

A HOLISTIC ENDOGENOUS EXPLANATION FOR THE EXOGENOUS PLAGUING FACTORS IN NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Prof. Kelly-Bryan Ovie Ejumudo, PhD
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

ejumudo.kelly-bryan@dou.edu.ng

Abstract: This study examines the exogenous factor that holistically explains the exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data supported by relevant empirical studies. The study employed the Integrated Endogenous Governance Failure Theory that provided composite lens for analytically explaining foundational role of the singular endogenous factor self that has persistently propelled and engineered the sundry factors: leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership conspiracy or complicity that have plagued public service delivery in Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed that leadership failure and management malady in the public service in Nigeria is institutional, structural, administrative, and behavioural with multiple effects on governance, institutional growth, development and renewal. The findings of the study also unveiled that corruption has removed funds and diverted same from priority service delivery in sectors like health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, defence and pushed same into private pockets or inefficient projects thereby worsening outcomes and increasing unit costs of service delivery. Essentially too, the findings of the study showed that followership conspiracy or complicity manifest in Nigeria's public service through patronage networks and compliance with patron-client demands in areas like employment, promotions, training, performance appraisal and contract awards that reward loyalty over merit, moral disengagement in which government officials justify and rationalise funds diversion, nepotism, budget padding and other survival tactics as normal. The findings of this study equally revealed that it is the singular endogenous factor called self that provides propelling force to the endogenous factors such as management malady, leadership failure, corruption and followership conspiracy. The study recommended among others that the Nigerian society should undergo resetting, remoulding and rebuilding because Nigeria's public service does not only reside, operate and function within it; it is also a product and reflection of the macro or larger society, Nigeria's public service should imbibe and integrate principles of efficiency and cost-effectiveness that focuses on minimizing waste, optimizing resource use, and achieving value for money; performance measurement and results-based management that emphasizes the adoption and deployment of lucid measurable performance indicators, targets, acceptable turn-around time for service delivery

Keywords: *Endogenous Explanation, Exogenous Plaguing Factors, Nigeria's Public Service*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's public service which predated its independence status was established to support the development and implementation of government policies. During the colonial era (1861–1960), the British government established a formal public service expectedly aimed at facilitating colonial administration. The British annexation of Lagos in 1861 actually signaled the introduction of a public

service structure modeled after the British system (Tamuno, 1972; Madubochi, 2024). At independence, the public service which was entrenched in the Nigerian constitution was meant to perform different functions including appointments, promotion, discipline and the broad organization of government business in several sectors of the neo-colonial economy. Due to the critical roles of the public service

vis-à-vis the growing demands of governance as well as sustainable development, several reforms have been initiated and implemented supposedly to cope with the dynamics of social change through revitalization, re-invention, re-engineering, renewal and transformation. Arguably, the public service has achieved some measure of success and experienced some level of failure. Despite the indispensability of the public service as the pivot upon which effective governmental processes, operations and performance revolve and the plethora of reforms, the public service has been plagued with multi-faceted problems that seem to have prolonged. To this end, several authors have attributed the myriad of problems to multiplicity of factors. Chikeleze & Orji (2021), for example, found that political interference and politicized appointments in the Nigeria's public service has resulted in inefficiency, ineffectiveness, corruption, and loss of accountability.

Dosunmu & Lamidi (2021) also argued that politics distorts recruitment and selection in the public service, with negative implications for productivity and service quality. Similarly, Ibeh & Onwuzuruike (2025) stressed that politicization of workers' performance has significantly undermined merit-based promotions resulting in demotivation of staff and degradation of service delivery in the Nigeria's public sector. Besides, Ezeani (2006) emphasized that senior public servants have always collided with the political elite to loot the national treasury. Asiodu (1979) also noted that the level of corruption in the public service was exposed by the 1975 purge in which 11,000 public servants, the majority being civil servants, including super Permanent Secretaries, were either dismissed or retired. According to Adebayo (2019), religion has largely influenced the public service and decision-making processes by public servants in Nigeria. He added that religious affiliation has generated biases that seem to undermine the principles of neutrality and equity in public sector governance. Similarly, Oladimeji (2020) stressed that public service in Nigeria is often plagued by religious

favouritism such that appointments and promotions, participation in training and development programs, contract awards and execution are influenced by religious connection instead of merit. However, religion has not been the real problem; rather, the politicization of religion is the actual problematic issue in Nigeria's public service Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Nwosu (1977) equally posited that, ethnicity has not only become a yardstick for employment and disengagement in Nigeria's public service, family, local, ethnic and other primordial ties and loyalties sometimes take precedence over merit and competence in the public service. Training and promotion of workers are also largely influenced by ethnic consideration at the expense of merit. Patron-client relationship exists in Nigeria's public service and it has negatively affected its capacity to be innovative, goal setting and problem solving. This rather unchanging and unending negative trend has culminated in glaring lack of qualified personnel. Although they have little or no experience about the job, they choose to do it due to the search for greener pastures. A concomitant effect of ethnicity-based employment has largely contributed to the negative attitude to work among public servants who often see their job as government job which does not require any seriousness (Ejumudo, 2014b). With inadequate training, the public service has, to a large extent, produced a crop of lack-lustre and inefficient human capital. In a similar vein, the nature of political competition in Nigeria is such that Nigeria's public service has been transformed into the theatre for sharing the 'national cake' among the major ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, a factor responsible for the unending demand for fragmentation of governmental structure. The situation is worsened by the public perception of the public service as an amoral realm that is to be plundered to sustain individual survival or the survival of a community, ethnic or other primordial grouping (Olowu, 1997).

Scholars like Nnoli (1978), Adebayo (2004), and Ezeani (2006) contend that the decline in Nigeria's bureaucratic effectiveness is deeply rooted in leadership inadequacies at various levels of public governance. Corruption is and rent-seeking, while Igbuzor (2013) linked the mismanagement of funds to weak leadership accountability structures. Adamolekun (2002) asserted that political interference has weakened the autonomy and professionalism of public institutions and Ejumudo (2013) identified leadership failure as the root of the persistent decay in service quality. Other scholars opined that the root of management malady in Nigeria's public service is traceable to the colonial administrative structures inherited at independence in 1960. While Adamolekun, (2002) noted that the colonial system emphasized order and compliance, it was not designed for inclusive governance or socio-economic development, Ezeani (2006) pointed out that post-independence successive governments expanded the public service, but reforms often failed due to management malady political interference and lack of continuity.

The contention of this study however, is that the above exogenous factors are not the real primary matter as far as the problematic of Nigeria's public service is concerned. Rather, the endogenous root cause of the persistent and intractable problem of the public service in Nigeria is self. This self is the endogenous internal nature or innate factor that propels and reinforces the exogenous, external and nurture factors that receive strength and force from the real plague or spoiler. Every human element has self, but it is the amount of self as well as the will and capacity to manage and control the self-tendency that determines the direction, strength, height and level of the exogenous or external factors such politics, elitism, religion, ethnicity, corruption, leadership failure, management malady and followership conspiracy that seems to have negatively impacted on and constrained Nigeria's public service in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, performance and quality.

perhaps the most notorious consequence of leadership failure. This explains why Ezeani (2006) emphasized that the public service has become a site of massive looting

Statement of the Problem

From its colonial origin to its neo-colonial journey, the public service in Nigeria has achieved success and encountered failures. It has served as an engine room for policy formulation in an advisory parlance and policy execution. It has also been the wheel within the wheel as far as the running of governmental affairs and the administration of government business is concerned. As Kaufman (1988) rightly noted, the public service bureaucracy is to execute or implement policy decisions and coordinate government activities in order to achieve some common purpose. They therefore close the gap between statements of intention as typified by national development plans and their actual accomplishment. In this regard, the public service bureaucratic machine has fairly guided the political public servants in steering the ship of the Nigerian state and accomplishing the tasks and responsibilities of government at the multi-layered levels so as to achieve both short and long term goals of governance.

Despite the central role of the public service in policy formulation and execution, the coordination of government activities and operations as well as the administration of government business and programmes for socio-economic development on a sustainable basis and sundry reforms initiated and implemented supposedly to cope with the dynamics of social change through revitalization, re-invention, re-engineering, renewal and transformation, senior public servants have engaged in grand conspiracy and collaboration with the governing political elite with the aim of plundering the national treasury (Ezeani, 2006). The 1975 purge in Nigeria's public service involving several super permanent secretaries is in synchrony with the above assertion. Igbakpa, Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2023) investigated the impact of corruption on the efficacy of the oversight

functions of the lower chamber of the national assembly and the study emphasized that in spite of the utilitarian value of legislative oversight as an institutionalised mechanism for checkmating the excesses of the executive arm of government, many legislators in Nigeria have not acted above board in the discharge of their legislative oversight responsibilities. The level of corruption has also been linked to the weak public service institutional environment and structure.

Nwosu (1977) also stressed that the recruitment, selection, training and promotion of employees in the public service is largely based on extra-organisational considerations including ethnicity, religion, politics and top governmental connection instead of competence and merit. The above entrenched culture has contributed to the unfavourable climate of god-fatherism, indiscipline, poor innovation and general laxity that are detrimental to the efficiency, effectiveness, growth and development of the public service in Nigeria. Olowu (1997) also observed that the politicisation of the public service in an environment of high political stability has led to wastage of personnel and a weakened role of the public service in the development process. Ejumudo (2014a) in a related study on pay reward system management and staff performance in Nigeria, stressed that there is disconnection between the pay reward system in the public service and the central guiding principles of fairness, cost of living, moderation as well as the in-grained culture of poor performance and the dysfunctional employee mode of entry. The study also revealed that merit-based employee entry practice is nearly a rarity in Nigeria's public service largely because of the focus on ethnicity, nepotism, politics and top government connection when hiring both experienced and inexperienced human capital. The study further stressed that employees engaged into the public service through the window (figuratively) have the tendency and potency of becoming rotten apple and mismatch as far as organizational processes and good attainment is concerned.

Essentially too, Okotoni & Adebayo (2003) noted that management malady that is a reflection of poor leadership, weak institutional culture; lack of accountability, bureaucratic red-tape, corruption, inadequate training, and resistance to innovation has largely undermined organizational effectiveness, while Olaopa (2014) asserted that the public service in Nigeria, despite being staffed with seemingly highly qualified individuals in some cases, often struggles with productivity due to weak institutional frameworks and entrenched systemic problems. Ejumudo, Adogbeji, Ejeba and Ejumudo (2025) equally posited that the dynamics of leadership, followership, and their impact on national development present critical challenges in Nigeria. The study also stressed that the followership in Nigeria is largely docile and complicit and the rather unchanging development has constrained their capacity to check and limit the excesses of corrupt and manipulative leaders.

All the same, this study which seeks and provides an endogenous explanation for the sundry exogenous factors that have plagued the public service in Nigeria in a cross-cutting manner and fashion with consequential effects on efficiency, effectiveness, performance and quality service delivery, argues that the pathological factors like politics, elitism, ethnicity, religion, leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity are an outgrowth of self or self-interest that is the real motivator behind the above exogenous or external plaguing factors in the public service in Nigeria. It is further argued that the foundational source or enabler of all the exogenous plaguing problems in Nigeria's public service is the centre of the centre, while the afore-mentioned external problems are periphery of the centre, centre of the periphery and periphery of the periphery. This is the gap that the study sought to fill.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

Assess the impact of leadership failure, management malady, corruption and

followership complicity in Nigeria's public service delivery.

Explain the endogenous factor (self) responsible for the above exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service delivery.

