The Impact of Religiosity on Human Resource Management in Public Sectors in Nigeria

Chisom S. Ugwuewo
Maduabuchi I. Edeh
Ikedi J. Ugwuanyi

Abstract

Religiosity has been identified as one of the critical factor that influences human resource management practices in the public sector in Nigeria. This paper explores the impact of religiosity on human resource management in the public sector in Nigeria. Using an ex-post facto research, this study is anchored on secondary sources, wherein content analysis was utilized. More so, the social-exchange theory was applied as theoretical framework of analysis. The findings of the study show that religiosity influences efficiency, leadership, recruitment, development, performance appraisal and reward systems in the public sector in Nigeria. Similarly, it was found that religious beliefs and practices are considered in the recruitment and staff selection while training and development programs are align with religious values. On the other hand, performance appraisal systems are influenced by religiosity, with managers considering moral and ethical conduct of staff alongside their job performance. This paper concludes that religiosity has a significant impact on human resource management practices in the public sector in Nigeria as well as recommends that human resource manager need to be aware of religious beliefs and practices of their staff in order to manage them effectively.
Keywords: Impact, Religiosity, Human Resource, Management, Public Sector, Nigeria

Corresponding Authors:

Chisom S. Ugwuewo
Department of General Studies/JUPEB Unit
Madonna University, Nigeria, Okija Campus,
Anambra State
chisomhebrew@gmail.com

Maduabuchi I. Edeh
Department of Arts and Social Sciences
Mea Mater Elizabeth High School,
Agbani, Enugu State
Maduabuchi.edeh.pg00603@unn.edu.ng

Ikedi J. Ugwuanyi
Department of International Relations
Madonna University, Nigeria, Okija
Campus, Anambra State
ikedijohn@gmail.com

Introduction

The demonstration of one's personal belief among public servants in Nigeria public sector is palpable in the contemporary dispensation. Religious activities are dominating almost every activity in the public sector. Some public workers suspend their duty for personal religious activities which range from prayer meetings to bible study, rehearsal, choir practice, revival, crusade, inauguration and so on. Most times, such attitudes are found among Christians who claim to be devoted and committed to their belief. Even at work, these kind of Christian believers spend office hour for other religious devotions. They use office time for personal evangelism, Christian counseling, prayer ministry as well as other religious based activities. The aggravated aspect of this idiosyncrasy is the fanatical aspect of it. These Christian fanatics apply their personal ethics and faith necessarily and unnecessarily in their public service while serving the members of the public. The major factor for this continuous practice this by Christian public workers in Nigeria is closely related to the thesis of Mbiti (1969 p.1) that "Africans are notoriously religious, and each person has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates all departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible

always to isolate it." Whereas their public services is dwindled and bastardized, they think that they are highly dedicated to the service of the divine being often refer to Jesus Christ in the Christian Religion.

Similarly, Civil servants, in some cases, interpret their level of observance of work ethics in relation to their religious beliefs; thereby ending the contradiction between faith and work. This tends to suggest that religion influences the many different areas of a person's life, such as family, politics and gender roles (Cherlin, 2009; Edgell, 2006; Davidman, 2001 & Legee, 1993). Asifat and Adusa (2020) elucidate that individuals, no doubt, choose their religion leading them to its practice by placing significant efforts on certain work values that are salient to them. The consequences of incorporating religiosity fanatically on public service manifest in the following ways: bastardization of civil service, abuse of religious practice, inefficiency of service, incessant incomplete tasks in the office, delay of services given to members of the public, imitation of bad idiosyncrasy by new members of staff, encouragement of posterity of wrong attitude as culture and other related evils brought by abuse of religiosity. The thrust of researchers in this paper is to address this phenomenon so as to restore a suitable environment for feasible rendition of public service.

The research method used in this work is qualitative method. Data are

collected mainly through secondary sources including text books, online literatures etc. Social exchange theory is also used which is explained subsequently in this paper.

