

# EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION POLICY IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE: A REVIEW

Shehu Sadat<sup>1</sup>

Department of History and War Studies  
Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna  
P.M.B 2109, Kaduna State  
[sashmandiya@gmail.com](mailto:sashmandiya@gmail.com)

&

Timothy Onimisi<sup>2</sup>

Department of Political Science,  
Federal University Lokoja,  
P.M. 1154, Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria  
[timothy.onimisi@fulokoja.edu.ng](mailto:timothy.onimisi@fulokoja.edu.ng)

## Abstract

Attempts to capture the diverse nature of the country in the employment distribution in the civil service and to give the citizens some sense of belonging remain a big task in the Nigerian civil service. This paper reviews the causes of disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. The paper consulted Federal Character Commission, academics, non-governmental organizations, and unemployed graduates to ensure wide representation, and these were supported with scholarly articles to arrive at some critical findings. The research revealed that disparity continues to ravage the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service because of the weak recruitment and selection process, absence of reliable data of employment, political influence, and bureaucratic influence, as well as conflict of interest. Finally, the paper recommended the provision of a valuable blueprint/guide in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service.

**Keywords:** *Disparity; Civil Service; Employment Distribution; Political Influence; Nigeria*

## INTRODUCTION

The creation of the Nigerian civil service can be traced to the British colonialists when an administrative institution oversaw the then two protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria (Gberevbie, 2010). The service had both upper

and junior echelons' occupied by the British colonialists and Nigerians, respectively. The employment of staff was carried out purposely to ensure law and order were maintained and the sustenance of the economic interest of the colonialists, and it was the sine qua non and live wire for consolidating the colonial structure in the nation. The situation remained unchanged until the 1940s during the awakening of Nigerian sine qua non and the taking of the administrative functions of the nation from the colonialists by the indigenous people of Nigeria (Oladoyin, 2008). Ecological challenges encountered by the British colonial officials and rising political awareness sped up the steady acceptance of the indigenous people in the civil service structure, and the aftermath of the Second World War significantly influenced the colonialists (Bayo, 2012). Hence, the formal establishment of the Federal Public Service Commission with the responsibility of employing, promoting, dismissing, and putting in place disciplinary measures for the civil service (Bayo, 2012).

In the period before Nigeria's independence, employment distribution in the civil service was based on loyalty, unity, and dedication of officers and men that would implement policies of the colonialist, these equally created opportunities for more Nigerians to be engaged (Justin, 2015). In 1960, when Nigeria got her independence, the civil service was not only seen as an arm of

government responsible for policy implementation but an arm responsible for harnessing resources and championing the economic development of the country. According to Adejuwon (2012) the administrative leadership and employment distribution structure tried restructuring it to suit the country's diverse interests, especially in its employment distribution. However, despite attempts to capture the diverse nature of the country in the employment distribution within the civil service, disparity remains inherent in the Nigerian civil service. This paper is an attempt to analyze the causes of disparity in employment distribution in Nigerian civil service. It is divided into four sections, which are the introduction, the theoretical section, literature review, discussion on the disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service and conclusion.

#### **FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE AND EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE: REVIEW OF SOME SELECTED LITERATURE:**

According to Okeke (2019) in the study of enforcement and implementation of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria with a focus on political appointment and governance of the country found that the policy is "honored in the breach than in observation", meaning the principles guiding the policy not adhered to during political appointment into political offices under the current democratic dispensation. According to the study, the political elites sadly felt the disparity associated with the employment distribution during the political appointment into political offices. The Federal Character Principle is a measure by the nationalists in Nigeria aimed at preventing disparity and ensuring that the governmental composition reflects the diversity of the country. The study by Onah & Ayogu (2018) focused on Federal Character Principle and inclusive governance toward harnessing Nigeria's diversity for sustainable development. Onah and Ayogu (2018) stress the need to redress the geopolitical zonal imbalance and inherent disparity in the services as it has made national

integration an up-heel in the Nigerian political system. The scholars opined that the policy serves as an instrument necessary for sustainable development and inclusive governance in a multiethnic and diverse nation such as Nigeria, and it ensures equity and inclusiveness in governance.

