# Ethics in the Public Service in Africa: A Focus on the Nigerian Public Service

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**Abstract.** A thorough observation of the Public Service in the African society, particularly in the past decades reveals a Public Service bedevilled with several unethical conduct and behaviour covering social, economic, religious and political dimensions. These unethical standards manifest in poor attitude to work, organisational irresponsibility, corruption, inefficiency, low level of productivity. The collapse of ethical and professional standards in the Public Service has led to crisis in governance, especially in the area of implementation of government policies and programs. The focus of this paper is on the examination of ethics in the Public Service in Africa with particular interest on Nigerian Public Service. Ethical standards have been ranked as one of the cardinal instruments of success of any organization. One of the major objectives of this study is to examine the character of administrative ethics in Nigeria and ultimately come up with useful suggestions on how to raise ethical standards which govern the performance of both the exercise of technical skills and operation of organizational procedures in the Public Service. Finally, this paper highlights recommendations geared at promoting ethical behaviour in Nigeria and Africa generally.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Government, Public Service, Civil Service, Public organization, Society, Nigeria, Africa.

## 1. Introduction

Ethics is seen as the principles or standards by which behaviour is evaluated in an organization or in a society. Some standards of behaviour are almost universally valued and cherished – such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, trustworthiness – and those who violate these ethical standards are evaluated negatively. Sometimes, the standards by which behaviour is evaluated are influenced by the profession, position or relationship ties of the person taking the action. For that reason, it is found that the ethical standards applied to specific positions, for example public officials, lawyers, doctors, engineers, clergy - reflect the roles and relationships common to that position.

This paper focuses on ethical standards applicable to public servants, usually to elected and career public servants alike. This is because they hold positions in government, public/civil servants are expected to treat their positions as a public trust, and behave only in ways that respect the power and authority the public has placed in that person and the government position they hold.

In the late 1950's and the early 1960s when most African countries gained independence, the countries, particularly Nigeria, inherited a vibrant and effective Public Service from the colonialists that paid serious attention to the good conduct of the officials. The decay in the conduct of Public Servants in Nigeria initially became noticeable in the period immediately following the Civil War. The unethical attitude in the Public Service manifested first in general laxity followed by extortion and then financial mismanagement. After independence, the Public Service which also includes the Civil Service

was as efficient as the erstwhile colonial service which preceded it. Subsequently, something went wrong somewhere and the Public service lost its efficiency and dedication.

The fortunes of some African Public Services especially that of the Nigerian Public Service, generally took a downward turn. Unfortunately, due to lack of serious efforts to handle and arrest the situation and absence of a sustained interest in the flashes of efforts to sanitize the conduct of Public servants coupled with application of technically ineffective remedial measures, the ethical behavior of Civil Servants and other Public Servants degenerated and escalated by the day to the present era.

However, the promotion of a sound ethical culture in the Public Service and the enlarged African society, Nigeria inclusive, has been the driving force underpinning every action of government and its agencies in present day Nigeria. As enshrined in the Public Service charter for Africa, ethical culture manifests in an officer, when among others, he performs his duty efficiently, displays discipline, dignity, integrity, equity, impartiality, fairness, transparency, justice, legality, public spiritedness and courtesy in his actions. These could be seen as the core values intended to guide Public Servants in their daily operations. They are also the common standards by which we evaluate the behaviour of Public Servants, and are informed by democratic principles, social norms, and professional ethics. Public Service organizations are encouraged to find ways to institutionalize these ethical values and hold public servants accountable for behaving in accordance with the standards.

The crisis of governance over the past decades in Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular as observed by Adegoroye (2005) has been critically associated with the collapse of ethical and professional standards in virtually every facet of our national life. For example, the inability to maintain professional and ethical standards in the civil service and the entire public service resulted in various military coups which adversely affected every stratum of the Nigerian society. He contended that it accounted

for the near collapse of the educational system, the increased wave of crime, the decadence in the health sector and the pervasive culture of greed, indiscipline and corruption in the public service. The resultant effect of compromising on standard is that everybody in the society becomes the ultimate loser.

Corruption, fraud, illegal conduct and other types of unethical activity have characterized the public service including the private sector. There is no doubt that different types of unethical behavior have contributed significantly to increased cynism and scepticism by the larger public (Ehrich et al, 2005).

Akinyemi (2002) in Ogundele (2010) noted that one of the greatest social and economic problems in Nigeria which must be tackled is that of breakdown in morals, work ethics, discipline, social responsibility and general civility among citizens. Ethical problems have forced various governments in Nigeria and other African countries to introduce one form of legislation or the other to curb this ugly trend.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Service efficiency has been one of the central issues in contemporary African public administration. Efficiency in turn is grounded on values which help bureaucrats immeasurably to shape the directions and cultures of the organization they manage.