Overview of Religiosity

Holdcroft (2006) is of the view that the concept "religiosity" is difficult to define. The reason for the uphill task of the definition is concerned with the various perspectives from which religiosity is viewed. However, religiosity has been given various but related views or definitions. Hornby (2010 p.1244) sees religiosity as "the state of being religious". Duru (n.d p.263) elucidates that "religiosity is one's degree of commitment or dedication to religion." In the thought of Stolz (2008), religiosity is a personal experience and expression; it is a matter of individual commitment. It is one's private and inward commitment to religious symbols peculiar to one's religious belief. Johnson et al. (2009) define the concept of religiosity as a dependence on one's religious teachings which are reflected in one's behaviour. Thus, it can be said that religiosity can shape one's attitude and behaviour. Barnett et al. (1996) in Asih, Setini, Dharmmesta and Purwanto (2020) state that the religiosity concept has three dimensions, which are the cognitive dimension, the affective dimension, and the behavioral dimension.

Religiosity coincides with an individual's various feelings, meaning all of one's spiritual feelings that are related to God, which tend to be more dogmatic. Allport and Ross (1967) defined religiosity as a religious inner experience. Cornwall et al. (1986) in Asih, Setini, Dharmmesta and Purwanto (2020) describe religiosity as a concept which includes an individual's behavior and the strength of their religious convictions. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) defined religiosity as a commitment to follow the principles of a belief that are determined by God. Magill (1992) in Asih, Setini, Dharmmesta and Purwanto (2020) mentioned that religiosity coincides with morality and its values are interpreted for ethical behavior.

Religiosity is not restricted to a certain religion. This implies that religiosity is a practice of believers of various religious groups. In Nigeria for instance, religiosity can be practiced in respect to African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. It considers one's belief in accordance to the tenets of one's belief. Scriptures and doctrines and other ancient traditions and practices form the components of believer's religiosity. The incessant and strong demonstration of a believer's religious beliefs is often influenced by personal understanding of believer's teachings and tenets of one's religious faith as well as one's

personal religious experience. Therefore, it is wrong to generalize religiosity. This is because most times, it is people's individual encounter that enhances their participation in certain religious activities.

A Glance at Human Resource Management

To grasp an understanding of human resource management, it would be appropriate for one to comprehend what human resources entails. Generally, human resources is used to denote personnel, in terms of their diverse skills, capabilities and knowledge they bring to an organization. Suffice it to say, it simply connotes an organizational personnel, manpower or its entire staff. It is not surprising, why Ikeanyibe (2013) conceived human resources as the infinite difference in the relative capability of peoples who are actually employed in an organization and their relative quantity and quality of output, which they could be used to achieve. To him, taking cognizance of the individual differences which they bring to an organization, is core to the success as well as the effective management of modern organization.

Human resource management (HRM) on the other hand, could be seen from diverse scholarly inclinations. To some scholars, it could be used interchangeably as personnel management. However, the two concepts

are similar but different in certain ways.Onah (2017) viewed HRM as a set of organizational activities directed at attracting, developing and maintaining an effective workforce. This stem from the notion that organizational success lies squarely on organizations luring the right kind of people, inducing them to maintain a right state of mind in order to contribute immensely to the growth of the organization. No wonder, Meijerink and Keegan (2019) conceived HRM as the managerial activities targeted at maintaining employment relationship. From the above views, it could be inferred that most successful organizations are built on satisfied employees. This conception by Meijerinketal (2019) is in tandem with Ezeani's conception of personnel management as deduced from the Institute of Personnel Management:

> Personnel management is that aspect of management that deals with people at work and their relationships with an enterprises. It seeks to bring together and develop effective organizations where enterprises have utmost regard for the wellbeing of diverse work group in orderfor employee to contribute their best to its success (Onah, 2013 p.115).

In a nutshell, it vital to point out that human resource management is a

modern term used to qualify the traditional duty of personnel management. Therefore, it could be seen as those activities carried out by an organization to ensure the efficient use of the personnel of the organization vis-à-vis the satisfactions of their diverse needs in order to achieve optimal organizational productivity.