Research Questions

Does leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity have any significant impact in Nigeria's public service delivery?

Does the endogenous factor (self) explain the exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service?

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Public and Service

The term public is multifaceted and encompasses various meanings. Coined from the Greek word *Koinion*, it conveys the idea of people or community as a whole. It was derived from the Roman term *res publica* meaning public as against *res priva* meaning private. In the governmental parlance, the word public which relates to governance can be traced to the ancient civilization in Greece which refers to the collective body of citizens who participated in the governance process. Here, public is suggestive of public affairs that was used to describe state matters that were collectively controlled and managed. The word service on the hand refers to acts of assistance, support, or work aimed at fulfilling needs, meeting expectations, satisfying aspirations or providing value. It also involves activities for which consumers, organisations and multi-layered levels of government are willing to pay (McConnell and Campbell, 2019). Service covers work done by barbers, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, banks, insurance companies, and so on. Service equally means intangible acts or performances whereby the service provider provides value to the customer.

The Notion of Public Service

The idea of public service has to do with government or community-driven efforts that seek to provide essential facilities or support to the population. In the governmental

parlance, service refers to those things such as healthcare services, public utilities provided by the government so as to enhance the quality of life for all citizens. Historically, the notion of governmental service started prominently during the Industrial Revolution and in the wake of the welfare state. During this period, rulers provided limited services like law enforcement and defence. Later, the scope expanded to include education, healthcare, and social welfare. Such services such as public education, healthcare and policing could be delivered directly to citizens by governmental bodies or delivered indirectly by the government through subsidies or partnerships with private organizations like housing programs managed via private developers.

Government service is universalistic because it is designed to be accessible to all citizens, irrespective of social or economic status; equitable since it is expected to reduce disparities and ensure fairness and sustainable to the extent that it is developed with long-term societal needs in mind. Government service can be delivered centrally and directly by national government bodies; indirectly or in the decentralized manner as in the case local governments deliver services tailored to community needs or through collaborative efforts between governments and private organizations. On the whole, government service can be protective by ensuring the safety and security of citizens; social by promoting social equity and welfare or regulatory through the enforcement of laws and standards including inspections in order to protect citizens.

Understanding the Civil and Public Service

It is important to present a clear understanding of the civil service before proceeding to the concept of the public service. This is absolutely necessary because of the tendency to see and accept both terms as synonyms, whereas, in the actual sense, the public service is a broader concept that encapsulates the civil service and other governmental organizations outside the

umbrella of the civil service. In fact, while the civil service is homogenous in structure, salary grading and nomenclature, the public service (the civil service plus all other governmental organizations) is heterogeneous with differentials in structure, salary grading system and nomenclature. For instance, all ministries at the federal and state levels which constitute the main or central framework of the civil service are almost homogenous with little salary differentials, but the public service in the context of other governmental organizations outside the civil service significantly differ from one another. A typical example is the structure, salary grading system, nomenclature and years of service for retirement in state and federal Universities vis-à-vis those in the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and significant others. Worthy of note is the retirement age of 70 years for professors and 65 years for Associate Professors and non-teaching staff in Universities as opposed to 60 years or 35 years of service for retirement in the civil service.

Specifically, civil service refers to the professional, non-political human capital employed by a government to execute its policies, administer public programs, and deliver essential services to the population (Ejumudo, 2015). These individuals are typically employed on merit-based principles rather than political affiliation and form the backbone of public administration in a country. It is equally a professional body of officials, permanent, paid skills that can be distinguished from politicians who are elected on the basis of political affiliation for a short tenure. Civil service is also viewed as a term employed to cover those public servants who are direct employees of the federal and state governments, other than the police, the armed forces personnel, the judicial personnel and teachers (Obiajulu and Obi, 2004). Adamolekun (1983) also defined the civil service as the body of permanent officials

appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing government policies. Its usage excludes also employees of statutory corporations and boards (Nwosu 1977).

The civil service is usually characterized by professionalism which implies trained professionals committed to serving the public and implementing government policies impartially, permanence which connotes civil servants with long-term or permanent positions aimed at ensuring continuity in governance, neutrality that presupposes civil servants that are politically neutral and are ready to serve governments of any political affiliation with equal commitment and support, accountability which shows indirect accountability to the public and direct accountability to elected officials and administrative systems as well as meritocracy that ensures recruitment, selection and promotion systems are based on qualifications, skills, knowledge and performance rather than nepotism or political connections. The civil service functions as the operational arm of the government, translating policies into action plans. Generally, it is concerned with policy advisory role through the provision of expert advice to ministers, commissioners and elected officials so as to effectively formulate policies, policy execution through the implementation of laws, policies, and programs formulated by the legislature and the executive arms of government.

Public service on the other hand, refers to a body of all government officials at the multi-layered levels (local, state and federal) whether engaged in a permanent capacity, elected or appointed for a specific short tenure. In this light, it involves all regular employees in the civil service comprising of government ministries and departments and all other government workers in other government-owned agencies, corporations and establishments. This includes all elected and appointed government officials in the legislature and executive, employees in the judiciary, armed forces, the police, immigration, customs and educational

institutions like Universities as well as financial and other institutions such as the Central Bank, Bank of Industry, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). It also refers to services, activities, or functions undertaken by the government, or by entities authorized by the government, to provide essential goods, support, or assistance to the population. The goal of public service is to promote social welfare, enhance quality of life, and address collective societal needs. Public services are typically funded by public resources such as taxes and are characterized by universal accessibility, inclusivity, and a focus on social equity over profit. The central objective of the public service is to meet societal needs, ensure public welfare, uphold the rights of citizens and prioritizes the common good over individual profit or gain. They are usually funded through public resources such as taxes, grants, or international aid and their services are often offered at low cost or free to ensure accessibility for all.

Meaning of Leadership Failure

Leadership failure is the inability of persons in leadership positions to effectively guide, coordinate, influence, and mobilize individuals or organizations towards achieving desired goals. It often relates to poor decision-making, ethical breaches, lack of vision, mismanagement of people and resources, and ultimately, the breakdown of trust and performance within institutions. Leadership failure takes place when those in positions of authority including political figures, public servants and organizational heads fail to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, ethically, or strategically. Aligning with this view-point, Kellerman (2004) emphasized that leadership failure occurs when there is a significant gap between a leader's responsibilities and actual performance, especially in terms of ethical conduct, competency, and accountability. This failure manifests as inefficiency, corruption, lack of vision or institutional collapse. Northouse (2021) opined that when leaders operate for personal gain and succumb to short-termism, they betray both public trust

and institutional integrity. He underscored that leadership is not just about results but also about process, integrity, and relationships. Leadership failure captures the inability of a leader or leadership body to fulfil their core responsibilities, resulting in negative consequences for the group, organization, or the mission they are entrusted to guide. It transcend beyond mere mistakes to encompass a persistent pattern where leadership actions or inactions fundamentally undermine purpose, well-being or sustainability. Since leadership's primary purpose is to set direction and achieve goals, leadership failure exists when there are constraining and inhibiting human forces that prevent their actualization (Ejumudo, 2025). Leadership failure is evident when leaders sacrifice ethics for personal or organizational gain, fail to truly define or communicate their vision and are unable to inspire and mobilize their followers.

Understanding Corruption

Corruption is a complex and multidimensional concept that has been defined differently by scholars, institutions, and practitioners depending on the context, the cultural milieu, the ideological perspective and academic parlance. Corruption was derived from the Latin word "corruptus", which means "Break". According to (Egonmwan, 2020), corruption is anything that deviates from what is right, that is not pure and cannot be trusted to function properly. Generally, corruption has to do with the abuse of public or private office for personal gain, undermining fairness, accountability, and development. It can be seen as misuse of office for unofficial ends or purposes (Ejumudo and Ejumudo, 2021). Corruption has close nexus with economic growth and development, state of law, investments, political and social systems. Corruption can occur in different scales and ranges from small favours between a small number of people (petty corruption) to corruption that affects the government on a large scale (grand corruption), and corruption that is so prevalent that it is part of the

everyday structure and character of society, including corruption as one of the symptoms of organized crime. Corruption takes place in different sectors of any economy and it could be political corruption, police corruption, judicial corruption, financial corruption, educational corruption, religious corruption and corporate corruption. Corruption is a social exchange which transcends beyond individual affairs or private interests to the larger social system including governance and administration in different countries (Achebe, 1988). It involves the person who takes bribe, the person who offers the bribe and any third party as well as the sufferers (the larger society) that bears the costs of the corruption.

Meaning of Management Malady

The term "malady" typically refers to an ailment or disease and in organizational context; malady symbolically represents pathological conditions that hinder effective leadership and operational efficiency. Management malady is therefore the chronic dysfunction or systemic failure in management practices within an organization, institution, or government. It is characterized by inefficient planning, poor organizational coordination, misallocation of resources, lack of accountability, and bureaucratic bottlenecks. These deficiencies prevent institutions from achieving their goals and serving stakeholders effectively. Management malady often manifests in both public and private sectors, especially when leaders lack technical competence, engage in unethical behavior, or operate without strategic oversight. According to Drucker (1999), effective management is about "doing things right," but in the case of a malady, institutions persist in "doing the wrong things inefficiently."

Management malady includes bureaucratic inefficiency that is marked by excessive red tape, delays in decision-making and procedural rigidity; lack of accountability where funds earmarked for development projects are often diverted or mismanaged; resource misallocation in which strategic planning is often undermined by political

patronage and nepotism, leading to the funding of non-viable projects over critical infrastructure; policy inconsistency where successive administrations introduce new policies without evaluating or continuing the previous ones, leading to confusion and wastage (Northouse, 2021). Management malady manifests in several forms depending on organizational context and leadership culture including ethical malady characterized by the violation of moral principles, as seen in fraudulent accounting, misappropriation of funds, and data manipulation, operational malady involving inefficiencies in workflows, delegation, time management, and resource allocation (Stevenson, 2020), cultural malady marked by fear, gossip, discrimination, or favouritism as well as strategic malady where management fails to adapt to environmental changes or lacks innovation. In sum, management malady is a critical barrier that constrains and inhibits organizational growth, innovation, and sustainability regardless of its source or cause (Ejumudo, 2010a).

Understanding Followership Conspiracy or Complicity

Followership conspiracy or complicity has to do with the collective, often silent or subtle, complicity of citizens or subordinates in perpetuating or enabling bad leadership, corruption, and systemic failure in governance. Followership conspiracy or complicity is central to leadership and organizational studies and can also be seen as the active or passive involvement of followers in supporting, legitimizing, or enabling unethical, destructive, or ineffective leadership practices. It is viewed as a situation where followers, either out of fear, ignorance, personal gain, or apathy, indirectly or directly support leaders and practices that are detrimental to the public service or general good. Historically, the role of the populace in either upholding or challenging the status quo has been recognised and emphasised. Tocqueville (1835) and Gramsci (1971) indirectly investigated these ideas in their analyses of democracy and hegemony. Postcolonial theorists have pointed to the

colonially inherited dual-public structure of African governance, where loyalty to informal systems often supersedes formal governmental norms (Ekeh, 1975 and Oluwatobi, 2021). Unlike overt rebellion or protest, followership conspiracy is usually covert, passive and involves actions such as silence in the face of wrongdoing, idolization of unworthy leaders, or failure to hold leadership accountable. While a lot of scholarship place emphasis on leaders' roles in organizational success or failure, interestingly some scholars have increasingly posited that followers are not merely passive recipients of leadership but active participants who may either resist or contribute to destructive outcomes (House, 2017 and Ejumudo, Adogbeji, Ejeba and Ejumudo, 2025).