Administration demands proper and effective performance of the individual responsibilities in an organization according to laid down rules and regulations. Administration as a profession has standardized techniques of performance, ethical principles and standards expected of all practitioners. Ethical standards have been ranked as one of the cardinal instruments of success of any organization. Although ethical standards have direct association with legal standards they are indeed different instruments for shaping behavior. Whereas a number of immoral and unethical acts are accommodated within the laws of some nations, ethical behaviors demand more morality, pointing out how people relate to others, how individuals

treat others and the degree of responsibility that individuals feel for others.

When an individual refuses to maintain any moral absolutes such deficiencies rob off on the organization where he affiliates. Thus, often times, the Public Service organizations are criticized for their ethical shortcoming. Studies have shown that unethical behaviors are direct results of inefficiency and low levels productivity (Brown, 1989), (Sherrer, 2000). Unethical behavior particularly in the Public Service is an impediment to economic and social development of any nation.

The above observation is in line with the study carried out by Edwards (2001) on ethics in the Australian Public Service. He noted that the key to the solution of the problems facing the Public Service is the reference to professional standards. These embrace the exercise of technical skills, the operation of organizational procedures and ethical standards governing performance. This is couched on the premise that the question of ethical standards determines how Civil Servants and other Public Servants perform their work in relation to the loyalties they observe and the conflicts they perceive.

However, the problems of the Public Service in Nigeria which need to be corrected to improve the dynamism and effectiveness of the service are:
-   The disregard for rules and regulations that could enhance good ethics and efficiency in the service;
-   General decline of efficiency and effectiveness;
-   The weak enforcement of rules and regulations, relating to unethical behavior and corruption.
-   Virtual institutionalization of corruption at all levels and segments of the service
-   The perpetual breakdown of discipline;
-   Lack of financial accountability and probity and
-   The politicization of the top hierarchy of the public service.

The lucid picture of the unethical administrative behavior of the Public Servants painted in the preceding section may seem to suggest the absence of rules and regulations guiding the conduct of Public Servants. Yet, to hold such a belief would be derailing from the point. Legislations abound as to how Public officers in general should behave and conduct themselves in respect of their offices. For instance, there are the Civil Service Handbook, Public Service Rules and Pension Act, the Civil Service Rules (Formerly General Order) and the Code of Ethics for Public/Civil Servants all of which apply specifically to Public Servants among others.

## 3. Research Questions

The following questions provide the framework on which a questionnaire was developed for the purpose of this study:
- What is the ethical standard of the Civil/Public Service in existence in Nigeria?
- What impact does the level of education of the Public Servants have on their ethical behavior?
- What factors, (including institutional and environmental) affect the ethical behaviors of Nigerian Public Servants?
- What are the implications and remedies for overcoming unethical behavior in the Nigerian Public Service?

## 4. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this research paper is to examine the character of administrative ethics in Nigeria and ultimately come up with useful suggestions on how to raise ethical standards which govern the performance of both the exercise of technical skills and operation of organizational procedures in the Public Service.

To help in the achievement of the major objective, the following sub-objectives would be pursued:

-   To examine the level of education and moral disposition of, and as such, illuminate the administrative behavior of the Nigerian Public Servants.
-   Identify, the institutional and ecological factors that shape the ethical inclination of bureaucrats in Nigeria.

- To make suggestions on how to raise ethical standards which govern the performance of both the exercise of technical skills and operation of organizational procedures in the Public Service.
- Develop a strategic follow-up action that could enhance the quality of Public Service ethics in Nigeria.

## 5. Ethics: Conceptual Clarification

Conceptual framework entails presenting a general understanding of the key concepts used in the study. This obviates any uncertainties that might arise. From a general view point ethics have been interpreted by many writers and scholars to mean so many things – like an omnibus – that its original meaning seemed to have been lost. However, the discussion and debate on the phenomenon of ethics have been on the increase daily. The concept ethics have received so much attention and momentum because of may be, advances in technology, access to information via satellite communications, the internet and cable networks.

Most of the controversy surrounding ethics stem from its multifaceted nature; it covers everything from economics to culture, the environment, governance, international relations, values and morals, religion and much more. The meaning of ethics is therefore hard to pin down.