Consequently, it is apt for one to note, that HRM is a more modern concept that emerged in the 1970's. And as such is broader than personnel management. However, it focuses on managing people within an organization, as valuable resources thatkey to the actualization of organizational goals. It deals more on a strategic approach to human resources (such as attracting and retaining the best talent, developing their employees' skills and abilities as well as creating a positive work environment). On the contrary, personnel management is a more traditional concept. It is focused on administrative tasks associated with managing employee (like payroll, employee benefits and legal compliance). Put differently, it is a more reactive approach to employee issues.

Socio-Exchange Theory to the Study

This study was based on socio-exchange theory otherwise known as the exchange theory. Some of the proponents of this theory includethe

following American Sociologists: George Homan (1958), Peter Blau (1964), Richard Emerson (1978), and Karen Cook (1978). This theory is one of the major social interaction theories in the social sciences (Mark, 2015).However, it can be applied in a wide range of social phenomena such as friendship formation, religious /class formation, organizational behaviour, romantic relationships, and even economic transaction. From a socio-psychological perspective, this theory could be used to explain social behaviour in terms exchange between or among individuals and groups (Blau, 1964). This theory is built on the assumption that people are engaged in social interactions with the anticipation of receiving benefits/reward with the view of avoiding costs or even punishment. Furthermore, it emphasizes that people are rational and self-interested. As such, their behaviours are guided by cost-benefit analysis of such social exchange. That is, people weigh the rewards and costs of an interaction and then making decision about whether to engage in it or not (Levinvr and Kim, 2010).

The theory is built on the following tenets:

a. Social exchange: this entails the process of giving and receiving rewards amongst individuals

b. Cost/benefit analysis: this is the weighing of the potential course

of actions in terms of their risks and reward.

c.   Reciprocity: this entails a continuous investment in a relationship.

d.   Equity: this is a balance in the distribution of reward in a socio-exchange.

e.   Comparison level: this is yardstick against which individuals appraise their reward and cost in a social exchange.

f.   Comparison level of Alternative: this is the standard against which individuals evaluate their current relationship in comparison other relationships.

The suitability of this theory to the study stems from the notion that religiosity in the Nigerian public sector could be seen as one form of social exchange. As such, social interaction at workplace in the public sector in Nigeria is governed by give and take based on one's religious affiliation. In Nigerian public sector, religiosity is a resource that both the employers and the employees exchange with each other. The understanding of the exchange of religiosity as a resource can provide an insight in the dynamics of the human resources management in the public sector in Nigeria. Similarly, religiosity is deeply rooted in social norms and expectation of many communities; as such this can influence how individuals interact with one another at their workplace.

That is to say, religious norms may encourage employees to be more cooperative and respective towards their superior, while employers may feel a greater obligation to provide support and assistance to employees who share their religious beliefs. It could be inferred that the understanding of the role of social norms and expectations in the exchange of religiosity can help in providing an insight on how religious values can shape human resource management in public sector in Nigeria.

Productivity of Public Sector in Nigeria

Measuring employees' productivity in the Nigeria public sector has remained an issue of serious concern in recent times. However, before exploring the issues of productivity in the Nigeria public sector; it is pertinent to understand what productivity means. Productivity is seen as the ratio between output and the resources (like labour, capital, and raw materials) utilized in the production process (Shimawua and Adejoh, 2018).Onah (2013) on the other hand, viewed productivity as any action geared towards moving an organization to its goal. She further added that a good definition of productivity should possess three key elements namely: output, commitment of resources and time. Hence, she conceived productivity to mean, the output accruable from a

given resource input over a given period of time.

Emphasizing on productivity, particularly within the Nigerian public sector; Ikeanyibe (2013) and Shimawua and Adejoh (2018) observed that one of the major problem of productivity in the public sector, is the difficulty in quantifying the output of most jobs found in the sector. This is owing to the notion that some of the government establishments are service oriented. Thereof, this makes the measuring process to be characterized by some level of subjectivism. Another bane to the measurement of productivity in Nigerian public sector is inherent in the perception or attitudinal disposition of both the managers of the sector and their employees that views public sector business as no man's business. Thus, making most of the senior staff as well as heads of departments to render false confidential reports of their subordinates (Adejuwon, 2015; Agboola, 2018). Thereby throwing merits and virtues of the employees overboard. Some of the other factors that accounts for the low productivity level in the Nigeria public sector include: low level of employees' skill, workers' attitude, poor compensation of workers, absence of participative management, lack of training and accountability, poor governance, corruption, inadequate funding and so on (Isiaka, Edegware, and Anya; 2018; Onah, 2013).