Public Service as a Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy can be said to be the engine room of administration in both developed and developing countries (Ejumudo, 2008). It is, in fact, the nerve-centre of government and propeller of government business. It is also the pivot upon which government operations revolve. Without the bureaucracy, the hands of government are tied and the feet paralyzed. The above assertion underscores the central role that bureaucracy plays in the accomplishment of governmental and non-governmental business. Bureaucracy is a cross-cutting institution which is central to governmental and non-governmental organizations. This is largely because governmental and non-governmental operations willy-nilly revolve around the machinery called bureaucracy.

According to Rosenberg (1979), bureaucracy whether for good or bad is an essential part of the present structure of governance which consists of a system of professionalised administration as well as a hierarchy of appointed officials upon whom society is thoroughly dependent. He equally emphasized that, whether we live under the most totalitarian despotism or in the most liberal democracy, we are governed to a considerable extent by a bureaucracy of some kind. Bureaucracy has emerged as a dominant

feature of the contemporary world, especially as almost everywhere in public or large private organisations in both developed and developing nations, bureaucratic structures are a universal phenomenon. Economic, social and political lives are also largely influenced by bureaucratic organisations and the transmission of knowledge and culture has often become bureaucratized to the extent that the world itself is organised bureaucratically. In fact, the tendency towards bureaucratization has been greater in the realm of governance.

The Characteristic Features of Bureaucracy

The bureaucratic mechanism that compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production (Weber, 1949) does not only symbolize precision, speed, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and material and personal cost, it is laced with the following discernable features:

Division of Work

Division of work is one of the fundamental characteristics of bureaucracy. Both at the task and administrative levels, there is a high degree of division of work in a bureaucratic set-up. The whole work is first divided into some broad groups. These groups are further broken down into sub-groups. This process of division of work or task goes on until the job of an individual employee becomes highly limited and specific. This characteristic of bureaucracy brings about specialization as the job the individual employee is assigned is highly limited and specific. As employees become specialists and surer in their jobs, the level of their efficiency and effectiveness tends to increase.

Hierarchy of Authority

In every large organization, public or private, there exists hierarchy of authority. Hierarchy of authority involves the separation of superior and subordinate officers. This implies that each lower office is under the supervision and control of a higher one. Every subordinate is responsible to only one boss. In a bureaucratic

organization, the principle of unity of command is strictly adhered to. Since duties assigned to individual employees are specific and limited in scope, a superior officer need not unduly interfere in the work of the subordinate by way of very close supervision, and the subordinates on their part need not all the time depend on or wait for instructions from his superior while carrying out the tasks assigned.

Extensive Filing System

The existence of extensive filing system is another important characteristic of every bureaucratic organization. In a bureaucratic set-up, all decisions, as far as practicable, are formally recorded, and orders, instructions or directives are issued in writing. The use of formal and written documents on a large scale in a bureaucratic organization makes their proper custody in the form of extensive filing system necessary. When an extensive filing system is maintained in an organization, it becomes possible for such an organization to be independent of individual employees. While individuals may come and exit from the organization, the files kept serve as the memory of the organization by illuminating the past and current happenings to new as well as old entrants.

Institutionalization of Procedures, Rules and Regulations

All operations in a bureaucratic organization are carried out through the instrumentality of procedures, rules and regulations. The development and application of procedures, rules and regulations are used to obtain clarity in the operating processes in a bureaucratic organization. In the course of interaction between members of the organization vertically, horizontally or laterally, it is established procedures, rules and regulations which shape and guide their behavioural patterns. Through these procedures, rules and regulations, rationality, stability, continuity and predictability are achieved in organizations. These procedures, rules and regulations only operate in relations to the official job of an office holder. The role of

procedures, rules and regulations has been stressed by Weber so that personal favours, arbitrariness, grace or gratitude do not hinder the efficient and effective working of an organization. In his view, even act of personal discretion aimed at preserving or enhancing the powers of the officials must be justified by impersonal ends.

Expert Training

Modern Large and complex organizations are staffed with specialists in diverse fields who are required to perform highly specialized and limited tasks. Though new entrants into modern large and complex organizations may possess specialized formal education in specific fields, they may still be inadequately equipped to respond efficiently and effectively to organizational problems. Expert training is therefore required to effect quantitative and qualitative improvements in their performance by figuratively panel-beating them to suit their organizational environments, standards and requirements. This would help employees to make better and quicker decisions and thus catalyze efficiency in all the units of the organization.

Impersonality of Inter-personal Relations

In a bureaucratic organization, there is complete depersonalization of inter-personal relations. Formal dealings are therefore encouraged to ensure that emotions and sentiments do not unduly interfere with the rationality and objectivity of officials and promote nepotism and favouritism as a result. Rationality, objectivity and efficiency in decision-making are achieved thus by ensuring that all decisions are shaped by existing precedents, rules and regulations.

Rational System of Personnel Administration

Merit in terms of academic qualifications, length and nature of experience as well as competence form the basis of selection and promotion in a bureaucratic organization. This implies that recruitment and selection into and promotion in a bureaucratic organization is

based on achievement criteria as opposed to ascriptive criteria. Individual officials or employees are expected to be appointed and function according to the following criteria: they are personally free and subject to the authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligation; they are organized in a clearly defined hierarchy of office; each has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense; the office is filled by a free contractual relationship; there is free selection of candidates on the basis of technical qualifications, tests, interviews and medical screening; they are remunerated by fixed salaries in money, for most part with a right to pensions; it constitutes a career with a system of promotion according to seniority and performance dependent on the judgment of a superior; the official work is entirely separated from ownership of the means of administration and without appropriation of his position as well as strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office of all incumbents.

Functions of the Public Service Bureaucracy in Nigeria

According to Kaufman (2019), Nigeria's public service bureaucracy performs the following functions:

Policy Implementation

The primary responsibility of the public service is policy implementation. The function of administration is to carry out or execute or implement policy decisions, or to coordinate

Education/Continuity

The public service is a repository or store of knowledge of past government decisions and procedures. Thus, it plays an educative role by assisting professional and military political executives, especially the new ones so as to adapt themselves to the realities of their offices. The continuity and educative functions of the public service is of immense benefit to the public service, especially in the face of a somewhat weak and unenlightened political executive or in case of political vacuum due to serious political crisis, as it is often the

activities in order to accomplish some common purpose, or simply to achieve cooperation in the pursuit of a shared goal. In this direction, both the federal and state public servants help in the execution of national development plans. In fact, they help to close the gap between statement of intention, as represented by national development plans, and their actual accomplishment.

Policy Formulation/Advice

Public servants at the multi-layered levels of government play critical roles in policy initiation of major economic, social and educational objectives. Specifically, the formulation of the various national development plans in Nigeria cannot become a reality without the ground-work preparation and participation by non-political public servants whose expert advice and knowledge are of immense value.

Investigative and Regulatory

The public servants also engage in investigative and regulatory functions. For instance, members of the internal revenue board investigate cases of tax evasion, and assess members of the public for purposes of taxation. Building inspectors inspect new houses to ensure that they are built according to government specification. Again, sanitary inspectors inspect houses to ensure that they are kept clean, while anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) investigate alleged cases of corruption against government functionaries.

situation in many developing countries (Ibrahim, 2019).

Information

The public service performs information function mainly because public servants gather statistical information for the activities of the government. Senior civil servants also have to inform the public about the achievements, activities, and problems facing the government.

Roles and Responsibilities of Public Servants in the Public Service

Public servants in the public service have a wide range of responsibilities that includes the following:

Citizenship Welfare and Engagement

Public servants are ultimately responsible to the citizens and are therefore expected to be fair, just, and equitable in their decisions and dealings in order to help citizens access their rights in keeping with the values of governance. They are also to assist citizens in fulfilling their civic duties to be fully engaged and involved in the work of the polity (Stone, 2023). Also, public servants are the primary contact between the citizens and public organizations and when this contact is effectively executed, the public service contributes to organizational development and reaffirmation of the social contract (Johnson, 2022). To this end, Cooper (2021) stressed that public servants are citizens employed as one of us to work for us in a complex large-scale political community.

Promoting the Public Interest

Public servants are also expected to promote the public interest as opposed to promoting individual and private interests. While it is not the role of the public administrator to determine or decree the public interest, it is their role to facilitate the development of a collective, shared notion of the public interest (Denhardt, 2019). The public servant is therefore a key actor within a larger system of governance including citizens, groups, elected representatives, as well as other institutions. In line with the above view-point, public servants are prime actors that ensures the public interest predominates and solutions to public problems are generated through a process reflects justice, fairness, and equity. Generally, a distinction between public and private service is anchored on the idea that government obligation is to promote public interest and serve a higher purpose (Sapru, 2023). Although it is often difficult to say precisely what is in the public interest, there is no controversy about the obligation of public

servants to consider it as a general guide for their actions; which, if they fail to do, the public service may rightly be criticized for placing personal or agency interest above those of the people as a whole.

Implementing Public Policy

Public servants are also responsible for the implementation of public policy. The execution of laws formulated and passed by elected officials is the responsibility of public servants mainly because political office holders can carry out the will of the electorate only with the help of the public service. It therefore follows that the onus for policy and program implementation rest on managers drawn from diverse professions as accounting, business, law, medicine, engineering, social science, public administration and the like. Box (2018) categorized three roles: implementers, controllers and helpers and emphasized that implementers are neutral practitioners who avoid significant involvement in shaping policy, but dutifully carry out lawful policy directions in a professional and competent manner to avoid the potential trouble and risk associated with direct involvement in determining public policy. He added that, while controllers seek to guide the policy process and outcomes by influencing the attitudes of their superiors or of elected officials or citizens, helpers take an active part in policy creation and implementation by serving to interpret public wishes for representatives, presenting professional knowledge of organizational and technical practices to citizens and representatives, and monitoring decision making and implementation to ensure that citizens have opportunities to participate.

Professional and Ethical Responsiveness, Reliability, and Responsibility

Public servants are also expected to be well-educated technocrats of high moral and ethical character, specialists by training and application, and professionals by temperament and commitment. Mosher (2017), contend that the exigency of public

problems and the increasing interconnection of social conditions requires inter-disciplinary and inter-professional approaches to public issues. This explains why the public service requires leadership that is a get-it- all-together profession and captures the notion of the public administrator as a skilled professional with the technical and attitudinal abilities to utilize a wide range of disciplines and fields of knowledge that are needed to address contemporary public issues as Bashland (2019) rightly posited. Expanding the discourse, Shore (2020) stressed that responsiveness, reliability, and responsibility as three desirable characteristics of the public service. While responsiveness relates more to the needs of the citizens than to its own tendencies to reproduce and grow, reliability has to do with delivering services that measure up to the standards and expectations of the good governance, responsibility is concerned with refraining from discriminating against minorities and social groups who naturally have limited access to fewer resources.

Challenges of the Public Service in Nigeria

The public service in Nigeria had been bedevilled by many-sided multi-dimensional problems and some of them have graduated to hydra-headed levels. Such problems have not only constrained the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, they are equally negatively impacted on the quality of service delivered by its workforce. Sundry factors have been advanced by different scholars as the challenges of the public service in Nigeria. Such factors include the following: **Lack of Enthusiasm and Political Will:** Oikhala (2022) posits that the inability of government institutions in the past decades to develop enthusiasm for and demonstrate the political will for appropriate reforms that will reposition and ensure a functional public service has had a prolong negative effect on public service efficiency and effectiveness. According to El-Rufai (2013) the quality of public servants and the services they provide to our country are both below expectations and the

remuneration of Nigeria's public servants was too low when juxtaposed with the cost of living. It is this debility of government institutions that has culminated in the army of unenthusiastic and uninspiring people as public servants who have become more burdens and liabilities than assets to the public service in Nigeria.

