2005) ^[30] that recruitment policy has established broad principles on how a public-sector institution should handle recruitment. The above position also aligns with that of Ukeje, Ndukwe, Emma, Ogbulu and Onele (2020) ^[33] that there are guidelines that explain the process of attracting people who possess the qualifications required by job openings. Responses from experts, who are serving and retired op bureaucrats recognized the instruments to include the Scheme of Service, Public Service Rules, the federal character principles. The availability of the instruments was also in conformity with the quantitative data available with 72.3% of service providers agreeing that the Civil Service has established policies, procedures, and guidelines for recruitment into the civil service. The Scheme of Service is a 469-page document that contains all positions in the public service with specific detailed qualification for each position. The scheme of service also has detailed description of career progression within the public service, and state the qualifications for each rank along a career progression. While the Scheme of Service concerned itself with the qualifications needed to join the civil service, the Osun State Public Service Rule (PSR) deals with every facet of the civil service. It guides the general conducts of the entire public service structure. The process as stated in the PSR involves all applicants filling out a designated form while the Civil Service Commission process and shortlist applicants for the examination as prescribed by the rule. The content of the form and examination constitute scrutinized processes that lead to the invitation of applicants for interview or appointment.

On the second objective, which investigates the gains or otherwise of the policy instruments used for recruitment process into the Civil Service and their influence on service delivery outcomes in Osun State. We can infer that there are gains for the recruitment instruments used in the civil service of Osun State. The unanimity on the effectiveness of the instruments by respondents is of particular interest here as it shows that adhering to the rules give no room to manipulation of the recruitment exercises. In addition, the fact that the scheme of service is a detailed document with respect to qualifications required of every position within the civil service makes it difficult to give jobs to candidates with wrong or inappropriate qualification. Another area to confirm the effectiveness of the instruments is the provisions of disciplinary measures on any erring civil servant. As noted by Awodele-Fayomi (2015) ^[5], once there is violation of any of the rules or code of conduct on any public official with evidence, higher authority will take disciplinary steps against such an official with the aim of imposing the prescribed punishment. The entire chapter three of the Osun State Public Service Rules has detailed penalties to various offenses within the civil service. The provisions are capable of preventing abuse of the process. Considering the effectiveness of the instruments used for recruitment vis-à-vis their impacts on service delivery in the civil service, we can deduce that the recruitment instruments are effective and capable of attracting qualified, competent and best candidates, which invariably improve service delivery outcomes of the civil service. This finding contradicts the position of Bakare *et al.* (2020) ^[6] who earlier noted that the civil service of Osun State was full of unqualified persons. Relying on the quantitative data on the perception of the relationship between recruitment process

and service delivery by both the service providers and users, it was discovered that users acknowledged the high quality of services rendered by those recruited in 2013. This admission by the service users is a confirmation of the position of the Permanent Secretary that carried out the exercise in 2013 that the civil service of that time is now transforming the image of the civil service through efficient delivery of services.

On the third objective, which is to examine the factors that influence recruitment process into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that the major factors that influenced recruitment into the civil service of Osun are the availability of vacancies and the political decision of government in power. Vacancies as supported with the views of Osoian and Zaharie (2014) ^[23], who are of the opinion that the need to fill vacancies in an organisation with the required skills calls for of employment from a pool of applicants that possess the needed skills and qualifications. In similar vein, Agbionu (2015) ^[2] supported the above position by seeing recruitment as the process of identifying and selecting the most qualified candidates to fill vacancies in an organisation out of a large supply of applicants who indicates interest to fill such vacancies. We can infer therefore that recruitment is to fill vacancies in public sector. In addition, the number of vacancies influences the recruitment process. Making inference to position of the Former Head of Service of Osun, who noted, “the limited number of vacancies, especially in some cadres made the process more stringent so as to get the best among the candidates. Hence, vacancy is a major factor that influences the recruitment process”. Closely related to this factor is the high rate of unemployment in the country. In the words of Berhe (2021) ^[7], approximately one fifth of all young people in the globe are not in any employment. This global scenario is reminiscent to Nigeria’s situation as reported by Adenike (2021) ^[1] that the unprecedented rate of unemployment in the country presently. The high rate of unemployment has put pressure on government at various levels to consider recruitment to reduce the menace. This pressure ultimately influences political decisions to embark on recruitment exercise by governments in power (Nwekeaku & Obiorah, 2019) ^[15].

The last objective was to discuss the challenges of public sector recruitment process in Osun State. The major challenge of recruitment exercise in the civil service is the high rate of unemployment in the country, which has led to having a huge number of applicants looking for jobs. This position is captured in the report of KPMG’s Global Economic Outlook (2023) ^[12], which note that due to low private sector investment, low industrialization, and slow economic growth, as well as the economy's inability to accommodate the 4-5 million new workers entering the Nigerian labor market annually, unemployment is predicted to remain a significant challenge in 2023. Therefore, unemployment is one of the fundamental developmental challenges facing Nigeria and has increased the pool of applicants both those qualified and unqualified looking for jobs. Another challenge identified by the respondents is political interference. Political Interference, according to Edino *et al.* (2021) ^[10], connotes a scenario in which politicians manipulate, influence, and, in most cases, alters bureaucratic decisions for political purposes. This position aligned with the views of Omisore and Okofu (2014) ^[20], who noted that one of the major impediments to efficient public service recruitment is the age-long phenomenon of

political interference. Political interference majorly occurs at the final selection stage, as the most important stage where political supporters take job slots as compensation for their support. Most of the respondents agreed that we could not remove political interference fully from recruitment exercise because of pressures from political leaders and godfathers to boost their goodwill in their various constituencies. Such pressures make the political class to jettison merit for political consideration during recruitment exercise. However, referring to the 2013 recruitment exercise in Osun State, the bureaucrats in charge of the process were able to withstand and reduce such influence owing to the disposition of the then Governor who upheld merit throughout the process.