The Management of Public Sector in Nigeria

Studies have shown that the management of public sector in Nigeria lies within the purview of the government on one hand and the civil servants on the other. Oboh and Nwachukwu (2020) observed that while the government saddled is with the responsibility of establishing the policies, regulations, and guidelines that govern the public sector, the civil servants are charged with carrying out the day-to-day operations of the public sector. Furthermore, the information available in the Nigerian Civil Service Handbook shows that the federal ministries such as the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning play key role in the management of the Nigerian Public Sector (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016). These ministries are charged with economic policy formulation and implementation, national budget preparation and management, and public finance management. In the same vein, there are other agencies, departments, and parastatals within the public sector that are tasked with the specific responsibilities and functions of overall public sector management in Nigeria. They include the Bureau of Public Service Reforms, the National Planning Commission, and the National Bureau of Statistics are among them (Nwekeaku and Obiorah, 2019; Amujiri, 2017).

The Impact of Religiosity in Rendering Public Service in Nigeria

Religiosity of an individual believer in Christian faith is often determined by his or her regular participation in the church activities within the week and his or her private observation of Christian religious rituals. Asih et al (2020) purport that measurement of the level of religiosity of an individual is generally determined by the frequency of ritual attendance to religious activities and observances. In order to be considered an effective Christian, public workers who are member of Christian denominations tend to devote almost half of their office time to personal and public religious expression and solidarity. Practically, long minutes and hours prayers are conducted in the office or in the church or other related arena during working hours. Personal and corporate Bible Study is facilitated in the office or outside the office when a public officer is supposed to be seated in the office to attend to official duties. Worship songs and praises consume office hours and sometimes distract tranquility of public setting.

The devastating and deteriorating aspect of this practical exudation of religiosity among Christian public servants/civil servants is the abandonment of public service for days and sometimes weeks due to personal quest for spiritual retreat. It is observed that some public

workers travel near and far away places for religious purposes which ranges from annual beginning of the year retreat, end of the year retreat, personal fasting and prayer, church conferences and conventions, church seminars and other similar activities. Whereas some take official permission using genuine and cunning means, some especially members of the senior cadre of civil service don't seek official permission. Some would go to any extent to bribe higher authority in order to secure official permission to leave official duty for religious duties.

The negative impact left on Nigeria public sector as a result of special and regular attention given to one's religious beliefs and practices by public servants cannot be overemphasized. Siddique Khan and Zia (2019) posit that in recent years, religiosity especially among religious fanatics has given room for the mismanagement consequences which can be felt today in the private and public sector. The effects of these illicit attitude concerns itself with poor to attention to public services. It encourages flippant attitude among workers. It provides no platform for new and young members of staff to emulate virtues for posterity. It destabilizes the progress and growth of public offices in particular and the nation at large.

It is observed that though religiosity is considered necessary by some public/civil servants, yet it has not contributed significantly to the development of society and promotion of moral rectitude in the public sector. Anderson (2013) contends that to be ethical implies finding out whatever society accepts and do it. Ethical rules operate to protect the people who work in organisations most especially the civil service and the larger society against various immoral activities. The study presents the relationship between religious affiliation and observance of work ethics. It was observed that when only religious affiliation was fitted into the model, there was no significant association between the level of observance and religious affiliation. Similarly, when other factors were combined with religious affiliation, the association still did not influence ethical attitudes. This, therefore, implies that religious affiliation is not a predictor of observance of work ethics. In other words, ethical attitudes are not a function of religious beliefs (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Kidwell, Stevens & Bethke, 1987). Thinking about religious affiliation to the observance work ethics, for example, by way of not breaking the law, not violating trust and being less susceptible to various immoral activities, may not be enough in bringing about high observance of work ethics (Asifat and Adisa, 2020). Civil