Poor Political Leadership: Another factor militating against the public service in Nigeria is poor political leadership. The issue of leadership has been a topical one across the world for many decades. This growing concern is not unexpected given the pivotal and critical role that leadership plays in governance that is supposed to have cross-cutting impact on all and sundry. In Nigeria, especially in recent times, leadership deficiency and inefficiency has been more evident. The leadership engagement process has, in fact, become an extraordinary warfare zone where politicians employ offensive means unknown to law to pursue and grab leadership positions. It is not unlikely that people who do all manners of odd things and breach the law to occupy government positions would run inclusive people-oriented administration that will impact positively on Nigeria's public service. Nwolise's (2019) assertion that, maybe our leaders in their in-fighting and struggles over natural resources, have not noticed the great malady Nigeria is currently facing, clearly portray the political leadership problem in Nigeria. The question here is whose interest is the political leadership class serving? For instance, in 2001, a human resource audit of the Federal civil service at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revealed that about twenty percent (20%) of the nominal roll consisted of ghost workers. Nothing was done about the audit, and like most other things related to the public service, these and similar abuses continued and have grown unabated.

Corruption: According to Ezeani (2006), corruption is yet another factor that has affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service in Nigeria. This abnormally, has militated against the ability of the public service to perform its role as an instrument of

change. Corruption has become so prevalent that senior administrators, in particular, have always colluded with politicians to loot the national treasury. The level of corruption in the civil service was exposed by the purge that took place in the public service, in which 11,000 public servants, the majority being civil servants; including super permanent secretaries were either dismissed or retired (Asiodu, 1979). Many civil servants were also dismissed or retired by General Muhammadu Buhari, when he assumed power in 1984, due to corrupt practices. Long years of military rule and the persistence of colonial mentality, whereby public service is regarded as an alien institution to be plundered produced a situation in which key institutions for advancing accountability in government became casualties (Olowu, 1997). In fact, corruption appears to have permeated the entire public service in Nigeria so much so that it has become a hydra-headed problem.

Disrespect for the Rule of Law: There is a common tendency for public servants in Nigeria to show disrespect for the rule of law. Arguably, law creates a state, and set its objectives, establishes government, defines the functions and obligations of citizens and lays the foundation for governance. Therefore, law is an inevitable instrument of social control, especially as it promotes the proper and successful way of doing of things in every organised society. In Nigeria, most people including top government functionaries have no respect for rule of law and behave as if they are even above the law. The resultant effect is likely to be a dysfunctional public service where almost everyone is lawlessness. According to Olaniyi & Oyewale (2021), the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, argued that when injustice becomes law, resistance will be a duty. This is in tandem with Apaokagi's (2014) assertions that the involvement of government in subverting the rule of law is why it has lost all moral rights of law enforcement in Nigeria, while impunity in high and low places is the order of the day.

Poor Staffing and Conditions of Service: The poor staffing and inability of government at the multi-layered levels to reposition the

public service with its unattractive conditions of service for public servants among others has also constrained its efficiency and effectiveness in Nigeria. Specifically, the inability of the government to run and maintain a functional public service has worsened the performance problem in Nigeria. This ugly situation explains why the government does not seem to make the public service to serve the needs and satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the deserving public servants.

Bad Governance: According to Anifowose & Enemuo (1999), another challenge of the public service is the bad governance in Nigeria. They noted that bad governance is the root of all evil and it will be a daydream to expect efficiency from the public service of a country that is being poorly governed. The public service that has been dominated with dull and lazy public servants where public servants are paid low salary which is far below cost of living conditions in Nigeria can hardly be efficient. In fact, the take-home pay of public servants is nothing to write about and many of them refuse to give their best to the public service partly due to poor salary or remuneration. All of these are manifestations and features of bad governance as Gisselquist (2012) rightly posited. The impacts of bad governance have, in fact, affected every facet and stratum of Nigeria's public service.

Bureaucratic Red-tapism: Nigeria's public service is equally characterized by bureaucratic red-tapism, too many protocols, long due process, routine and well-established procedures as well as seeming unending formalities which are militating against its efficiency and effectiveness (Ejumudo, Douglas & Ejumudo, 2024). One of the major impediments to speed in Nigeria's public service can be traced to excessive layering in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). This inflexibility has stifled innovation and led to waste of time or delay in the implementation of public policies (Palmer, 2023). This problematic has been further compounded by inconsistencies in government policies in Nigeria. Essentially, change of government in most cases result in

change in policy and this usually has adverse effects on the public service. Additionally, constant change of top-ranked government officials always bring about change in rules, regulations and policies with unhealthy implications for the public service in Nigeria. Worse still, many government policies are not subjected to any evaluation process with an eye to establishing whether or not the outcomes are in line with the original intended objectives. This near absence of evaluation culture at the different levels of the public service in Nigeria appears to be an integral part of the service (Ejumudo and Ikenga, 2017).

Representativeness

The 1979 constitution of Nigeria and other subsequent ones made provisions for fair representation of all states and ethnic groups in the federal public service. It is referred to as the "Federal Character" principle which seeks to ensure that backward areas of the country are fairly represented in the federal service. However, the application of the principle undermines meritocracy and excellence and sacrificed same at the altar of spread and fair representation in the public service. As Olowu (1997) explicitly pointed out, strong demand for representativeness undermines the public service claims to objectivity and rationality, a factor that is also responsible for the often sharp internal divisions within the public service usually along ethnic lines.

Reforms in Nigeria's Public Service

As a result of the critical roles of the public service vis-à-vis the growing demands of governance as well as sustainable development in Nigeria, several reforms have been initiated and implemented supposedly to cope with the dynamics of social change through revitalization, re-invention, re-engineering, renewal and transformation. The major reform efforts are captured below. Although several minor reforms of the public service in Nigeria such as the Africanization of senior positions which saw the emergence of Simeon Adebó as the first indigenous Head of

Service in 1954 (Ayo, 1988) took place prior to independence, the post-independence era witnessed more significant reforms. For instance, the federal public service was expanded through the creation of more ministries and agencies. Before long, there were tensions between regional and federal public service bureaucracies (Mackintosh, 1966). Besides, weak meritocracy, patronage and ethnic favoritism began affecting public service efficiency and effectiveness (Dudley, 1982). A significant departure from the past took place in 1966 when the then first military administration of Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi through decree 34 abolished regional civil services and created a unified national system. The Gorsuch Commission of 1968 also recommended the streamlining of the civil service (Gorsuch, 1968). Similarly, the Adebó Commission was established in 1971 to review wages and salaries in response to the rising cost of living and the need to improve the economic conditions and well-being of workers. The commission's recommendations led to the establishment of the Udoji Public Service Review Commission. The Udoji Commission was charged with the responsibility of making recommendations that would ensure the emergence of an efficient and effective development-oriented public service in Nigeria and on any other matter which in its opinion appeared to be relevant and therefore in the public interest to be enquired into. Specifically, the commission was mandated to examine the organization and structure of the public services; investigate and evaluate their methods of recruitment, conditions of service and staff development programmes; examine existing pension and superannuation schemes in the public and private sectors; make recommendations that would facilitate inter-sectoral mobility, without detriment to the retention of efficient and qualified personnel in the public services and undertake the re-grading of all posts in the public service with a view to establishing appropriate salary scales.

The major recommendations of the Udoji Public Service Commission's report included

improved salaries and conditions of service to attract and retain qualified personnel, award systems and performance-based incentives to motivate workers, reorganization of the public service structure through departmental mergers so as to reduce duplication of functions, creation of ministries and departments based on functional efficiency and effectiveness, professionalization of the public service, merit-based appointments and promotions rather than seniority alone. Other recommendations were training and development programs for public servants, open reporting system for performance evaluation, unified grading and salary system (UGSS), harmonized salary structure across federal and state public services, job evaluation schemes to ensure fairness in remuneration, decentralization and delegation of authority to lower-level officers to improve efficiency, regional administrative reforms to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, improved pension schemes for public servants as well as accountability and anti-corruption measures and efficiency monitoring system.

The Udoji Commission's report was an epoch-making document expected to have significant and far-reaching implications for the public service in Nigeria. All the same, the reform has both strengths and weaknesses. In the area of strength, the reform interjected values which are meant to de-emphasise class and status consciousness and emphasized that development is determined by management and efficiency, and that functional recruitment, coupled with appropriate rewards and incentives, would foster development and effect attitudinal changes that are synchronous with it. In the area of weakness, the report did not employ rigorously the ecological logic it espoused and failed to dissect adequately the difficult and complex problems of development and how these relate to the public service.

Under the leadership of both Murtala Muhammed and Olusegun Obasanjo between 1975 and 1979, Nigeria saw minimal reforms aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges and promoting national unity through restructuring of the public service,

establishing new states, and planning for a new Federal Capital Territory. A mass purge of the public service was carried out to address perceived lack of discipline and purpose, though it faced criticism for potential malice and revenge, while the number of states in Nigeria was increased to nineteen with the creation of Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Imo, Niger, Ogun, and Ondo. During Shehu Shagari's administration (1979-1983) that took over from the then military administration of Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian public service faced sundry challenges and there were some reforms based on the government's recognition of the public service as a key and central engine of governance. The public service was plagued with issues of corruption, mismanagement, nepotism, and indiscriminate engagement process, although efforts were made to streamline procedures, improve capacity building and address some of the issues through measures like the Code of Conduct Bureau.

The public service under the successive military administration from December 31, 1983 when Muhammadu Buhari took over the reins of power through the military administration of Ibrahim Babangida between August 27, 1985 and August 26, 1993, the short-lived transitional government of Ernest Shonekan between August 26 and November 17, 1993, Gen Sani Abacha's military government that ousted Earnest Shonekan as well as the military administration of Abdulsalami Abubakar that came into being on June 9, 1998 due to the demise of Sani Abacha, the only significant major public service reform was that of 1988 during Babangida's era through the Dotun Phillips report. This view-point is based on the fact that the public service under Muhammadu Buhari's military rule (1983-1985) faced significant changes, including restructuring and retrenchment as the government sought to streamline the bureaucracy, reduce ministries, and implement policies focused on austerity and social reforms like the "War Against Indiscipline", the public service during the Shonekan administration (August 26-November 17, 1993) witnessed little or no

reform because the government was ultimately characterized by a lack of authority and power, the public service under Sani Abacha's military regime (1993-1998), encountered periods of significant changes and challenges while insignificant efforts to improve efficiency and address corruption was constrained by the overall climate characterized by authoritarianism which impacted the operations and morale of the service and General Abdulsalami Abubakar's short, transitional military rule (1998-1999) focused on transitioning to a civilian government through free and fair elections. During Olusegun Obasanjo's civilian administration (1999-2007), the public service in Nigeria went through significant reforms and changes and the government sought to streamline the bureaucracy and introduce policies aimed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and activities. The government also emphasized transparency, accountability and due process in the public sector and made efforts to reduce the number of government ministries and agencies bureaucratic red tape. The government equally embarked on anti-corruption crusade through the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Although commendable steps were taken to tackle the hydra-headed problem of corruption in the public service, the anti-corruption fight was perceived to be selective and a witch-hunt against political enemies, apart from the fact that the public service continued to face challenges of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies and political interference.