Some people hold the view that ethics is concerned with the moral aspect of man, that is, how man ought to behave in the society he finds himself. It also refers to code of conduct or principles governing or regulating man's life. It is in this sense that one talks of the ethics of various professions. For instance, if a member of a particular profession flaunts the code of ethics (conduct) of his profession; his behavior is described as unethical. In this way, every man is checked and equally protected in the society he belongs.
Davis (1990) in his own way conceptualized ethics as consisting of those standards of conduct that, all things considered, every member of a particular group wants to follow

even if their following them would mean he too has to follow them. Acting ethically is acting according to appropriate ethical standard. Ethics is related to but distinct from morality. In trying to relate the two, Davis pointed out that morality consists of those standards of conduct everyone (every rational person) wants every other to follow even if everyone else's following them would mean he had to follow them too. On the other hand, ethics (the ethics of a particular group) consists of those morally permissible standards of behavior or conduct each member of a group wants every other to follow even if their following them would mean he or she had to follow them too. Implied, ethics is 'special morality'.

Suffice here to say that we all agree about certain rules of conduct in our societies and or organizations. For example, the rule against murder seems to be common property of everyone or at least of all those not plainly too young, too feeble minded or too mentally ill to count as rational. These universal ethical standards might be called morality while we reserve the word 'ethics' for those morally permitted standards that apply only to particular groups.
For Thompson (2010, p.10):
*Ethics or 'moral philosophy' is about thinking through issues of right and wrong. It examines the moral choices that people make, what they are based and how they might be justified.*

Thompson went further to divide ethics into two important elements. Ethical theory and applied ethics. 'Ethical theory' asks whether morality should be based on a rational interpretation of nature, anticipated results, personal development or the needs of society, and also examines question about the status of moral language, free will and so on. While 'Applied Ethics' applies such theories to various aspects of life: medical ethics, issues of war and peace, life or death, environmental ethics, business ethics, etc.
In its simplest rendition, ethics could be said to refer to a system of moral principles which affect how people make decisions and lead their lives. It is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and also described as a

moral philosophy. Ethics cover the following areas:
- How to live good life
- Our rights and responsibilities
- Moral decision – what is good or bad?

It can be summarized to mean moral principles that govern or shape a person's or groups behavior, or the moral correctness of specified conduct.

In line with the above, ethics means two things. First ethics refer to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues, of honesty, compassion and loyalty (issues of ethics 2010).
In another vein, Mizzioni (2010 p. 4) conceded that:
*Ethics is a field that not only looks at ethical and moral ideals that we should have but also examines actual codes of conduct that people indeed follow and use whether consciously or unconsciously. Some ethical codes of conduct are written out and some are orally or socially transmitted.*

At this juncture, it will be pertinent to make important clarification. Ethics can be viewed from two angles. The first angle is that it can be seen as an academic discipline contending with what is right or wrong or with moral duty and obligation. Secondly, it can connote the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession or standards of behavior. In this paper the latter is the sense in which the word is used.

From the foregoing, professional ethics can be taken to mean special standards of conduct that shapes or governs members of a particular profession because they are members of that profession. Professional ethics can only be learnt as part of the training for that profession. Thus, members of the administrative system are expected to learn the ethics of their profession during formal training or on the job (Tunde and Omobolaji, 2009). Seen in this light, professional ethics has variety of colours. For example, Catholic ethics applies to the Catholics; engineering ethics applies to engineers, legal ethics to lawyers; medical ethics to physicians and so on. Institutional ethics, though similar are still distinct. In this case, institutional ethics are special standards of conduct governing all those affiliated or connected in a certain way with a particular institution because they are so connected. This simply goes to answer research question one. Since the Civil/Public Servants belong to an institution there are existing common ethical standards of the Service which, it is believed, are generally understood.

## 5.1 Administrative Ethics

Administration demands proper and effective performance of the individual responsibilities in an organization according to laid down rules and regulations. The questions may be asked, what are the rules and regulations that guide the performance of administrators? Administration as a profession has standardized techniques of performance, ethical principles and standards of behavior expected of all practitioners, these principles and standards are referred to as ethics.

Thompson (1985) conceptualized administrative ethics as involving the application of moral principles to the conduct of official responsibilities and duties in an organization. For forester (1981) moral behavior refers to the willingness to make difficult decisions concerning right and wrong in situation involving fundamental value conflicts. Chapman (1988) on the other hand has defined Civil Service ethics 'as the application of moral standards in the course of official work'. He further averred that 'the practical dimension of the topic is that area of official conduct and actions where Civil and or Public Servants are not simply carrying out specific instructions or order from higher authority but are making value judgments that have implications for their professional standing. Chapman observed that the judgement of these Public servants do not all

have an ethical element, but the number which do is a matter of increased concern. So it is expected of Public Servants to apply and exercise certain ethical consideration when carrying out orders of political bosses and when they are faced with a situation where they have to make value judgment that have implication for their profession.

Ethics in the Public Service are the broad norms that stipulate how public servants should behave and exercise judgement and discretion in carrying out their official duties. Central to administrative ethics are attitudes, standards, and system of values which have been internalized in the public servant. Its foundation is the belief that what public officials and employees do has a central and inescapable normative component involving values, morality and ethics (York, 1984).