Olasunkanmi & Agulanna (2018) in their study of the constitutionality of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria opined that the policy is far from still achieving or correcting the disparity inherent in the past employment distribution in Nigeria but unfortunately, it has created more issues. The scholars discovered that the Federal Character Principle, rather than correcting the imbalance and disparity in the system as well as ensuring national unity, has rather encouraged disunity, mediocrity, and causes of mutual suspicion in Nigeria. The finding of their study further stated that policy has created a local godfather, ethno-regional lords, and more division amongst the geopolitical zones of the country. Similarly, Okorie and Onwe (2015) in their study of the implications of the Federal Character Principle and separation of powers in the Nigerian public sector state that the policy is targeted at solving the prevailing issues of disunity and diversity in the country through the public sector, especially the employment process into the Nigerian civil service. The scholars further stressed that Federal Character Principle provides a genuine and commendable measure to end the pockets of problems in the civil service and general disunity in the nation. Thus, the policy aims to resolve disparity associated with employment distribution.

It has been showed by Aondoakaa and Orluchukwu (2015) that the Federal Character principal attempt to ensure equal opportunities. The scholars found that policy is both redactional and systematic. On one hand, the Federal Character Principle is a positive reaction to rectify the past practices of selfishness and parochial practices in the employee's conduct in the civil service. However, it is a system because it includes a deliberate plan to guaranty equal opportunities in the distribution of government projects, employment, and amenities. Federal Character

Principle attempts to build a country where all the citizens feel they have equal opportunities to be employed in the civil service without bias of any form (Aondoakaa & Orluckukwu, 2015). A critical aspect of the finding in the research of Aondoakaa & Orluckukwu is that the principal remains an agency for ensuring equal opportunities, thus solving the long-term issue of disparity in the employment distribution in the country's civil service. In a related study of spatiotemporal analysis of federal civil service socio-demographic employment constraints, Ibor, Peterside, & Egolikuma (2015) opined that the Federal Character Principle signifies the traditional social structure of the federal government of Nigeria, which offers an amending measure to resolve the existing employment disparity among genders (men and woman) in the country. The scholars identify those other aspects of the policy that emphasize the quota or representative system despite disparity. Ibor, Peterside, & Egolikuma (2015) demonstrated through the rank order technique that disparity remains inherent in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service despite introducing Federal Character Principles which was enacted to solve the problems of disparity, inequality, and marginalization across the geopolitical zones of the country.

#### **GROUP THEORY AND THE MANIFESTATION OF DISPARITY IN EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION IN NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE:**

The manifestation of disparity in employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service can be better described using the group theory perspective. The theory stated that someone wholly appreciated the process of political activities through the desires and agenda of groups that make up the society. Subsequently, to better understand the phenomenon at hand, scholars and concerned individuals need to identified groups' interest and engage in the activities they are doing, hence, the theory stress that the analysis should be placed on the desires and interest of groups that makes up the society than the individuals (Slaughter, 1978). The basic assumption of

Group theory therefore according to Dahl (1961) and Bentley (1949) is that although individuals are important in the political process of the society, what is even more desirable is this individual's shared beliefs, interests, or attitudes within a said group. The theory believes that political influence can be better secured through group influence and, this can positively or negatively affect any set goals or policies of the government of the day. Policy ordinarily reflects the struggle among groups in the society and the dominant interest influence this policy in their favor at the expense of the other. The theory assumes the struggle among groups in society remains the central component of political life.

#### **NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE: ANALYZING SOME BASIC CAUSES OF DISPARITY IN EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION**

The disparity in the employment distribution remains a central challenge across the diverse and heterogeneous societies in the world, worsening by the social disparity in the past two to three decades because of less employment growth and work opportunities (Lerche, 2007). Employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service through the recruitment process often involves searching for several candidates for employment, with the major purpose of stimulating the civil service structure of the government. The recruitment process provides the government and its agencies, especially the civil service, with several qualified and potential candidates within which they carry selection out to fill vacant positions. The recruitment and selection process are majorly concerned with filling, contacting, and examining potential employees to determine their suitability for the position of office (Watson, 2004; Onimisi, 2020). Recruitment and selection process, which includes how job applicants present their skills, qualification, knowledge, and experience to secure employment, while the employers attempt to find the most suitable and qualified candidates for a particular position was lopsidedly carried out in the Nigerian civil service.