The "Seven-Point Agenda" of the Umaru Yar'Adua administration (2007-2010) was the major plank upon which the public service reform initiatives was based. The reform focused on areas like power and energy, food security, wealth creation and security. While initiatives like infrastructural reforms and agricultural development were initiated, the agenda was largely unfulfilled owing largely to the president's health and eventual passing

on. The former President Goodluck Jonathan that took over the affairs of government in Nigeria between May 2010 and May 2015 introduced various reforms within Nigeria's public service. The initiatives such as the "Roadmap for Power Sector Reform" and "SURE-P," aimed at improving the power sector and reinvesting subsidy savings in infrastructure marked the "Transformation Agenda" of the administration. The government also implemented fiscal rules and created reserve accounts to manage oil revenues more effectively, digitalized government processes, introduced the integrated payroll and personnel information system (IPPIS) in order to curb ghost workers and payroll fraud and embarked on pension reforms through the establishment of the Pension Commission (PENCOM). The Jonathan administration also set up Nigeria's Presidential Committee on the Rationalization and Restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions, and Agencies. The report which was commissioned by the government was meant to address concerns about duplication, inefficiency, and bloated bureaucracy in the federal public service so as to improve efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. The report was however, not implemented.

During Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration (2015 - 2023), the public service focused on addressing major issues like corruption, economic challenges, and insecurity. His government appeared determined to tackle corruption head-on through several anti-corruption initiatives and reforms. Economically, his administration implemented measures to diversify the economy, reduce dependence on oil, and stimulate growth. The administration equally introduced the treasury single account (TSA): a centralized government revenue system intended to reduce leakages and whistle blowers supposedly meant to encourage the reporting of corruption. The Tinubu administration that came into being in May 2023 introduced the renewed hope agenda that is expected to provide a strategic plan to drive public service commitment and

dedication for successful implementation of the national goals. The administration is also expected to prioritise reforms such as capacity building and talent management with a well-structured mandatory training programme and innovation as well as enhance the professionalization of human capital within the public service for improved efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the **Integrated Endogenous Governance Failure Theory**. It is a two-way composite analytical lens that explains governance failure as a combination of internal systemic weaknesses and external shocks. The theory is a synthesis of insights from governance theory, leadership failure theory, management malady theory, corruption theory, followership complicity theory, institutional theory, and public administration scholarship to argue that persistent public service delivery failures are rooted and grounded in endogenous governance deficits. According to Hyden (2010) and Grindle (2007), the theory rejects mono-causal explanations and instead adopts a systems-based approach, emphasizing interactions among leadership quality, institutional capacity, accountability mechanisms, and administrative culture. The theory is premised on four interrelated and interconnected dimensions: leadership failure suggesting absence of strategic vision, ethical integrity, and administrative competence; institutional weakness embodying fragile rules, poor enforcement, and normative decay; administrative dysfunction typifying inefficient processes, poor bureaucratic capacity, and resistance to reform and accountability breakdown implying weak oversight, politicization of institutions, and limited citizen participation. The theory posits that governance failure occurs when these endogenous factors reinforce one another, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of inefficiency (Grindle, 2007), while exogenous factors such as globalization and economic volatility exert pressure on public institutions. The theory believes that the interaction

between endogenous and exogenous factors produces an outcome that depends on the severity of the impact on internal governance capacity. Thus, the theory reframes exogenous constraints as stress agents rather than root causes.

Relevance to Public Service Delivery

The relevance of the above theory to the study is evident in its utilitarian value in explaining instructional or public service delivery failures as manifestation of the inability or poor capacity of organizational or governance systems to efficiently and effectively translate policies into concrete outcomes required for short-term and long-term goal accomplishment. This theory therefore provides an explanatory basis for leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity or conspiracy manifesting through policy inconsistency, chronic project abandonment, resource leakage and poor service quality despite huge budgetary allocations and expenditures. By focusing on internal institutional or governance mechanisms, the theory provides a diagnostic tool for identifying where governance system breaks down within public institutions. In Nigeria's public service, this theory is useful in explaining why despite abundant resources and repeated reforms, service delivery remains poor. Thus, the theory explains the paradox of leadership failure, management malady, weak institutional autonomy, fragmented accountability systems and enduring administrative cultures that resist change as Olowu & Wunsch (2004) lucidly asserted. This theory views Nigeria's public service not so much as a victim of external forces, but that of a system constrained and incapacitated by internal governance failures.

The theory however has inherent limitations because of its apparent failure to capture the manifested leadership failure, management malady, corruption, followership conspiracy or complicity as exogenous or external institutional or public service factors propelled by the foundational endogenous factor called self or self-interest that overrides or

supersedes the general institutional public service interest. Rather, it pictures the above factors as endogenous, while globalization and economic volatility are seen as external or exogenous factors. This glaring gap has necessitated the adjustment and expansion of the theory by Ejumudo (2026). This new development views institutions or organizations including the public service as a system interacting with the endogenous or internal element known as "self" embedded in human beings seen as institutional or organizational members. On the other hand, the theory classifies institutional or organizational dysfunctional elements such as leadership failure, management malady, corruption, followership conspiracy or complicity as micro exogenous or external factors drawing strength from self which is the only originating or foundational endogenous or internal factor and globalization as well as economic volatility as macro exogenous or external factors. .

Research Method

The study employs an exploratory and descriptive qualitative research design to assess the impact of leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity in Nigeria's public service delivery and explain the role of the endogenous factor (self) that is responsible for the above exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service delivery.

Results

This section of the study contains the analysis of the research questions which was stated in the beginning of this research work and they are answered using empirical data derived from existing literatures. The research questions for the study are:

Research Question One: Does leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity have any significant impact in Nigeria's public service delivery?

The Problems and Effects of Leadership Failure in Nigeria's Public Service Delivery

Despite the fact that leadership is a cornerstone of effective governance in public service institutions, in Nigeria, the public service has suffered from chronic inefficiencies, corruption, and poor delivery of services largely as a result of leadership failure. Effects of Leadership failure in Nigeria's public service include erosion of meritocracy, weaponisation of ethnicity and nepotism, decline in public trust, poor service delivery where essential services like health, education, and infrastructure are inadequate (Akinyemi, 2014 Eke, Eke & Agala, 2023). Alemika and Chukwuma (2005) stressed that there is a direct relationship between leadership gaps in governance and the proliferation of crime and insurgency in Nigeria, while Igbuzor (2013) noted that despite huge investments by successive administration in Nigeria, electricity supply remains unreliable largely due to leadership failure and sabotage. Gyimah-Boadi (2024) also stated that leadership failure erodes legitimacy and undermines democratic governance. In fact, Leadership failure in Nigeria's public service is both a cause and symptom of underdevelopment, poor governance, and public disillusionment. According to Adeoye (2024), Nigeria's leadership failure represents one of the most significant barriers to development at the multi-layered levels of government despite the country's vast human and natural resources. His study which attempted a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted problems stemming from leadership failures in Nigeria's public service illuminated the systemic nature of leadership crisis and stressed that ethical decline, value erosion; moral bankruptcy and poor leadership culture have become common place. He equally added that the initial stage of leadership failure involves politicians securing power through a web of financial manipulation and co-optation, bribing voters, corrupting the judiciary, making grand yet empty promises, exploiting tribal, regional and religious divisions, and entrenching poverty in order to consolidate support. The concomitant leadership illegitimacy establishes a governance foundation built on deception

rather than efficient and effective service delivery. This explains why public service in Nigeria has become associated with a fundamental disconnect between leadership actions and societal values. No wonder, public institutions in Nigeria are largely plagued by deteriorating integrity, decaying professionalism, accountability deficit and service inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

Examining sustainable development in Nigeria: the policy gap and action dilemma, Ejumudo (2015) argued that despite the central role of efficient and effective natural resource management which encapsulates economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development; in Nigeria, leadership failure, poor integrated and inter-disciplinary policy planning, policy disconnect and action dilemma have constrained the actualization of sustainable development efforts with the potentiality of environmental crisis. Also investigating oil production and the problematic of water pollution in Nigeria's Niger Delta, Ejumudo and Amede (2019) stressed that leadership failure in Nigeria, conspiracy and poor commitment by the oil conglomerates as well as visionless community leadership have compounded the negative effects of water pollution on the health, occupational and livelihood standards of the oil-bearing communities and the already pauperised people.

Interrogating the democracy/environmental justice challenge in Nigeria's Niger Delta and the developmental leadership and governance culture imperative, Ejumudo (2014a) contended that Nigeria's failed democratic enterprise weak, poor and shallow democratic institutions have largely denied the region access to developmental opportunities and benefits in the context of food, human security, socio-economic empowerment, educational, skill acquisition, small and medium-scale business development and infrastructural development in the face of the social and economic dislocation, environmental pollution and degradation and unemployment engendered by large-scale oil exploration and production is largely due to leadership failure, corruption and

mismanagement. Also, x-raying and analysing air pollution and health challenges in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Ejumudo (2011) posited that the region has faced serious environmental problems because of the hydra-headed level of pollution, degradation and dislocation became commonplace and argued that the under-developed region and its people have become affected and afflicted by air and sea-borne diseases due to degraded land, polluted sea and perforated air. The study also revealed that the above problem has been compounded by the somewhat disconnected poor-functioning and low-performing health care system due to leadership failure in Nigeria.

Discussing the intractable crisis of Nigeria's public oil sector and the unending palaver of reorganisation and restructuring of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Ejumudo (2008) x-rayed the justification for public enterprises, the developing country environment and the political dimension of the environment. The study revealed that inefficiency, ineffectiveness and low productivity persist despite the gargantuan of reforms in the oil sector mainly due to leadership failure, management malady and corruption. Presenting a climatic explanation for the inefficacy of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Nigeria, Ejumudo (2010c) contended that despite the efficacy of CSR as a pro-development voluntary tool, there is poor response from corporate organisations that are supposed to be stimulated by the government through appropriate policy direction and result-oriented programmes and practices. At the heart of the problem are leadership failure, policy dilemma, relative inaction and passivity, apart from the pressure of economic expansionism and competition.

Examining the challenges of solid waste management in Nigeria, Ejumudo and Amede (2021) stressed that poor monitoring and weak enforcement by government agencies as well as poor public, private and community collaboration have constrained the expected efficiency and effectiveness of the waste management system and practice in Nigeria.

Investigating leadership, followership and national development in Nigeria, Ejumudo, Adogbeji, Ejeba and Ejumudo (2025) emphasized that Nigerian leaders have not been able to satisfy the desires of the people; expenditures have not matched productivity, the welfare and security of the people have not been guaranteed and the vision, goal and national morale of the people cannot be assured by leadership failure in the face of lack of the change needed to foster good followership. This study also posited that leadership failure has created a climate of deep-rooted structural poverty, hydra-headed corruption and institutional collapse in the public service of Nigeria.

On the whole, leadership failure in the public service in Nigeria transcends beyond an administrative issue to a critical challenge to the integrity of sustainable governance and institutional growth, development and renewal. Its permeating effects cut across performance, trust, equity, and policy outcomes and require genuine commitment to ethical, inclusive, and adaptive leadership so as to build a resilient and citizen-responsive public service.