Scholars like Effiong (2004) strongly argued that administration is related to ethics in as much as ethics sets standards of integrity and honesty in human actions. Ethics has, as pointed out earlier in this paper, to do with moral values of the community and administrators, to which public servants are part of, must take cognizance of these values while enforcing public policy. Work ethics demand loyalty to the system, devotion to duty and a very high sense of integrity, high moral standards, honesty and fairness. No formal punishment can be as effective as the condemnation of an employee by his own sense of dignity and pride and by persons of his own class.

Effiong went further to explain that one of the key areas of concern of administrators and indeed the ultimate challenge of an organization is to enhance productivity. And that code of ethics and standards are instruments of effective performance and effective performance is since qua non for productivity.

## 5.2 Environment of Bureaucratic Morality

This section briefly examines the relationship between the environment and bureaucratic morality, the state, political process and the conduct of public administration in Nigeria. As

remarked by Napier (2010) bureaucracy is nothing more than a means of organizing and managing people and is subject to the same kinds of analysis as any other kind of organizational theory. The reason, behind the adoption of bureaucracy by government was to eliminate widespread political corruption and efficiently organize state and local government services.

There has been a considerable debate in the literature of political science dating back to the period of Hobbes as to whether the state, as a sovereign body, should be accountable to anyone or whether it should be treated as a moral and responsible agent. The consensus now seems to be that while the state must be self-accounting on the basis of the constitution and the laws of the country, the individuals who exercise power on behalf of the state whether appointed or elected, must be accountable for the actions they take on behalf of the state (Ademolekun, 2002).

## 5.3 The Ecology of Administrative Conduct

Policy makers and other public servants operate or work within a specific milieu. The environment in which policies are made and under which policy – makers function determine, to a considerable extent, the context and content of public policy.

The system theory scholars expressed that policies can better be understood and analysed by understanding the environment that generate them and from which they emanate. This is because policy inputs – demands and supports – "are generated in the environment and transmitted to the political system; at the same time, the environment places limits and constraints upon what can be done by policy – makers" (Anderson, 1979).

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum, likewise the Public Service neither do they operate in isolation. They are organically linked with other component structures in the society. They are constantly being affected by external forces which determine their effectiveness and performance. Therefore, it is imperative for the management of any organization to examine

components of their firm's external and internal environments to understand the dynamics and far-reaching changes that are occurring. The illustration of the place of the bureaucracy in the society by Heady (1966, p. 20) is instructive:

*The environment of bureaucracy may be visualized as a series of concentric circles, with bureaucracy at the center. We may visualize the largest circle as representing all the society or the general social system. The next circle represents the economic system or the economic aspects of the social system; it encloses the administrative sub-system and bureaucracy as one of its elements.*

Rigg (1964), Choforas (1965) and Kalagbor (2001) view the administrative system in terms of 'input' of goals, resources and demands resulting in an 'output' of related goods, services, and regulative acts. Input – primary environmental intake into the system; Through-put-the conversion or transformation process of the input variable or output; Output – the product of input conversion by the system. Feedback – environmental response to output, negative or positive. Thus if administration is considered as a subsystem, as part of a large social system, then its 'output' may be viewed as 'input' for the bigger system. In other words, maintaining the peace, or building roads or defending the state may be outcome of administrative action (outputs) which serve the survival needs (inputs) of a social order. Seen in this light administrative subsystem may be understood, not in terms of its internal arrangement and relationships, but its interaction with the external, non-administrative subsystems of the same society. An alternative way of characterizing an administrative system is by inclining the environment which gives it form instead of outlining its component structures.

From the foregoing, it simply means that no proper understanding of the performance of a structure can be made without recourse to environmental factors. This is amplified by the explanation on the impact of the environment on political structures by Bailey (1970). Bailey explained that it is easy to see how political structures are stated in terms of roles. He defined structure as a set of rules about behavior. The rules list the rights and duties of particular roles; they say what a king, a subject, a voter, a public servant, a party leader, a village headman etc. is expected to do in that particular capacity and what he may expect others to do for him. In the same vain, Rigg defined a structure as any pattern of behavior which has become a standard feature of a social system. Thus, a government bureau is a 'structure' or rather a whole set of structures consisting of the many things the officials in the bureau do regularly; the decisions they make, the people they see, the papers they sign among others. The structure is not composed of the people and things themselves, but of their actions. It does not include all their actions, but only those actions which relate to the goals and work of the bureau.