Validation of Working Assumptions

Three assumptions guide this study and are

1. Unbiased recruitment process has no effect on service delivery of the Civil Service in Osun State, Nigeria
2. Impartial recruitment process does not attract qualified personnel into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria
3. Several factors account for a compromised recruitment process into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria

From the presentation and analysis of data, findings of this study have invalidated the first working assumption. Findings revealed that recruitment of employees through merit leads to efficient performance of the civil service. 89.1% of service providers as respondents established a positive relationship between merits-based recruitment exercise and efficient service delivery in the civil service of Osun State. This is in consonance with the chi-square test of association as presented in table 6 above. It is also important to refer to the perception of service rendered by the civil servants recruited in 2013, which indicated a general positive perception and assessment of the service delivery outcomes of the civil service of Osun State using the various indicators. The positive perception is an affirmation of the position of the respondents from the interview that those recruited at the time were products of a thoroughbred and that they are the shining light of the civil service of Osun State at their various posts. Premised on this analysis, it is appropriate to say unbiased recruitment process has positive effects on service delivery of the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria. We therefore invalidate or reject this assumption.

For the second working assumption of the study, data obtained revealed impartial recruitment process attract qualified personnel into the Civil Service of Osun State. 75.2% of recruited civil servants who were respondents affirmed that the civil service of Osun State attracted the best candidates owing to the impartial recruitment. This position agrees with the chi-square test of association as presented in table 7 above. The performance on the job as testified by majority of the service users, showed the technical expertise and mastery of the knowledge required for the duties. All these pointed to the fact that impartial recruitment process attracts qualified personnel into the Civil Service of Osun State, Nigeria. We therefore reject this assumption.

On the third assumption, the findings revealed that there are factors that account for a compromised recruitment process into the Civil Service. Such factors, as revealed by the findings of this study are number of vacancies, political will, unemployment rate, and political interference. Although,

these factors largely compromise recruitment it did not influence Osun State's recruitment exercise of 2013 except availability of vacancies and the decision of the state government to recruit. The political will of the Governor of the State at the time as well as the conviction of the bureaucrats in charge of the exercise prevented other factors to influence the exercise. Given the admissibility of these factors as capable of compromising recruitment exercise in the civil service, we accept this assumption.

Recommendations

It is necessary to reduce the length of civil service recruitment process. Public recruitment process is too long. The government through the Civil Service Commission should adjust the time allotted to the process. The excessively long period of recruitment exercise is capable of making more qualified and competent candidates to lose interest in the civil service or opt for private sectors who always look for the best available candidates without unduly making the process long.

The civil service should develop a standard evaluative mechanism that will be useful in assessing candidates, especially after writing examinations. Most people lose interest in the civil service recruitment process because of absence of known evaluative mechanism used in selecting successful candidates. Having standardized evaluation mechanisms would erase reservations and suspicion of political interference by candidates and bring about credibility and integrity into the process of public recruitment.

The Civil Service Commission should employ more innovative technology in its recruitment process, especially at the application stage. The application should contain requirements and qualifications for various positions. This strategy will not only cut out unqualified applicants but also ensure the pools of applicants available for examinations are qualified. It will end up making the recruitment process faster and smooth.

There should be renewed efforts to reduce political interference in the recruitment process. Reducing this menace will ensure a merit-based process and allow best and qualified applicants to get the jobs. Bureaucrats should be with relevant rules as contained in the various policy books. This will help to lay bare the processes.

There should be creation and adoption of more vocational skill-based recruitment schemes by government at all levels. The creation of these schemes will reduce the unemployment rate in the State thereby reducing the number of unqualified applicants for the limited available civil service vacancies.

There should be regular training of civil servant to update their skills and capabilities. In line with international best practices, civil servants and bureaucrats require on the job training and retraining regularly. This will have positive effects on the service delivery of the civil service serve as motivation for the workers to devote their time and energy to their duties, and boost the image of the civil service.

Conclusion

There is a noticeable difference between perception by members of the public on the recruitment process and actual practice into the civil service of Osun state, Nigeria. There is a wide gap in the perception by members of the public as regards 2013 recruitment exercise in Osun state and what was actually in practice. The perception by members of the

public was that political connections override recruitment process thereby giving room to recruitment of incompetent candidates but do not apply in this case. Service delivery will be optimal when competent persons secure jobs through an unbiased process, which is possible when the political class does not compromise the recruitment process.

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