The requirement needed for employment from the available/reliable

database, screening, and selection strategy used, which most often result in complex and continuous processes (Devi & Banu, 2014). Recruitment exercise to be successful and free of disparity, there is the need for employment forecasting and planning, where the agencies or bodies responsible for recruitment plan a concrete plan of procedure to fill the vacancy position. Importantly forecasting is made to eliminate near future employment open' future employment opening based on the available and reliable data. However, this is missing in the employment structure in the Nigerian civil service. According to Acker (2006), recruitment and selection processes are practical examples and the reason that massively contributed to the disparity in employment distribution. The scholar further argued that all institutions responsible for recruitment though show equality, a deeper look at them will present a situation of interrelated practices, actions, and processes of disparity across the board. The recruitment and selection process adopted by the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria, which handles recruitment into the civil service of the country, made up a significant reason that led to a clear disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. The selection process occasioned by complex procedures, an absence of a reliable database, and employment strategy cumulatively led to the disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service.

They made the recruitment and selection more complex when employment is carried out in the Nigerian civil service without advertisement, thus creating room for secret recruitment which invariably led to disparity and lopsidedness in the country's civil service. This was further shown in previous studies such as Onimisi (2018), Onwe, et al (2015), Al-Gazali (2006), Omisore & Okofu (2014), Onimisi & Tinuola (2019) shows that ambiguous processes could lead to disparity in employment distribution. The Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria which handles employment and distribution of these jobs to the citizen of the country adopts an ambiguous selection process which in the long run could not

guarantee the equal representation of the states of the country Nigeria the current research findings shows. According to Al-Gazali (2006), the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria, which has the mandate to recruit, select and distribute employment, adopts a process that continuously encourages disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. Omisore & Okofu (2014) captures the complex processes and strategies of staffs recruitment in the Nigerian civil service as that which involves several stages starting with public advertisement which is to bring the attention of the general public to an ongoing recruitment exercise, this is followed with a complex and unending list of requisition for the candidates to meet. This is further compounded by job information, description, and specification, followed by methods of application/source of recruitment adopted by the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria. They followed the actual selection process from the pool of applicants by setting up an interview and general assessment and post recruitment activities (Omisore & Okofu, 2014). The complexity of the recruitment process into the Nigerian civil service makes it difficult to ensure equal representation of the sections of the country in the employment distribution as many of the candidates could not stand the challenge of these seemingly unending processes, thus discouraging some sections of the country.

The absence of reliable data of the employed in the Nigerian civil service is another important cause of the disparity in the service. The problem of reliable data affects the overall employment distribution process in the Nigerian civil service as the service still relies on an old system of data compilation in the country. The absence of reliable data causes the recurrent disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution. This has hampered the employment distribution process in the nation. According to Briggs (2007) recruitment process of staff into the civil service is one of the difficult challenges faced by the government of most countries of the world and especially in Nigeria in employment distribution among the states in the country. According to Fried & Gate (2005), the process of recruitment in the public

sector needs to explore and depend on the existing and reliable data which must be current, accurate, and comprehensive to guarantee fair and successful employment exercise and when this is absent equality cannot be ensured. Reliable data of past and current recruitment and selection processes can ordinarily serve as an indicator for ensuring equality in employment distribution and serve as a shield against employment disparity anytime in the service, but unfortunately, this is not available in the Nigerian civil service. The absence of reliable data on employment in the Nigerian civil service has led to the continuous disparity in employment distribution. These reflect those of Hawk, Powers & Rubinovitz (2015) who stated that data in employment is undisputedly important even were there no consensus on what makes up reliable data, thus its usefulness in ensuring that disparity does not arise cannot overemphasize. Through reliable data, facts on employment disparity are broken down for easy identification, compilation, tabulation and subsequently used to guide those responsible for the recruitment like the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria, unfortunately, this is not the case in the country's civil service employment distribution hence the disparity.