But an individual is likely to have many roles; the village headman or the public servant may also be a father, brother, a farmer, a priest in the temple, and a part-time trader. At the very least all these different roles compete for a man's time and energy; they may also directly influence his political behavior. Also, the rights and obligations of family ties – extended family, do not end with a person's election or appointment to a position of authority. Contrarily, they are felt all the more keenly. Those who gain office often find themselves besieged by relations and friends of relations expecting benefits for, just as blood links helped to cushion adversity, they would also be expected to confer advantages. To have a family member in a ministry or local government, for instance, is seen as a benefit. In effect the environment both provides resources for political use and puts constraints upon political behavior.

## 5.4 Institutional Foundation for Professional Conduct

Ethics and morals have remained a cardinal and critical issue in the management and administration of corporate bodies and institutions. This is why, as Aliche (2012) posits, it can simply be seen as 'the ingenious anatomy of corporate institutions'. Companies particularly government owned including the Public Service are easily distressed because of

high level fraud and corruption simply because the managers are not deeply trained with the use and application of ethics in the organization.

Within the history of the Public Service community, multiple reforms have not been able to yield great results simply because the administration and administrators particularly in our contemporary era are not strongly driven with the application of ethical standards in their behavior.

When viewing Public Service ethics at the government wide or institutional level, attention is focused primarily on creating a well – functioning government that can effectively deter and redress corruption. Every government, irrespective of culture or level of economic development, experiences one form of corruption or another.

Public Servants in the performance of their duties to realize the goals of the government of the day are required to be well informed, not only with their work, but with the rules and regulations, procedures and ethical conduct of the Public Service institution. They are governed by two things – the laws of the Public Service, or as Thompson (2010) expressed 'the laws of the land', and the goals that politicians have set. For this purpose measures have been put in place to check the ethical behavior of Public Servants by various governments in Nigeria. These include the Public Service Rules, Public/Civil Service Handbook, Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Civil Servants, Public Complaints Commission, Official Oath, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal, Independent Corruption Practices and Allied Matters Commission among others. Yet the ethical standards of behaviors spelt out in the Public Service Rules and others are not respected and obeyed by the Public Servants.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

For a proper understanding of theoretical framework, it will not be out of place to first of all come to terms with what theory is all about in this study.

According to Anikpo (1986), theory is a set of generation statements made on or in relation to

hypothesis inferred from a set of premises which have been confirmed true. For Kerlinger (1973) a theory is "a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and proposition that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena".

Theoretical framework is "the main supporting parts of a building, vehicle or object or a set of facts, ideas from which more complicated ideas are developed, or on which decisions are made". (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006). Theoretical framework here implies the examination of some theories proffered by scholars on the issue of ethics in the public service in Nigeria to enable us consider and select a particular theory on which to couch this study. Theories like the monist theory and the pluralist theory by Keke (1996) are looked at among others and their applicability to this research. In summary, the monist theory holds the view that there is only one single reasonable system of values from which the foundations of ethics can be built on. This system is the same for all human beings everywhere. This theory contends that one fundamental value overrides all other values; the importance of those other values depends on their standing in the overall hierarchical system.

The monist theory has been criticized for its inability to provide a satisfactory theoretical basis for building up the ethics of Public Service for the fact that one single value is not enough to describe the whole sphere of public administration in democratic countries. It also has the shortcoming of incompatibility with changing circumstances, for example, with globalization or extensive administrative reforms.

On the other hand, the Pluralist theory hinges on the nature of values where realization makes life good. This theory offers a description of some conceptual and factorial features relevant to good life, and also undertakes to evaluate these features on the basis of their contribution to good life. Pluralism means a plurality of values. Therefore, pluralism and conditionality should

conform better with democratic governance than monism.

The pluralist theory is important and applicable to this study because it sees ethics as not just a matter of moral values, but also has to do with non-moral values. This is important for Public Service ethics because Public Service ethics is not just a question of morality, but is also a matter of good governance and administration.

## 7. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to pilot this study:

- Environment will not significantly influence the ethical behavior of Public Servants in Nigeria.
- There is no significant relationship between the level of education and the ethical standards of public servants.

## 8. Methodology

This research adopts the historical descriptive method of analysis. Much of the research work is based in archival and library research. The background data for this study is obtained basically from secondary sources which include: texts, journals, reports, case studies, models and in some cases interview conducted and questionnaire distributed to elicit information from respondents.

### 8.1 Instrumentation

The research instruments used for data collection in this study include questionnaire, interview (oral), texts, journals and the review related literature. The questionnaire which contained thirty four (34) items was designed to sample, views of public servants (both senior and junior) on the issue of ethics in the public service.

### 8.2 Population

There are over twenty four (24) public ministries in the area of study. As such the total population was not used in the study. However, the sample is three hundred drawn from 24 ministries. Twelve public/civil servants were randomly selected from each of the ministries and questionnaire distributed to them for response.