servants who observed work ethics did so out of their conviction. Even though a higher percentage of civil servants were adherents of the two religions, they did not allow such religions to positively influence the discharge of their duties. Since religion is personal, and it is often said to be an opium of society (Raines, 2011), it should not be seen as a major parameter which civil servants will employ to live an ethical life (Asifat and Adisa, 2020). Despite the regular practice of personal attachment to religious faith by public workers in Nigeria, social vices are still prevalent in many public offices. It is quite surprising but a reality that some of these committed and devoted religious adherents are channels through social vices are advocated in the public offices. Among them are those who practice bribery and corruption in the offices. Some of them are chief culprits of crime of public embezzlement as well as other thefts. Gerrymandling, favouritism and ableism are not detatched from their attitudes in the management of human beings in the public sectors. However, religiosity should not be discussed without looking at its positive contribution to public sectors in Nigeria. Irrespecive of incessant religious observances without expected corresponding moral rectitude, there are still evidence of religiosity with high moral demonstration. In the Nigeria public sector, religious believers whose

lives reflect their religiosity are in extant. Dedication and commitment, refusal to collect bribe and get involved in any theft by some though very few public workers attest to this fact. In addition, there are some public workers whose religious lives have positively influenced other members of staff. Reformation has taken place in some public offices when a genuine religious person assumes leadership position in any public offices. It is an experience of one the researchers of this paper. The researcher reports that during his Postgraduate studies, the HOD reformed every practice that is instituted for exploitation of students. That Head of Department provided a good and feasible platform where students would do their program with ease. All payments which are not constitutional were put to stop. All necessary things required by the students to do in terms of copies of papers for presentation and other necessities were made affordable. Academic activities became more serious, and students were highly encouraged to work hard in order to achieve excellence, compete their equivalents across the globe and remain very relevant to humanity.

Conclusion

The impact of religiosity on the level of services rendered by public servants in Nigeria public sector is palpable. It is observed that most

Christian believers especially the instrumentalists among them have abused religiosity in different respects as reflected in the work. This paper reveals that religiosity is personal. As such it should not deteriorate the efficiency and progress of public service. Religiosity is expected to make individual's life better and more relevant in serving both Supreme Being and human being. It is not meant for abuse as it is encountered in the contemporary time by some adherents of Christian religion in Nigeria. The negative impact of wrong application of religiosity has bred evils which has kept the country in a mess. Therefore, researchers in this paper seek among other things to advise public /civil servants to refrain from such activities.

Recommendations

1. Religiosity should not be an obstruction to effective discharge of public service by public/civil servants.

2. Public workers especially Christians should personally endearvour to match their daily demonstration with the ethics of their religious belief.

3. Leadership of public service in Nigeria should lead with practical examples.

4. Stipulations should be made to monitor illicit and unauthorized movement by public workers during office hours. These stipulations

should take into consideration using office hours for personal and corporate religious devotions.

5. Nigeria public service leaders should create an enabling milieu where dedicated workers would be rewarded and better incentives given so as to encourage steady efficiency in service.

6. Religious fanatics who abandon office work for religious observances should be seriously punished so as to leave others with lessons to learn.

7. Government of the day should make salary attractive so that public workers would be more serious with their public duty. This is because when they are paid pittance, they must be on look out for better opportunities in order to boost their source of livelihood. It is not doubtable that some civil servants commit themselves to religious activities and devotions because it gives them some hope of survival as well as other benefits from brethren of same religious belief.

References

Adejuwon, D.K. (2015). Enhancing Public Accountability and Performance in Nigeria: Periscoping the Impediments and Exploring Imperative Measures. *African Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, Research Article, pp 102-125.

Agboola, T. O. (2018). Performance-Based Management in Nigerian Public Sector: Issues and Challenges. I*fe Social Sciences Review*, Vol 26 (1): 24-35
#
Allport, G. W. & Ross, J. M. (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 5(4), 432-443.