The delegation of recruitment exercise is another striking cause of the disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. Delegation of recruitment in the Nigerian civil service helps to promote the self-serving interest of some individuals and groups. Briggs (2007) whose study which was aimed at accessing the problem of recruitment conducted by the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria found that the delegation of power by the commission which handles recruitment into the Nigerian civil ministries, extra-ministerial agencies, and department to pilot recruitment exercise for staffs on its behalf has contributed in no small measure contributed to the disparity in the employment distribution into the Nigerian civil service. The research conducted by Briggs (2007) using a descriptive survey with a multi-choice questionnaire to over 500 respondents shows that delegation of the duty of recruitment to ministries, departments, and extra-ministerial agencies led to the imbalance in the recruitment

exercise, which invariably presents a situation of disparity in employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. The action of the Federal Civil Service Commission to delegate part of her responsibility of recruitment into the Nigerian civil service to ministries, departments, and extra-ministerial agencies contributed to the disparity in the employment distribution in the civil service. Although the delegation of responsibility of the commission to the ministries was done to forestall the continuous delay in the recruitment process in the Nigerian civil service, it ironically gives room to the various heads of ministries, departments, and extra-ministerial agencies to recruit people without due adherence to equality and balance in the employment and its distribution in the Nigerian civil service. According to Peter & Philip (2013) in a comparative study of recruitment strategy adopted in India and Nigeria, stated that despite the recruitment guidelines handed to ministries during the delegation of recruitment by the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria for them to adhere to equality and to avoid disparity in the employment distribution of staffs, the various heads of these ministries still conduct recruitment without due compliance to the regulations of the commission, which promptly brings disparity to bear in the Nigeria civil service employment distribution. Madugu & Okafor (2015) in a critical appraisal of the Nigerian civil service recruitment also supported the position that although Section 170 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave the commission the power to delegate parts of its functions, which they gave to the ministries and extra-ministerial agencies make up a challenge because they lack proper control of these ministries gave room to the various heads of this body to recruit without due consideration to equality in the employment distribution into the service leading to the great disparity in the entire recruitment and selection process in the Nigerian civil service. This paper mirrors those of the previous studies that have examined related issues, it shows that the primary motive of delegation of employment in the Nigerian civil service to the ministries which to put an end to complex employment process in

the country, unfortunately, happens to be one of the leading causes of disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution of senior civil servant.

The Nigerian Civil Service Commission, whose responsibility is to employ the civil servants and continuous influence of this commission, contributed to the current disparity witnessed in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution. The lack of independence by the commission responsible for employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service was a fundamental reason for the current disparity in employment distribution in Nigeria civil servants. To Briggs (2007), lack of independence of the selection and recruitment authority, in this case, the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria makes up a challenge to any plan or strategy put in place to ensure equal employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. In Briggs (2007) studies of the problems that confront recruitment in Nigerian civil service, the scholar through her respondents identified the continuous lack of independence inherent in the Federal Civil Service Commission as the leading cause of the numerous challenges facing the employment process in the service despite the existing constitutional provisions captured in Section 158 (1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which gives independence to the recruitment commission to exercise her constitution mandate without fear or favor. Inherent in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution because due to lack of independence of the commission responsible for employment distribution in the country, which evidently corroborate Briggs's (2007) position. Despite the constitutional provision, which gives the commission power to act independently and following the Act establishing it, the Federal Civil Service Commission still cannot boast of carrying out recruitment and subsequently employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service independently without frequent interference from various stakeholders. Madugu & Okafor (2015) & Yaro (2014) have demonstrated that in practice the members of the commission whose responsibility is to provide recruitment in the

civil service are heavily influenced by politicians, government officials, families, and friends which affected employment distribution in a long run. This scenario largely explains the seriousness attached to struggle for the control of the machinery of the state in post – colonial society (Peter & Ocheni, 2015; Peter, 2020). Those who control the state have the allocative capacity in giving jobs to members of their constituents without minding the Federal Character Principle.

The continuous political influence on the Civil Service of Nigeria prompted the level of disparity found in the Nigerian civil service, thus prompting a lack of independence. According to Osakwe (2007), Onwe et al (2015), employment distribution exercises in the Nigerian civil service which commences with recruitment and selection process are based solely on political patronage or determined by the Nigerian political class who sees it as an opportunity to compensate party loyalists at the expense of balance in the civil service of the country. This influence often comes not just from the politicians but also from the political decision-makers who planned the Act establishing the Federal Civil Service Commission and whose duty is to monitor the implementation of the laws and guidelines in the Act. According to Shahda (2016) in his study of the effects of political factors in Lebanese and Arab countries, civil service resolved that we cannot separate the political influence from the civil service employment distribution and other activities of the service. Shahda's (2016) finding shows that the employment distribution and all the recruitment processes in the Arabian countries depend heavily on the political leadership which projects their interest over fair and balanced employment distribution. The quest to satisfy political loyalty remains the main cause of the disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution of civil servants. In this situation, the political class has no regard for balance or disparity, hence continuous influence on the employment process.