## 9. Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed in accordance with the stated hypotheses. The statistical method used in the analysis of data is the chi-square test.

The formula for chi-square is $X^2 = \dfrac{(0 - E)^2}{E}$

E = Theoretical or expected frequencies

The degree of freedom for chi-square is calculated using df = 1 at 05 level.

The figures are presented in a tabular form for easy computation and understanding.

Presentation and analysis of findings on hypothesis 1

## Research Question

What factors (including institutional and environmental) affect the ethical behaviour of public servants?

**Table 1.1: Public Servants Response**

| The Environment Impacts on Ethical Behavior | % Assigned to Respondents | No. of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 31.1% | 101 |
| Disagree | 53.4% | 159 |
| Undecided | 15.5% | 40 |
| **Total** | | **300** |

From the table above, it was observed that the respondents do not all agree or disagree with the claim that the environment has any part to play on the ethical behavior of Public Servants. 31.1% of the respondents agreed that the environment impacts on the ethical conduct of Public Servants. 53.4% disagreed with that assumption, while 15.5% were undecided.

The summary of the above finding is that majority of the Public Servants in Nigeria are of the opinion that the environment does not impinge or impact so much on their ethical behavior in the performance of their official duties.

Public Servants, as earlier pointed out, as members and products of the environment where the public service organization operates have various ties and affiliations in the society – family ties, religious, organizational or institutional, associational ties and so on. The various social relations they have in the society can facilitate as well as impinge on their conduct. One important issue in this area is the economic milieu within which the public servants operate. For this reason the public servants were asked if they think they are adequately remunerated with the present economic situation in the country. To this question, 48 (16.0%) agreed that public servants in the country are adequately remunerated. 235 (78.3%) responded in the negative, while 17 (5.7%) expressed no opinion. Put differently, the public servants were asked. Do you think the level of income in the public service is enough to make them give their best performance?

75 (25.0%) responded in the affirmative. 208 (69.3%) disagreed that the level of income in the Service is adequate or enough to make them put in their best performance, the remaining 17 (5.7%) did not respond.

**Hypothesis 1:** Environment will not significantly influence the ethical behavior of Public Servants in Nigeria.

**Table 1.2: Observed Responses**

| Gender | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided | Total |
|--------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| Male | 34 | 29 | 56 | 51 | 30 | 200 |
| Female | 18 | 20 | 36 | 16 | 10 | 100 |
| **Total** | **52** | **49** | **92** | **67** | **40** | **300** |

The hypothesis is tested at 0.05 level of significance. The relevant formula for the calculation of expected frequency is given as:

$$\Sigma (RC) = \frac{fR \ x \ fC}{N}$$

**Table 1.3 Result of the Association between the perceived influence of the environment and the ethical behavior of Public Servants.**

| Gender | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided | Total |
|--------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| Male | 34 (34.66) | 29 (32.66) | 56 (61.33) | 51 (44.66) | 30 (26.66) | 200 |
| Female | 18 (17.33) | 20 (16.33) | 36 (30.66) | 16 (22.33) | 10 (13.33) | 100 |
| **Total** | **52** | **49** | **92** | **67** | **40** | **300** |

Having obtained both the observed (that is, frequencies as collected) and the expected frequencies (that is, frequencies as calculated) the next step is to calculate the $X^2$ using the formula:

$$X^2 = \Sigma \ \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$$

$\therefore$ From the above table $X^2$ calculated = 6.6. (See appendix) from the above, it means that the $X^2$ calculated is 6.6. The level of significance is 0.04 and with the degree of freedom (df) at 4. The $X^2$ value for 4 df at 0.05 level of significance is 9.488.

The $X^2$ calculated value of 6.6 was not significant of 05 level of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis that environment will not significantly influence the ethical behavior of Public Servants in Nigeria is accepted since the $X^2$ table value of 9.488 is greater than the $X^2$ calculated value of 6.6.

Presentation and Analysis of findings on hypothesis II

**Table 2.1: Educational Level of Respondents**

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Certificate | 70 | 22.8 |
| $1^{st}$ degree | 155 | 50.5 |
| $2^{nd}$ degree | 44 | 14.3 |
| PhD | 5 | 1.6 |
| Missing value | 7 | 2.3 |

**Research Question:** How does the level of education of the Public Servants affect their ethical behavior for the rules to be understood?

**Table 2.2 Public Servants Response**

| The Level of Education Adequate for the Rules to be Understood | % Assigned to Respondents | No. of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 36.7% | 110 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 50.0% | 152 |
| Undecided | 13.3% | 38 |

**Total No. of Respondents       =       300**

Deriving from the above table, it is observed that not all the respondents have knowledge of the fact that their level of education is adequate to understand the rules governing the conduct of Public Servants. 36.7% of the respondents agreed that the Public Servants level of education is adequate for them to understand the rules of the Public Service; 50.0% disagreed with that assumption, while 13.3% expressed no opinion or were undecided.

