

Time Management and Civil Service Reforms In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study evaluated time management in the Nigerian civil service. The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the civil service reforms. Time management ensures adequate and proper utilization of the time available. The research was conducted based on evaluation and survey research designs. The stratified random sampling with equal allocation was adopted in the choice of sample from the population of the study. The reliability of the research instruments was computed based on a pilot survey; and the instruments were found to be reliable. The results showed that there is low appreciation of the process of time management and its principles among the civil servants. There are also traces of time wastage or mismanagement by the civil servants during working hours. The civil service reforms have not addressed the issue of time management. The paper recommended inclusion of time management issue in all subsequent civil service reforms. Meanwhile, mismanagement or wastage of time during working hours by civil servants can be addressed by means of training and sensitization.*

Keywords: *Civil servants, civil service reforms, missing link, time management*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria and other developing countries, governments, due to lack of well-developed private sectors, are carrying the bulk of the burden of socio-economic development. For instance in the area of employment, in most developing countries, the state serves as the biggest employer of labour (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). The state on its part relies heavily on the civil service to play its significant role in socio-economic development. The Civil Service is an arm of the executive branch of government that is responsible for policy formulation and implementation, development planning and implementation, control and regulatory functions (Abdussalam, 1989). Civil service is also responsible for the day to day operation of the machinery of government. The Civil Service in Nigeria is of a colonial creation. The system bequeathed to Nigeria by the British colonialists, was narrow in structure and objectives, and meant to successfully extract financial and material resources (Anazodo, Okoye & Chukwuemeka, 2012). This makes the Civil Service to lack the much needed discipline, accountability and transparency. This is also the kind of civil service the Nigerian bureaucrats inherited after independence in 1960. Based on the structural defects of the Service, the bureaucrats, Anazodo et al. (2012) continued to argue, who occupied the leadership position in the Civil Service, imbibed the colonial mentality of wealth acquisition for self-aggrandizement and self-superiority. This unfortunate scenario laid the foundation for the continuous abysmal performance of the Civil Service in particular and under development of the Country in general.

In the bid to position the civil service so as to properly perform its aforementioned statutory functions and move the Nation forward, various governments in Nigeria, at various times, have made attempts to reform the Service. The reforms are essentially meant to improve the performance of civil servants so as to meet up with the challenges of civil rule, democracy, good governance and globalization (Ahmadu, 2007). Despite all the reforms, successive government regimes themselves were not satisfied with the performance of the Civil Service. The Service is fraught with inefficiency, ineffectiveness, indiscipline, red-tapism, bureaucratic bottlenecks, among others (Abdussalam, 1990). In fact, Ayida in Ahmadu (2007) is of the opinion that civil reforms, especially the 1988 one, have done more harm than good and would take patience and determination to restore the lost glory of the Service.

Since all human activities are tied down to time and past reforms in the Civil Service have failed to yield the desired result, it becomes imperative to focus on how civil servants utilize their working hours for which they are paid for. It is in this light that this study will focus on time management by civil servants during working hours. Despite the importance of time in the accomplishment of goals, all the past reforms have not addressed the issue of time management in the Civil Service (Ahmadu, 2007). The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the reforms. The study will examine time management among civil servants and by implications justify its inclusion in future reforms. Bejide (2011) argued that effective time management broadly entails appreciation of the process, adoption of the principles and avoidance of time wastage. In the light of this argument, the paper will attempt to examine how civil servants manage their time during working hours and seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Find out the level of understanding of civil servants of the process of time management
2. Find out the level of adoption of principles of time management by civil servants
3. Find out the level of indulgence of civil servants in factors leading to waste of time during working hours

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ipinlaiye (2001), civil service refers to “the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and non-political career basis by the Federal and state governments primarily to render and faithfully give effect to their decisions and implementation”. This definition is general and global while specific definition or composition of civil service is usually stated in the laws of individual countries.

Time refers to a non-spatial continuum in which events like work, relaxation, eating, sleeping etc occur in irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time). Apart from irreversibility, Bejide (2011) further identified the characteristics of time of being very personal, of universal demand, untransferrable, valuable, cannot be increased, absolutely inelastic and cannot be stored.

In view of the above characteristics and indispensability of time in all human actions, time management becomes imperative. Ahmadu (2007) viewed time management as the process of delegation or allocation of the available time in such a way that the most important tasks are achieved before the less important ones. According to Susan (2012), the process of time management involves planning, organization, coordination, control, and evaluation.