The role of bureaucracy in the disparity's cause in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution is no farfetched. The influence

coming from the top bureaucratic to employ their candidates not minding the consequence on the equality in the employment distribution remains one of the major causes of the disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution. Most often, those responsible for employment in the Nigerian civil service are more interested in employing their people or relations, not minding the disparity this might cause in the quest for equal employment distribution in the service. The bureaucratic influence, especially among the top administrative echelon, remains another prominent cause of the disparity in the employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. The bureaucrat who occupies the top administrative position in the various ministries most often carries out irregularities in the employment distribution process, which often caused disparity in the employment distribution of civil servant in the Nigerian civil service. According to Mustapha (2009) who stated that the long history of bureaucratic inequalities which favored one section of the country over the other, especially in the technocratic and directorate cadres of the civil service has contributed to the continuous disparity in employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service, as these top bureaucratic always find the way or the other to influence the entire recruitment process. Similarly, Rasul & Rogger (2015) asserted that bureaucrats play an important role in the service, their actions are most likely to tend towards pursuing and influencing the entire procedural guideline of the service through corrupt tendency which serves as an impediment to the employment distribution. Rasul & Rogger (2015) assertion is to similarly Rose (1976) who opined that bureaucratic influence in the civil service has a historical antecedent or link to political leaders who find one way or the other to exact their priorities on these bureaucratic, who often cannot deny them their request and subsequently affect their in employment distribution into the service of their various countries. Also, Okereka (2015) in his study of Delta State of Nigeria civil service recruitment and selection of personnel shows that growing influence of bureaucrat who holds the

perception or sees their position as an opportunity to compensate relations, rewards followers and loyalist by filling existing vacancies in the civil service, especially within their sphere of jurisdiction with these sets of supporters remains a big challenge to the institution of government.

Influences coming from the traditional leaders, family members, and friends wanting to have their candidate employed in the Nigerian civil service can also lead to disparity in employment distribution. According to Okeraka (2015) influence emanating from the environment has tremendously driven employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service to the level of disparity it found itself today. The scholar identifies this influence to be coming from traditional leaders, immediate and extended family members, and the members of the highly placed social class in the country, who constantly pressurize the employment body and invariably affect balance in selection and recruitment which they are supposed to uphold. According to Balogun (2006) who stated that environmental influence and pressure are from leaders/godfathers and relations as a 'prepared list' of applicants for employment into the Nigerian civil service interesting the recruitment commission or body to employ specific individuals without recourse to the disparity, it might cause to the civil service of the country.

### **Conclusion**

The paper opined that influence critical stakeholders' expert those responsible for employment distribution in-country hugely led to the disparity in employment distribution of civil servants. Exerting these influences on the recruitment agencies would bequest negative consequences. And the important issue of note is a conflict of interest, which the paper revealed to cause the disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution. The paper shows that the need to champion personal interest affects employment distribution. Ethical dilemma and conflict of interest in politics and administration which affirms that conflict of interest has caused a series of scandals in civil service in this case employment process and distribution because of some unethical conduct.

This involves those emotions and loyalties which influence and compromise bureaucrat or the top government officers in the exercise of their judgment, a situation which often arises when public duty, fairness, and equality clashes with the personal interest of those responsible for employment distribution in the country's civil service. Conflict of interest is of utmost concern because it reduces public confidence and trust in the impartiality of these government functionaries, especially in the face of increasing realization of the opportunities to place personal interest above equality in the distribution of employment. And when their issue between responsibility and personal interest of government officials, in which the government official has personal-capacity interests, these could influence their mandate. Furthermore, can the paper attributed the disparity in the Nigerian civil service employment distribution of civil servants to ambiguity in the process of employment, weak recruitment and selection process, and absence of reliable data of employment, political and bureaucratic influence. Thus conclude that primordial self-gratification, which is personal interest and conflict of interest, is the major cause of disparity in employment distribution of civil servants in the Nigerian civil service.

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