From the finding above, majority of the Public Servants in Nigeria have the belief that their level of education is not adequate enough for them to understand the provisions of the rules and regulations governing their ethical conduct in the performance of their duties.

199 (66.3%) of the respondents claimed to have read a copy of the Pubic/Civil Service Rules at one time or the other while 91 (30.3%) responded no., 173 (75.7%) of respondents claimed to be familiar with the contents of the document. 157 (52.3%) think the provisions of the Public Service Rules are adequate to make them perform their official duties efficiently while 126 respondents (42.0%) think otherwise.

**Hypothesis II :** There is no significant relationship between the level of education and the ethical standards of Public Servants in Nigeria.

**Table 2.3: Observed Response**

| Gender | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 41 | 30 | 59 | 50 | 20 | 200 |
| Female | 22 | 17 | 30 | 13 | 18 | 100 |
| **Total** | **63** | **47** | **89** | **63** | **38** | **300** |

The hypothesis is tested at 0.05 level of significance. The relevant formula for $$X^2 = \Sigma \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$$

**Table 2.4: Result of the association between level of Education and the ethical standards of Public Servants.**

| Gender | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided | Total |
|--------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| Male | 41 (42.00) | 30 (31.33) | 59 (59.33) | 50 (42.00) | 20 (25.33) | 200 |
| Female | 22 (21.00) | 17 (15.66) | 30 (29.60) | 13 (21.00) | 18 (12.66) | 100 |
| Total | 63 | 47 | 89 | 63 | 38 | 300 |

Having obtained both the observed (that is, frequencies as collected) and the expected frequencies (that is, frequencies as calculated) the next step is to calculate the $X^2$, using the formula.

$$X^2 = \Sigma \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$$

∴ From the above table, $X^2$ calculated = 8.18 (See Appendix).
The level of significance is 0.04 and with the degree of freedom (df) at 4. The critical $X^2$ value for 4 df at 0.05 level of significance is 9.488. The $X^2$ calculated value of 8.18 was not significant at 05 level of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the level of Education and the ethical standards of Public Servants in Nigeria is accepted since the $X^2$ table value of 9.488 is greater than the $X^2$ calculated value of 8.18.

## 10. Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

From the preceding sections in this paper, findings showed that factors which bear on professional conduct of Public Servants are mainly of two kinds. These are the institutional correlates and the ecological or environmental factors.

On the surface, the study discovered that the institutional framework of the conduct of Public Service operations appeared adequate. The reason being that at independence, Nigeria, like other commonwealth countries, inherited a vibrant Public Service built upon strong and sound structural foundation. This institutional basis has been further strengthened, reinforced and modernized by regular post-independence reforms.

But looking beyond the surface, however, it was found out that there is a profound institutional gap which seriously circumscribes the efficacy of institutional contrivances. This gap relates to the absence of a strong will for the implementation and enforcement of necessary rules and regulations of conduct. In the main, the body saddled with the responsibility of maintaining discipline is the Public/Civil Service Commission. Unfortunately, this body is impaired in the performance of its duties by its omnibus character.

The problem of institutional gap is further compounded by ecological factors that bear on the performance of Public Servants. Though the stated hypothesis that the environment will not significantly influence the ethical conduct of Public Servants was accepted, the operations of the Public Service have been hampered by the activities from the environment. In this stance, one of the serious ecological problems that hinder the efficiency of the Public Service operations today is poor motivation and remuneration, as findings showed. As such, an effective proposal for reform must not lose sight of the institutional and ecological configuration. In the attempt to cure the ills of the Public Service there has to be a synergy of the two factors – the interaction of elements when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements, contribution and so on.

Ethical issues are given much attention in countries like the United Kingdom and U.S.A. This shows that there is room for improvement of our ethical standards in Nigeria if we pay much attention to it. Studies of ethics have been made compulsory courses in the advanced countries in institutions of learning based on the belief that the more you teach them, the more they are likely to take root in the hearts of the people and consequently influence their behavior. This approach should be adopted in the Nigerian society.

Furthermore, policies and programmes, or strategies and tactics should be designed to change organizational member behavior. This could be done in three categories: (1) Those that will discourage unethical behavior through the processes of sanctions and reform of organization members' behavior; (2) Those that will reward organization members for exemplary acts of ethical behavior and (3) those that should focus on developing desired value behavior in the members of the organization through ethical re-orientation.