Effective time management requires adoption of certain guiding principles. According to Hisrich and Peter (2002) the principles include the desire to develop the required mindset for effective time management, effectiveness, analysis, team work, prioritized planning and reanalysis. In addition to adoption of the aforementioned principles, effective time management also entails identification of time wasters and making efforts to avoid or minimize them (Usman, et al., 2006). Similarly, Usman et al. (2006) further argued that time management can be leaned by realizing that; one can establish priorities that highlight his/her most important goals, what is important and what is not important. Also one can create time by realistic scheduling of time and elimination of low priority tasks.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study seeks to evaluate the level of appreciation, adoption and application of the process of time management among civil servants. The target population of this study includes the entire civil servants in Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study is an admixture of evaluation and survey research designs. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted in the choice of sample subjects. Structured questionnaires were used in collecting data for the study. An effective survey strategy was adopted to minimize nonresponse, response error and respondents’ bias to the barest minimum. In this strategy, follow-ups were made for the questionnaires not returned or not properly filled so as to maintain the effective sample size. This is the efficient survey strategy for optimal results. The sample consists of 300 respondents in two strata by gender as shownon Table 1 below.

Table 1: Equal Stratification

Strata	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	150	150
2	Female	150	150
	Total	300	100.0

The statistical tools employed for data analysis include Cronbach’s Alpha, t-test and descriptive statistics. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed for the data analysis. The questionnaires were tested for reliability using Cronbach’s Alpha based on a pilot study with a sample size of 100respondents. TheCronbach’s alpha is a robust measure of reliability of the question items and typically varies between 0 and 1. Hence, the reliability of any research instrument or questionnaire is adequately measured by the Cronbach’s alpha statistic. The closer the value of Cronbach’s alpha statistic is to 1, the better the reliability. For this study, the reliability results are given in the table below.

Table 2: Summary Item and Cronbach'sAlpha Reliability

Strata	Alpha	N of cases	N of items
Male	0.72	50	20
Female	0.65	50	20
Total		100	

From table 2 above, the Cronbach’s alpha of 0.72 and 0.65 for the research questionnaires for male and female civil servants respectively implies that the instruments are reliable and as such have requisite internal consistency.

In this study, the t-test was used to test the research hypotheses. Since the questionnaires used were on five Likert scale, we used the one sample t-test with a threshold hypothesized test value of 3.0 to test the significance of each of the research hypothesis. At the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis must be rejected if $p < 0.05$. The t-test is applied to test the three research hypotheses and the results are as follows.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants against the one-sided alternative of less significance.

Table 3: T-test on the level of appreciation of time management by civil servants

T	Test Value = 3			Descriptive statistics	
	Df	Sig. (1-tailed)	Mean Difference	Mean	Standard deviation
7.57	299	0.000	0.26	3.26	0.454

From the results of the t-test in the table above, since the $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is low appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants.

4.2 Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant adoption of the principles of time management by the civil servants against the one-sided alternative of less significance.

Table 4: T-test on the level of adoption of time management by civil servants

T	Test Value = 3			Descriptive statistics	
	Df	Sig. (1-tailed)	Mean Difference	Mean	Standard deviation
2.51	299	0.013	-0.06	2.94	0.557

Similarly, the results above shows that since the $p = 0.013 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is low adoption of the principles of time management by the civil servants.

4.3 Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant involvement of the civil servants in “time wasting” issues during working hours against the one-sided alternative of less significance.

Table 5: T-test on the level of time wasting by civil servants

T	Test Value = 3			Descriptive statistics	
	Df	Sig. (1-tailed)	Mean Difference	Mean	Standard deviation
4.92	299	0.000	-0.20	2.80	0.718

Similarly, the results above shows that since the $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is significant involvement of civil servants in “time wasting” issues during working hours.

V. DISCUSSIONS

In hypothesis 1, the results show that there is low appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants. The civil servants lack the requisite appreciation of time management. On the other hand, in hypothesis 2 the results also show that there is low adoption of the principles of time management by the civil servants. The two hypotheses jointly show that civil servants do not really appreciate the tenets of time management as well as lacking in the adoption of its principles. Again the results of hypothesis 3 show that there is significant involvement of civil servants in “time wasting” issues during working hours. Therefore, it can be deduced that lack of appreciation and adoption of the principles of time management could really lead to time wasting by the civil servants.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Time is a valuable resource available to every organization. The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the civil service reforms in of Nigeria. The findings of the study have revealed that civil servants do not really appreciate the process of time management and consequently do not adopt its principles. It was also discovered that there are traces of time wastage by civil servants during working hours. For improvement on time management in the Nigeria’s civil service, the following are recommended:

- I. All subsequent civil service reforms should seriously address the issue of time management
- II. Civil servants should be made to appreciate the process of time management and its principles through training
- III. Civil servants should minimize waste of time during working hours by means of avoiding involvement in issues leading to time wastage such as procrastination, gossips, prolong meetings etc
- IV. Effective time management requires use of certain facilities and equipment such as computers, organizers, calendars, diaries etc. These facilities and equipment should be made available so as to facilitate time management in the civil service
- V. Effective time management also requires motivation in form of higher remuneration and conducive working environment. These and similar kinds of motivation should be provided with a view to encouraging time management in the civil service

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