Effects of Corruption in Nigeria's Public Service Delivery

Corruption that is the abuse of public office for private gain, encompassing bribery, embezzlement, favouritism, patronage, state capture, and procurement fraud (Mauro, 1995) has permeated every sector in Nigeria (Osoba, 1996 and Rose-Ackerman, 2019). Corruption has raised uncertainty, misallocated resources, diminished productivity activities and depressed long-run growth in Nigeria (Mauro, 1995). It has also brought about financial stress and leakages in the oil and gas sector, depleted public revenues available for services and diverted resources meant for investments in sundry sectors like education, health, agriculture, and finance as well as works. Corruption in Nigeria has equally culminated in over-invoicing and contract variations, inflated costs and produced abandoned projects. Additionally, corruption has subverted merit-

based selection and promotion, depressed competence and institutional memory. Generally, corruption in Nigeria has weakened economic growth and development, reduced investor confidence, constrained employment-generating projects, reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of government institutions, created erosion of public trust, inequality and social injustice, poor service delivery and undermined competence, merit, professional standards and impacted negatively on development.

Examining corruption and the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria's Fourth republic, Igbakpa, Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2023) utilized David Easton's input-output analysis and Gabriel Almond's structural functionalism theoretical lens to explain and analyse the impact of corruption on the efficacy of the oversight functions of the lower chamber of the national assembly and the study found out that in spite of the utilitarian value of legislative oversight as an institutionalised mechanism for check mating the excesses of the executive arm of government, the way and manner legislators in Nigeria act towards the poor budget performance of ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA'S) investigation of public officials is disheartening. In a similar vein, Ejumudo, Igbakpa & Odukwe (2023) interrogated party allegiance and the efficacy of legislative oversight of the House of Representatives in Nigeria. The findings of the study unveiled the fact that party loyalty negatively affects the effectiveness of the House of Representatives' legislative supervision in Nigeria.

In a related study, Ejumudo and Ikenga (2021) interrogated the problematic of legislative oversight in Nigeria with a focus on Delta state and the findings of the study revealed the existence of politics of trade-off and pay-off between the legislature and the executive as well as poor commitment to oversight functions by legislators, apart from the culture of corruption and the perceptual legislative subservience to the executive. In another study on globalisation and corruption

in Nigeria, Ejumudo and Ikenga (2015) investigated globalisation and corruption in Nigeria and the findings of the study revealed that, of accentuating and exacerbating the occurrence and effect of corruption, The real problem of corruption in Nigeria is the structural and institutional failure of the Nigerian state manifesting at two levels: the inability to provide a responsible and accountable leadership accompanied by true citizenship participation and empowerment as well as the poor capacity to confront and tackle the increasing menace of corruption. In a similar vein, Ejumudo (2013) carried out a diagnostic study on the independent National Electoral Commission and the twenty-eleven general election in Nigeria and the study found out that despite the usefulness of transparent and credible elections in every stage of the democratic enterprise, elections in Nigeria since 1964 have been grossly manipulated and unimaginably flawed due to inordinate ambition and political recklessness by the political class, partiality and compromise by state security personnel and more importantly poor management typified by lack of independence, political attachment, corruption, inadequate Nigerian culture and inadequate capacity that have characterised election management bodies in Nigeria. Besides, Ejumudo (2010b) assessed social justice, democracy and cultural renewal in Nigeria and the study showed that there is a high level of social injustice and crisis of democratisation in Nigeria. The study also found out that democratic experimentation and consolidation process in Nigeria have continuously been constrained by lack of appropriate and entrenched political culture, electoral fraud, corruption, economic mismanagement, elite manoeuvrings and cultural decay. Ejumudo and Anyanwu (2025) also examined decentralisation and infrastructural development in Nigeria. The findings indicated that, while there is a significant relationship between decentralisation, governance capacity and infrastructural development, the culture of corruption and poor development

predisposition have significantly hindered infrastructural development in Nigeria. Ejumudo and Ejuvwekpoko (2013) equally attempted an exposition of the political economy of poverty eradication in Nigeria and the perilous and tortuous journey for millennium development goals The study found out that there has been manipulation of the efforts at eradicating poverty and that the failure, dysfunctionality and inefficacy of poverty reduction policies in Nigeria are largely due to a deliberate design and corruption by the leadership and governing class. Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2021) also analysed corruption and development in Nigeria with a focus on Ondo State. The quantitative study revealed that corruption has constrained development in Ondo State in the educational, agricultural and health sector. On the whole, corruption has equally removed funds from priority services in sectors like health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, defence and pushed same into private pockets or inefficient projects thereby worsening outcomes and increasing unit costs of service delivery, reducing administrative efficiency, distorting procurement and regulatory enforcement, creating perverse incentives in public programs, lowering citizens' satisfaction with government, reducing compliance with rules, increasing political cynicism and eroding democratic legitimacy despite reforms.

The Problems and Impacts of Management Malady in Nigeria's Public Service

Over the years, the public service delivery has been plagued by systemic inefficiencies and organizational dysfunctions collectively referred to as management malady. Management malady that is a combination of poor leadership, weak institutional culture, lack of accountability, bureaucratic red-tape, corruption, inadequate training, and resistance to innovation has largely undermined organizational effectiveness (Okotoni & Adebayo, 2003). The persistence of this malady has contributed to underperformance in public service delivery, stunted socio-economic growth, and eroded

citizens' trust in government institutions. The public service in Nigeria, despite being staffed with seemingly highly qualified individuals in some cases, often struggles with productivity due to weak institutional frameworks and entrenched systemic problems (Olaopa, 2014).

Management malady in Nigeria's public service has manifested in corruption through contract inflation, diversion of public funds, ghost workers and deep-rooted governance challenges, bureaucratic red-tape involving slow and cumbersome processes that hinders timely decision-making and discourages both local and foreign investment resulting in project delays and wastage of resources, nepotism and politicization of recruitment and promotion often influenced by ethnic, political, or personal connections rather than merit, weak accountability mechanisms lacking strong internal audit systems and performance evaluation frameworks and resistance to change and innovation due to entrenched interests and emphasis on status quo (Transparency International, 2023). The impact of management malady in the public service of Nigeria includes poor service delivery in sectors like healthcare, education, infrastructure, and public utilities which suffer from underfunding, mismanagement, and inefficiency, economic stagnation due to mismanagement of resources thereby promoting poor fiscal discipline and constraining economic development, erosion of public trust and reduction in citizens' confidence in government institutions leading to low tax compliance, civic disengagement, and public apathy toward government programs (Olaopa, 2014).

Assessing the practicability and efficacy of total quality management in Nigeria's public sector, Ejumudo (2009a) argued that performance is seemingly an exception rather than the reality because the public service has for too long been plagued with the combined evils of inefficiency and corruption that have become impediments to the effective implementation of government policies (Servicom, 2008). He added that the real victim in the end is the nation which is denied

effective positive contribution of the public service to national development and progress and at the receiving end are the Nigerian people who are being short-changed by the consequential effects of the poor and appalling management and quality service of the sector. Examining the health service delivery in Nigeria with a focus on the management of the organizational environments, Ejumudo (2013a4) noted that the issue of poor performance of the public service in Nigeria has been a topical one. He equally stressed that while the principal and growing function of governments in the developing countries like Nigeria is to ensure an equitable distribution of public goods and services to its citizens, service delivery in the country has not only been below public expectations, it has also not been integrated into the poor public service operations, processes, procedures, workings and management.

In another study, Akpemuwa, Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2023) examined performance management system and employee job satisfaction in Nigeria with a focus on Delta State Polytechnic Oghara and asserted that while public institutions have shifted their focus from mere goods and services provision to an emphasis on quality, cost, effectiveness, timeliness and sustainability, in reality, performance management appears not to be taken seriously by management and other categories of staff. The findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between performance management, employee productivity, employee engagement and employee commitment. Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2020) also examined the problematic of budget implementation in Nigeria and the findings of the study showed that there is significant relationship between politics of accommodation, poor commitment, compromised budget monitoring, culture of corruption and budget implementation in Delta State.

Attempting a critical discourse of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta, Ejumudo (2014c) argued that youth restiveness is one of the many-sided effects of environmental

justice in the region. The study further argued that the root cause of youth restiveness is the environmental law that provided the basis for the operational hazards of the oil conglomerates that have collaborated with the Nigerian state whose intervention agencies have largely failed to close the developmental gaps in the region. The study also revealed that while the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) deepened the misery of the region given the political motive behind its creation as evident in the kind of projects embarked upon and the manner contracts were awarded, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) that was expected to be an improvement on the woeful performance of the defunct NDBDA, OMPADEC and the ill-fated Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) established by the Abacha-led administration has not fared very well. The study concluded that NDDC was not significantly different from the deliberately designed failed efforts of the so-called state interventionist-development sister agencies because the thinking of the state and its allies about the exploitation and under-development of the rich-oil region has not altered.

The Effects of Leadership Conspiracy and Complicity in Nigeria's Public Service Delivery

Many Nigerians have accepted corruption as part of society and the public service. Citizens offer and expect bribes for services, reinforcing the already entrenched corrupt system and practice. Followers often applaud, praise, exalt and support corrupt leaders from their ethnic or religious group regardless of their competence, capability and performance and followers flaunt and celebrate their wealth acquired through dubious and questionable means. The resultant blind loyalty fosters impunity and division and conflict in the public service. Some avoid criticizing government officials and notable politicians as a result of fear of persecution, reinforcing a culture of silence and many citizens rely on politicians for personal favour instead of demanding institutional reforms. Complicit or conspiring followers in government at the multi-layered

levels equally advertently and consciously align with leaders, even when they recognize wrongdoing, malfeasance or misconduct (Ejumudo, 2025). Thus, complicity is either silently covert or actively overt cooperation of followers who sustain toxic or questionable leaders out of fear, self-interest, or misplaced loyalty thereby constituting social glue that allows destructive leadership to persist in the public service of Nigeria.

Followership conspiracy or complicity operates in Nigeria's public service through obedience to patronage networks and compliance with patron-client demands in areas like employment, promotions, training, performance appraisal and contract awards that reward loyalty over merit, moral disengagement in which government officials justify and rationalise funds diversion, nepotism, budget padding and other survival tactics as normal, choosing complicity due to fear of sanctions and loss of meal ticket or means of livelihood, citizen followership or electoral complicity where voters reciprocally re-elect or tolerate leaders despite poor performance for patronage, which reinforces public-sector complicity in the public service of Nigeria. The negative effects and impacts of followership conspiracy and complicity in Nigeria's public service include institutional decay and weakened rule-based governance resulting in poor capacity to enforce controls and standards in areas like procurement, ghost workers, pension theft, oil bunkering, financial propriety, auditing, judicial bribery, electoral fraud, normalization of illegality by revenue generating and anti-corruption organizations, decline in the quality of public goods and service delivery.

Investigating leadership, followership and national development in Nigeria, Ejumudo, Adogbeji, Ejeba and Ejumudo (2025) posited that the dynamics of leadership, followership, and their impact on national development present critical challenges in Nigeria. The study also stressed that the followership in Nigeria is largely docile and complicit and the rather unchanging development has constrained their capacity to check and limit the excesses of corrupt and manipulative

leaders. The study revealed that the twin problem of leadership failure and followership conspiracy has not only resulted in the diversion and misappropriation of public resources, it has undermined public service meritocracy, efficiency, effectiveness and eroded citizenship trust and confidence. The study also revealed that the public service leadership is so disconnected from the aspirations and collective interest of the mass of the people such that national development goals in Nigeria are largely unattained. Sketching a relationship between electoral fraud and legitimacy crisis in Nigeria, Ejumudo (2012) argued that elections do not only provide nexus between the people and their rulers, it equally bestows legitimacy on government at the multi-layered levels. The findings of the study revealed that electoral injustice which manifests through sundry types and shades of election fraud, manipulation and malfeasance is a function of leadership failure and followership conspiracy and a threat to democratic consolidation as well as functional democratic enterprise.