Amujiri, B.A. (2017). *Public Personnel Management*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria

Anderson, G. (2013). Religion and Morality in Ghana: A Reflection. Global Journal of Arts.

Asifat, O. & Adisa, A.L. (2020). "Influence of Religious Affiliation on the Observance of Civil Service Work Ethics in Osun State." *Ife Social Sciences Review*. www.issr.oauife.edu.ng/journal

Asih, D., Setini, M., Dharmmesta, B.S. & Purwanto, B.M. (2020). "Religiosity and spirituality: Conceptualization, measurement and its effect on frugality." *Management Science Letters*. Canada: Growing Science.

Blau, P.M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Cherlin, A. J. (2009). *The Marriage –Go Round*. New York: Vintage

Books.

Davidman, L. (1991). *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Duru, H.C. (n.d). Measues of Religiosity.

Edgell, P. (2006). *Religion and Family in a Changing Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2016). *Civil Service Handbook*
Gorsuch, R. L. & McPherson, S. E. (1989). "Intrinsic/Extrinsic Measurement: I/E Revised and Single – Item Scales," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (28), 34854.

Hadiza, A.S. (2010). *Public Sector Reforms and Management Control Systems in Developing Country: A Case Study of a Large State Enterprises in Nigeria*. University of Birmingham

Holdcroft, B. (2006). "What is Religiosity?" *A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, vol. 10, No 1.

Hornby A.S (2010). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8ᵗʰ edition*. London: Oxford University Press.

Ikeanyibe, M.O. (2013). *Principles and Practices of Public Personnel Administration: A Nigeria Perspective*. Onitsha: Perfect Image.

Isiaka, M. A, Edegware, J.G, and Anya, R. (2018). Supervision and Public Service Productivity in Nigeria: A Theoretical Discourse. *Public Policy and Administration Research,* Vol 8(4): 34-41.

Johnson, B., Yoon, D. P., Franklin, K. L., Schopp, L., & Hinkebein, J. (2009). Re-conceptualizing the factor structure of the brief multidimensional measure of religiousness /spirituality. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 48(2), 146-163.

Kidwell, J. M; Stevens, R. E. & Bethke, A. L. (1987). "Differences in

Ethical Perceptions Between Male and Female Managers." *Journal of Business Ethics* (6), 489-93.

Leege, D. C. & Lyman, A. K. (1993). *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

Levinvr, T.R and Kim, S. (2010). Social exchange, uncertainty, and communication content as factors impacting the relational outcomes of betrayal. *Human Communication*, Vol 13: 303-318

Mark, V. R. (2015). *Social Exchange Theory*. Iowa State University McDaniel, S. W. & Burnet, J. J. (1990). Consumer religiosity and retail store evaluative criteria. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 18(2), 101-112.

Nwekeaku, C and Obiorah, B. (2019). Public Sector Reform and Effective Service Delivery in Nigeria. *International Journal of Developing and Emerging Economies*, Vol 7 (4): 30-40.

Oboh, I, Vu, H.M, and Nwachukwu, C. (2020). Review of Recruitment Process and Public Sector Performance. *Management Strategies Journal*, Vol, 49 (3): 25-30.

Onah, F. O. (2017). *Human Resource Management (Fourth Edition)*. Enugu: Fulladu Publishing Company.

Onah, R.C. (2013). *Public Administration: Principles and Processes (Second Edition)*. Enugu: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd.

Raines, J. (Ed.) (2011). Marx on Religion. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Shimawua, D and Adejoh, S. (2018). Nigerian Public Sector and Challenges of Workers' Productivity: An Evaluation. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 4 (2): 225-233.

Siddique, M., Khan, A. & Zia, K. (2019). "The influence of Religion and Culture on HR practices: A Comparative study of Saudi Arabia and Iran". *Business & Economic Review*, Vol. 8, Issue 2.

Stolz, J. (2008). "The Explanation of Religiosity: Testing Sociological Mechanisms Empirical".