The following recommendations are made in addition to those contained in the report of the National workshop on Public Service Ethics in Africa, 2002:

- There should be a national integrated strategic approach to the problems of corruption and other unethical behavior in the Civil/Public Service.
- There is the need to identify coordinate, reinforce and sustain the current anti-corruption initiatives in the country.
- Establish mechanisms that provide citizens and public officials with channels for reporting alleged acts of corruption or abuse of authority.
- Mechanisms to reduce uncertainties about life in retirement should be put in place by the government.
- Countering conflicts of interest and enacting administrative reforms in the Public Service.
- Mechanisms to support accountability and transparency in democratic processes should be established.

- There is the need to adopt a targeted and focused approach to capacity strengthening of various institutions, charged with the various aspects of Public Service ethics.
- Need for consistent and continuous dissemination of information related to sanctions against unethical behaviors.
- Building partnerships between government, non-governmental and civil society organizations to stem the tide of corruption and other unethical conducts in the public service.
- Ethical behavior should be promoted by the leadership by example.

**10.1 Recommended Strategies for Promoting Ethical Behavior**.

The promotion of sound ethical behavior in Nigeria generally should take place in both the private and public organizations and all arms of government – Federal, State and Local Governments. This is simply because most private organizations and government agencies in the country are not properly aligned with values, morals and even convictions that build a strong, secure, healthy and prosperous nation. When nation, societies and other forms of organizations, loose their sense of purpose and significance, then confusion, frustration, discouragement, disillusionment and corporate suicide whether gradual or instant, reign (Munroe, 2001).

Two broad strategies are suggested here in line with Ogundele et al (2010):

(1) Reducing unethical business practices: Three stage approaches are suggested in this respect which includes:
(a) **Strict Sanctions:** The imposition of severe and appropriate sanctions on individuals and organizations that breach business and societal ethics. These sanctions must be prompt and sufficiently strong to act as deterrent to other prospective offenders.
(b) **Moral Suasion:** This approach calls for the launching of massive propaganda and campaign calling for disciplined behavior and practices of sound moral values. This should be championed

by individual organizations, governments and its agencies, among others.

(c) **Reward of Excellence or Outstanding Behavior**: In situations where an individual exhibits outstanding act of disciplined behavior, he/she should be rewarded in status and in kind. Such gesture on the part of appropriate authorities, institutions or individuals will motivate others to be ethical in their behavior.

(2) **Developing Ethical Behavior:** This is a deep rooted approach to change the perception, values and orientation of the society in general and the operations of business organizations in particular. Three methods or strategies are equally suggested here:

(a) General development of ethical behavior in individuals, groups and organizations: This calls for massive education, training and development in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. At the primary and secondary school levels, moral instruction should be made a compulsory subject.

(b) Development of Ethical Codes for various professionals and Adhering to such codes: There is the need to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of codes of conduct and the enforcement of sanctions for breach in order to restore sanity into their operations and to earn respectability from the outside world and prospective investors.

(c) Revitalizing the culture of Excellence: This calls for the restoration of African traditional values. Africa had a culture of excellence which modernization and civilization had robbed off our social fabric. The honest, considerate, truthful, respectable, accountable etc. African personality should be appropriate to borrow from the Japanese in a number of ways. These include:

(i) Building an organizational culture that supports excellence

(ii) Establishing ethical standard based on culture founded on ethical principles and sound values will be force for excellence.

(iii) Having strategic and articulated human resources – through the process of selection, placement and training.

(iv) Building a spirit of high performance into culture by inspiring people to do their best (v) having shared values by employees and

managers which will be core of excellence (Lawal, 2002).

**10.2 Conclusion**

The Public Service is the bridge between the government and the people. The principle upon which this relationship is based has not changed over the years. However, to ensure delivery of government programs in the light of current efforts to enable the country achieve vision 20:20:20, macro and socio-economic, and development objectives, it is important that the Public Service recognizes its pivotal responsibility and seeks to adapt to the new demands of governance. To this end, work ethics and values have been codified for the Public Service. Nigeria requires a vibrant Public Service that calls for fundamental change of attitude, behavior, processes and procedures as well as new management orientation that emphasize professionalism, transparency, accountability, trust, competence, integrity, efficiency and citizens - focus.

Imbibing these values is critical in ensuring that Public Servants render high quality service to citizens. In this vein, the notion of customer satisfaction becomes fundamental and should be understood as essential to the attainment of goals of governance. This codified document should therefore, be seen as an integral part of the existing legislations, regulations and codes binding on Public Service and must be read in consonance with those provisions and applicable sanctions. It is strongly hoped that if the letter and spirit of this work ethics and values are faithfully imbibed and the recommendations herein made are followed and implemented, the Public Service would be on the path of reclaiming its battered image and lost glory.

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