Research Question Two: Does the endogenous factor (self) explain the exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service?

Self in itself contradicts service in the public realm or the public service. This is largely because while self speaks of mine, public service connotes us. It is the nature of self that makes human elements in the public service or put slightly differently, public service members to gravitate towards corruptive tendencies and practices. Analysing the danger of self, Achebe (1988) emphasized that patriotism (the exact opposite of selfishness) is not going to be easy or comfortable in a country that is badly run like Nigeria because there will always be some people whose personal and selfish interests are well served in an environment of mismanagement and social inequalities. In a generic sense, corruptive practices include misallocation, diversion and mismanagement of financial, material, physical, human and time resources.

In the financial context, corruption cannot occur without self-tendencies. In fact, it is self that moves the human element to desire to steal public funds and proceed to actualize the desire. Before the desire to indulge in corruption is executed, it will be processed through the five human channels: memory, imagination, conscience, affection and reasoning connected to the inside of every human element and, by implication, all public service members. No graft incident, whether real or imagined, has ever occurred in the public service in Nigeria without "self" operating and connecting with the memory channel for remembrance of the desire to steal or divert public funds, interacting with the imagination channel in order to receive images of the act to be committed, interfacing with the reasoning channel so as to reason with the desire, linking with the affection channel in order to cherish the desire and connecting with the conscience channel so as to accept the desire to engage in graft or corruption. All the mindless and conscienceless alleged and proven looting and diversion of the public till in Nigeria's public service is therefore a product of the interaction between self, the five channels and the five external senses (eye, ear, nose, mouth and legs and hands) of the public servants domiciled in the public service.

It is instructive to assert that the five external senses of the human resource or element in the public service also play important roles. Essentially, they have the initial contact with the object of graft or corruption through seeing (eye), hearing (ear), smelling (nose), eating (mouth) and feeling or handling (hands and feet) and send or transmit message (s) to self that eventually processes the information based on the message(s) received through the five channels. The transmitted message from the five senses actually creates an impression on self before the processing is done through interaction with the five channels: memory, imagination, reasoning, affection and conscience (Branham, 1962). The outcome of the above interaction will determine whether the message or information was accepted or rejected. If accepted, it is the external senses

that will execute the final decision to engage in graft or corruption. The execution can occur when the action such as writing the cheque to transfer funds in the sum of millions or billions from various public service agency accounts to private accounts is taken and implemented to the latter.

In the physical and material resources area of the public service in Nigeria, it is important to stress that self that is concerned with an individual without minding the welfare of others has led many public service organizational members to engage in government land and other property grabbing at the expense of government ownership, operations, activities as well as growth and development. For example, government land in choice and high-brow places are allocated by top government functionaries to them, their family members, relatives, friends and cronies and other government properties such as vehicles, equipment and machines are stolen and diverted for personal use. There are similar cases of outgoing government officials illegally carting away with government properties, only to be harassed and compelled to return same. Many of such properties are never returned, thereby making government at different levels to engage in unnecessary, unwarranted and avoidable expenditures. Such misuse and mismanagement of physical and material resources do not only affect the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations, they are also the outcome of self-interacting with the same five internal human channels: memory, imagination, reasoning, affection and conscience as well as the five human senses: eye, ear, nose, mouth, hands and legs (Branham, 1952).

In the human and time resources aspect, employees in Nigeria's public service engage in all kinds of unethical practice that culminate in undermining the standards and performance of the public sector. Many of the employees partake in extra-organizational activities including selling and buying of different products like clothes, shoes trinkets, household cooking utensils thereby depriving the affected ministries, departments, agencies, state-owned enterprises and local

authorities of the services needed for their growth and development. Some others are loafers and gad-about who hardly sit in the office to attend to official assignments and, by their actions, negatively hinder public service delivery. The above categories of employees are spoilers in the system and it is centrally the self-problem because it is self-tendency that prodded the actions finally executed by the five senses of the public service organizational members. The self can be labelled "selfish" or "unpatriotic" inner force or wheel that determines and directs the actions taken by the human resource in the public service.

Besides, there is preponderance of slothfulness in government business. In this wise, employees largely abandon their official assignments and return to them at their own pace and comfort. In fact, assignments and responsibilities that ought to be attended to and completed within a few days, take up to weeks and months partly because there are no clear measurable and assessable turn-around time standards or performance indicators. Achebe (1988) captured the ugly behaviour when he aptly noted that indiscipline pervades our life so completely that one may be justified in calling it the condition per excellence of contemporary Nigerian society. He opined that indiscipline is so common that it is seen in the home, in the school, in the public service, in government and in legislative assemblies. He equally posited that indiscipline is a failure or refusal to submit one's desires and actions to the restraints of orderly social conduct in recognition of the rights and desires of others or the standards of organizations and institutions. In contrast, Achebe stressed that discipline does not invite supervision by an external force, but it is imposed by the individual from within. This imposition works through the five channels and five senses. The 'within' under reference is self which can operate negatively or positively depending on the amount, force and direction.

Lucidly, all negative actions and activities including but not limited to improper recruitment and selection practices, wrong

selection of employees for training and development programmes, faulty performance appraisal and performance processes, partial promotion, reward and compensation systems, fraudulent supplies, contract awards, nominations for elective positions, appointments into boards of government institutions, organizations and agencies, organized crude oil theft, brazen electoral manipulation and all forms of financial mismanagement and impropriety are connected to the inside or internal self in conjunction with the inner human channels and external human senses.

On the whole, it is lack of control of self which enlarges the self-tendency that makes the human resource in the public service to desire to accumulate resources beyond reasonable proportions so much so, that there exist the dominant will to enrich self-more than state institutions and organizations thereby sacrificing the benefits and satisfaction of the needs of future generations at the altar of present personal gain that affects and creates value for their own unborn generations. Thus, self is the foundational force that engineers all the spoilers that commit and perpetuate criminal activities as well as unhealthy and unethical practices in Nigeria's public service. This self is, in fact, the power of selfishness, greed and avarice and relates well with the assertion of Hobbes (1946) that humans are selfish and primarily motivated by self-interest and the desire for their own well-being.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the following two research questions:

Do leadership failure, management malady, corruption and followership complicity have any significant impact in Nigeria's public service delivery?

The findings of this study revealed that leadership failure and management malady in the public service in Nigeria is institutional, structural, administrative, and behavioural with multiple effects on governance, institutional growth, development and renewal. The cross-cutting effects that have permeated all sectors of the economy have

resulted in deep-rooted and hydra-headed problems such as chronic inefficiencies, corruption, erosion of meritocracy, weaponisation of ethnicity and nepotism, decline in public trust and public disillusionment as well as underdevelopment and poor service delivery. The findings of the study also unveiled that corruption has removed funds and diverted same from priority services in sectors like health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, defence and pushed same into private pockets or inefficient projects thereby worsening outcomes and increasing unit costs of service delivery, reducing administrative efficiency, distorting procurement and regulatory enforcement, creating perverse incentives in public programs, lowering citizens' satisfaction and eroding democratic legitimacy despite plethora of reforms in Nigeria.

Essentially too, the findings of the study showed that followership conspiracy or complicity manifest in Nigeria's public service through patronage networks and compliance with patron-client demands in areas like employment, promotions, training, performance appraisal and contract awards that reward loyalty over merit, moral disengagement in which government officials justify and rationalise funds diversion, nepotism, budget padding and other survival tactics as normal, choosing complicity due to fear of sanctions and loss of meal ticket or means of livelihood, citizen followership or electoral complicity where voters reciprocally re-elect or tolerate leaders despite poor performance for patronage, which reinforces public-sector complicity in the public service of Nigeria. The study's findings equally indicated that followership conspiracy and complicity has led to and compounded the problematic of institutional decay, and weak rule-based governance and poor capacity to enforce controls and standards in areas like procurement, ghost workers, pension theft, oil bunkering, financial propriety, auditing, judicial bribery, electoral fraud, decline in the quality of public goods and service delivery in Nigeria.

Does the endogenous factor (self) explain the exogenous factors plaguing Nigeria's public service? The findings of this study revealed that

The findings of this study revealed that it is the nature of self that makes human elements or public service members to move towards corruptive tendencies and engage in negative and dysfunctional practices. To this end, Achebe (1988) emphasized that patriotism (the exact opposite of selfishness) is not going to be easy or comfortable in a country that is badly run like Nigeria because there will always be some people whose personal and selfish interests are well served in an environment of mismanagement and social inequalities. In a generic sense, corruptive practices include misallocation, diversion and mismanagement of financial, material, physical, human and time resources. The study also revealed that corruption cannot take place without being processed through the five human channels: memory, imagination, conscience, affection and reasoning connected to the inside of every human element (Braham, 1962) and, by implication, all public service members. All the mindless and conscienceless alleged and proven looting and diversion of the public till in Nigeria's public service, this study found out, is a product of the interaction between self, the five channels and the five external senses (eye, ear, nose, mouth and legs and hands) of the public servants domiciled in the public service.

Conclusion

In the face of the central role that the public service in Nigeria plays in the formulation and execution of government policies as well as the delivery of social services in the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted sectors of the economy, the issue of performance has resonated in research concerns and public discourse. At the heart of such concerns is the contention that the public service efficiency, effectiveness and overall performance in Nigeria has been constrained and plagued by sundry factors including self, leadership failure, corruption, management malady and

fellowship conspiracy or complicity despite the gargantuan of reforms initiated and implemented by different administrations. The above cross-cutting diminishing factors represent and constitute a tightly woven web that has undermined Nigeria's public service in almost all performance indicators. The factors are not only mutually reinforcing, they have also become so ingrained, rooted and established in Nigeria's public service so much so that a holistic, integrated, eclectic and pragmatic approach encapsulating institutional and policy reforms, socio-economic and political re-engineering, societal change as well as paradigmatic shift in norms, values, expectations that will engender the creation of a genial public service environment with genuine individual and group commitment and support as well as true development orientation and practice.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The Nigerian society should undergo resetting, remoulding and rebuilding because Nigeria's public service does not only reside, operate and function within it; it is also a product and reflection of the macro or larger society. This has become a desideratum largely as a result of the fact that no institution including the public service in Nigeria operate in a vacuum; rather, they operate in an environment that is multi-dimensional encapsulating the social, economic, political, legal and ethical component.
- Nigeria's public service should imbibe and integrate principles of efficiency and cost-effectiveness that focuses on minimizing waste, optimizing resource use, and achieving value for money; performance measurement and results-based management that emphasizes the adoption and deployment of lucid measurable performance indicators, targets, acceptable turn-around time for

service delivery and evaluation culture; customer orientation and citizen-centered service that recognizes citizens as customers providing inputs needed for conversion into outputs as well as ICT and E-Government innovations that enables and facilitates automation, digital service delivery and data management.

- There should be attitudinal re-orientation that will engender favorable predisposition and genuine commitment to as well as true support for the promotion of the culture of responsibility, transparency and accountability, the achievement of organizational macro and micro goals in order to enhance sustainable socio-economic growth and development that is needed to re-position Nigeria's public service for transformational leadership, active selfless followership and citizen oversight.

References

- Achebe, C. (1988). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Adamolekun, L. (1983). *Public administration: A Nigerian and comparative perspective*. London, UK: Longman.
- Adamolekun, L. (2002). *Public administration in Africa: Main issues and selected country studies*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Adebayo, A. (2004). *Principles and practice of public administration in Nigeria*. Spectrum Books.
- Adebayo, A. (2019). *Public administration in Nigeria: Issues, challenges, and prospects*. *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 7(2), 21–34.
- Adeoye, A. A. (2024). *Leadership and national development in Nigeria*. Lagos: Zenith Publishers.
- Akpemuwa, M.O., Ejumudo, T.B & Ejumudo, K. B. O. (2023). Performance management system and employee job satisfaction in Nigeria: A study of Delta State Polytechnic Oghara. *Dutse Faculty Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Federal University of Dutse, Jigawa State, 5(1), 25-38.
- Alemika, E. E. O., & Chukwuma, I. C. (2005). Criminal victimization and fear of crime in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. CLEEN Foundation.
- Amede, O. H., & Ejumudo, K. B. O. (2021). The problematic of disaster management law and policy in Nigeria: A study of Bayelsa State. *Indonesian Journal of Advocacy and Legal Services*, 3(1), 35–50.
- Anifowose, R., & Enemu, F. C. (Eds.). (1999). *Elements of politics*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd..
- Apaokegi, A. A. (2014). Role of religion in the promotion of national security: Islamic perspective in I. B. Bello-Imam (Ed.), *National security and development in contemporary Nigeria* (pp. 34–50). Ibadan, Nigeria: College Press.
- Asiodu, P. C. (1979). *Essays on Nigerian political economy*. Lagos, Nigeria: Sankore Publishers.
- Ayo, E. J. (1988). *Development planning in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press Ltd.
- Bashland, A. (2019). *The public service and professionalism in Africa*. Kumasi: EPP Book Publishers.
- Box, R. C. (2018). *Essential history for public administration*. Raleigh, NC: Melvin & Leigh Publishers

- Branham, W.M. (1952): Experiences. Jeffersonville: Voice of God Recordings.
- Branham, W.M. (1962): Restoration of the bride tree. Jeffersonville: Voice of God Recordings.
- Chikeleze, F. O., & Orji, U. B. (2021). Implications of Politicization of Appointment and Recruitment for the Performance of Nigeria Public Sector.*
- Cooper, P. J. (2021). *Public law and public administration*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Denhardt, (2019). *Public Administration*. Cengage Learning
- Dosunmu, A. S., & Lamidi, K. O. (2021). Implications of Politics on Recruitment into State Civil Service in Nigeria*
- Ejumudo, K. B. O. & Amede, O. H. (2019). The challenges of waste management in Nigeria: A study of Delta Central Senatorial District. *Yaradua University Journal of Social and Management Science*, 4(1), 25-39.
- Ejumudo, K. B. O., & Anyanwu, R. (2025). Decentralization and infrastructural development in Nigeria: A study of Burutu and Bomadi local government areas, *Management and Humanities Innovations Journal, University of Artois*, Frances 9(2), 127-143.
- Ejumudo, K. B. O., & Ejuvwekpoko, S. (2013). The political economy of poverty eradication in Nigeria: The perilous and tortuous journey for MDGs. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 3(4), 65–75.
- Ejumudo, K. B. O., & Ikenga, F. A. (2015). Globalization and corruption in Nigeria. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 8, 1–9.
- Ejumudo, K. B.O. (2009a). The practicability and efficiency of total quality management in the Nigerian public sector: A critical examination. *Professor BasseyAndah Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(6), 135-144.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O & Ejumudo, T. B. (2021). Corruption and development in Nigeria: A study of Ondo State. *Law Research Review Quarterly*, 7 (2), 153-166.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O, Igbakpa, B.R, & Odukwe E.U, (2023). Party allegiance and the efficacy of Legislative oversight of the House of Representatives in Nigeria, *International Journal of Management and Humanities innovations*, 12 (3), 113-120.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2008a). The evaluation of training, a desideratum in the Nigerian public sector – A case of the NNPC, *Journal of Social Policy & Society*, 5(1), 50-57.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2008b). The intractable crisis of the Nigerian public oil sector and the unending palaver of reorganization and restructuring of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, *Journal of Social and Policy Issues*, 5(3), 1-9.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2010a). Public sector administration and national development in Nigeria: The performance dilemma. *International Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 2(1), 8-15.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2010b). Social justice, democracy and cultural renewal in Nigeria. *Africana: A Journal of Ideas on Africa and the African Diaspora*, 4(1), 210-238. ISSN:2155 7829(print),2155-7837(online)

- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2010c). A climatic explanation of the inefficacy of corporate social responsibility in Nigeria: The passivity of government. *State and Society*, 1(1), 203-224. ISSN:
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2011). Air pollution and health challenges in the Niger Delta: Desirability of a collaborative policy and action, *Africana: A Journal of Ideas on Africa and the African Diaspora*, 5(3), 161-190.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2012). Electoral fraud and the legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. *International Journal of Political Science and Public Administration*, 4 (1), 16-27.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2013a). Health service delivery in Nigeria: Managing the organizational environments. *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Health Care*, 3(4), 35-46.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2014a). The democracy/environmental justice challenges in Nigeria's Niger Delta and the developmental leadership and governance culture imperative, *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 5(15), 27-39. ISSN: 2222-1700 (paper), 2222-2855(online).
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2014b).The problematic of capacity building in Nigeria. *Research and Discussion*, 7(2), 24-41. ISSN:1855- 4148UDK:3
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2014c). Youth restiveness in the Niger Delta: A critical discourse. *Sage Journal*, 5(7), 1-12. ISSN: 2158-2440
- Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2015). Pay reward system management and staff performance in Nigeria: A study of the Delta State civil service. *Research and Discussion*, 5(4), 1-18.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O.& Ikenga, F. A. (2017). The Problematic of the politicization of the civil service in Nigeria: A study of the Delta State civil service, *African Journal of Social Behavioural Sciences*, 7(2), 82-93.
- Ejumudo, K.B.O., Douglas T.M.O. & Ejumudo, T.B. (2024). The effect of inter-ministerial coordination's on social service delivery in selected ministries in Delta State, Nigeria; *Management, Marketing, Entrepreneurial Journal*, University of Groningen, Broerstraat, Groningen, Netherlands,9 (2) 110-126.
- Ejumudo, T.F., Adogbeji, E., Ejeba, S. and Ejumudo, K.B.O. (2025). Leadership, followership and national development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies*, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, Australia, 13 (2), 1-18.
- Eke, I. C., Eke, F. A., & Agala, F. B. (2023). *Public service efficiency and implications for economic development in Nigeria. International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 8(7), 1821-1830.
- Ekeh, P. (1975). *Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: A theoretical statement*. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17(1), 91-112.
- El-Rufai, N. (2013). *Foundations for service delivery: Building government's capability to implement Nigeria's Vision 20:2020*. Abuja, Nigeria: Bureau of Public Service Reform.
- Ezeani, E.O. (2006). *Fundamentals of public administration*. Enugu: Zik-Chuks Publishers.
- Gisselquist, R. M. (2012). *Good governance as a concept, and why this matters for*

- development policy*. UNU-WIDER Working Paper No. 2012/30.
- Gorsuch, L. (1968). *Report of the commission on the civil service*. Federal Govt. Printer.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Grindle, M. S. (2007). *Good enough governance revisited*. *Development Policy Review*, 25(5), 553–574.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2024). *Democratic reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Hobbes, T. (1946). *Leviathan*. Oxford: University Press
- House, H.H. (2017). *Public sector reforms in Nigeria*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Hyden, G. (2010). *Governance and the study of politics*. In D. Arneil & A. W. Cox (Eds.), *Democracy, governance, and development in Africa* (pp. 15–34). Routledge.
- Ibeh, J. M., & Onwuzuruike, A. (2025). *Politicization of Workers' Performance in Nigeria Civil Service and its Effects on Service Delivery*.
- Ibrahim, J. (2019). *Politics and administration in Nigeria: Issues in bureaucratic management*. London, UK: Macmillan Press.
- Igbakpa, B.R, Ejumudo, K.B.O& Ejumudo, T.B (2023). Corruption and the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives. *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 89-99.
- Igbuzor, E. (2013). Leadership, governance and public policy in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Policy and Strategy*, 28(1), 1–20.
- Isaak, A.C. (1975): Scope and methods of political science, Illinois: Dorsey Press.
- Johnson, P. A. (2022). *Public service engagement and the social contract: The role of public servants in organisational development*. Academic Press.
- Kaufman, H. (2019). *Bureaucracy and public administration functions in modern governance*. Academic Press.
- Kellerman, B. (2004). *Bad leadership: What it is, how it happens, why it matters*. Harvard Business Press.
- Mackintosh, M. (1966). *Politics and society: Studies in the political development of modern Europe*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Madubochi, W. (2024). *Major phases of the modern Nigerian civil service*. *Advance Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(6), 1–7.
- Mauro, P. (1995). Corruption and growth. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110(3), 681–712.
- McConnell, E. and Campbell R. (2019). *Economics. Principles, problems and policies*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mosher, F. C. (2017). *Democracy and the public service*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Nnoli, O. (1978). *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage Publications
- Nwolise, O.B.C. (2019). *The military as the obstacle to democracy in Nigeria, in*

- S.G. Tyoden (ed.) constitutionalism and national development in Nigeria.* Benin City: NPSA.
- Nwosu, H.N. (1977). *Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Obiajulu, C., & Obi, C. (2004). *Strategies for effective local government administration in Nigeria*. Onitsha, Nigeria: Abana Books.
- Oikhala (2022): Oikhala, G. I. (2022). *Public service and efficiency challenge in Nigeria*. *Romanian Journal of Public Affairs*, 4(4), 65–76.
- Okotoni, O., & Adebayo, A. (2003). Management in the Nigerian civil service: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(3), 245–252.
- Oladimeji, A. (2020). *Impact of non-merit considerations on public service administration in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Journal of Public Sector Studies*, 7(2), 45–60.
- Olaniyi and Oyewale (2021). Rule of law and public service challenges in Nigeria. *Romanian Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(1), 99–135.
- Olaopa, T. (2008). *Theory and practice of public administration in Nigeria*.
- Olaopa, T. (2014). *Public service reforms in Nigeria (1960–2013): A critical overview*. Ibadan: University Press PLC.
- Olowu, D. (1997). *Decentralization policy implementation in Africa: Profile, measurement, and analysis*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Olowu, D., & Wunsch, J. S. (2004). *Local governance in Africa: The challenges of democratic decentralization*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Oluwatobi, G.F. (2021). *The nature of politics in Africa. In Africa and the politics of failure and renewal*. Palgrave. *The problem of followership conspiracy in Ghana*
- Osoba, S. O. (1996). *Corruption in Nigeria: Historical perspectives*. *ROAPE*, 23(69), 371–386.
- Palmer, M. (2023). *Principles of comparative politics and administration*. London: Routle
- Rose-Ackerman, S. (2019). *Corruption and government*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenberg, H. (1979). *Bureaucracy: The career of a concept*. New Delhi: Heinemann Publishers.
- Sapru, R.K. (2023). *Administrative theories and management thought*. Delhi: PHI Learning Limited.
- Servicom. (2008). *Servicom policy. Abuja, Nigeria: Federal Government (Services Compact Implementation Unit, National Planning Commission)*.
- Shore, A. B. (2020). *Responsiveness, reliability, and responsibility in public service: A conceptual analysis*. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 11(2), 79–99.
- Tamuno, T. N. (1972). *The evolution of the Nigerian State*. Longman.
- Tocqueville, A. de. (1835). *Democracy in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Transparency International. (2023). *Corruption perceptions index 2023*. Retrieved from *core problems of management malady in Nigeria's public service*

Weber, M. (1949). *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: Oxford University Press.