

## THE IMPACTS OF FRINGE BENEFITS ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

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### ABSTRACT

The provision of fringe benefits to public servants has been found to cause an increase in job satisfaction and increase in job satisfaction translates to effective public service delivery. The monetization of fringe benefits in the Nigerian public service is a potent instrument for enhanced job satisfaction among public service employees, it is in this regard that this article examines the impacts of fringe benefits on job satisfaction among employees of the Nigerian public service, using the secondary method of data collection, and employing textual analysis in analyzing the collected secondary data. Findings from the study showed that the provision of fringe benefits to Nigerian public service employees enhanced their job satisfaction and increase in job satisfaction translates to effective public service delivery. Several recommendations were suggested, such as the provision of enhanced remuneration, consistency in provision of mandatory fringe benefits, and the payment of fringe benefits in line with employees' job performance, among others.

**Keywords:** Fringe benefits, Public service, Job satisfaction, Job performance, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Public service refers to the conglomerate of government employees and their activities geared towards the implementation of public policies and programmes for the betterment and improvement of the lives of the citizenry. Public service is entrusted with the management of public affairs and coordination of day to day actions and activities of the government. Section 169 of the amended 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria describes the public service as comprising the civil service, parastatals, statutory corporations, judiciary, legislature, public educational institutions, the Nigerian police, the armed forces, and several other

organizations in which the federal or state government has a controlling share (Adebayo, 2004, cited in Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, & Yakubu, 2023; Agba, Ochimana, & Abubakar, 2013; Odeh & Sodje, 2023). Similarly, Odeh and Unufe observed that all civil servants are public servants, but all public servants are not civil servants, only the public servants who work in the federal and state ministries and extra-ministerial departments are civil servants. They further described the civil service as comprising the ministries of finance, health, education, defence, and so on. The public service consists of the Central Bank of Nigeria, all the federal and state medical centres, the public universities and other public academic institutions, local government service, and all the government research institutes, such as the Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN), Armed Forces of Nigeria, Nigeria Civil Defence Corp, the Nigeria Police Service, among others. In addition, the Director General of Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Mrs C.U. Gayya, cited in Odeh and Sodje (2023, p. 98) stated that the extra-ministerial departments in Nigeria include the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC), Office of Auditor-General of the Federation, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Population Commission (NPC), Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), Federal Character Commission (FCC), National Boundary Commission (NBC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Public Complaints Commission (PCC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau. However, none of these agencies can effectively achieve their constitutional mandates in the absence of adequate provision of fringe benefits in Nigeria's public space, a trend that would rather make them be counter-productive through the exhibition of acts of corruption, lack of commitment to the achievement of stated goals, and their involvement in several other acts of malfeasance in the course of discharge of their responsibilities.

The definition and scope of the civil service varies from one country to the others with some countries having a narrow conception of it, while other countries have a broader conception of the term. Countries like Island and Poland have a narrow conception of national civil service, while countries, such as France, Finland and Netherland maintains a broader conception of the term. Also, countries like Italy conceive civil service as both the entire public sector work force at the central and local administration, as well as the entire public sector work force including educational institutions and other government agencies in the country (Smalyskys & Yubalovic, 2017, cited in Pillar, 2023; Pillar, 2023). In Nigeria, the Civil Service comprises the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) (Adamolekun, 2002). The civil service which is a part of the public service is responsible for the achievement of the goals of the government through its vital role in management of the public affairs (Ejere & Utok, 2023).

The human element form the basis of every institution are responsible for the day to day management of organizations and at the same time responsible for the achievements of the targeted goals of every organization. To effectively fulfill these functions, there is the need to accord them adequate compensation and rewards which will incentivize them for enhanced job performance (Pillar, 2023). Also, collaborative governance as the newest trend of public governance requires qualified and adequately motivated public servants for its effective achievement (Odeh & Oladejo, 2023).

A panel study of 2013 conducted in the United States, which covered the periods between 1988 and 2003, established the existence of a relationship between job performance and the provision of rewards for public servants (Pillar, 2023). This, therefore, implies that the provision of rewards in the public service stimulates effective job performance and organizational productivity. Adequate rewards, such as fringe benefits granted to employees including Nigerian public servants have been identified by most scholars as a stimulus for

effective employees' performance, and achievement of the requisite organizational productivity (Adams, 1963; Milkovich & Newman, 2008; Armstrong, 2008; Maduabum, 2016).

Former president Olusegun Obasanjo attributed the low-quality public service delivery to employee capacity, hence, he instituted the SERVICE COMPACT (SERVICOM) programme to monitor and regulate the performances of public servants in the country (Nigeria, 2006, cited in Ejere & Utok, 2023). However, Nunberg (2014) viewed the poor performance of public servants in third world countries, including Nigeria, as a product of poor remuneration and lack of work incentives. In a bid to overcome inadequate public service delivery, most low-income countries have embarked on programmes of down-sizing and right sizing, a trend that further leads to the exit of the few skilled and qualified manpower in these countries (Lienert, 2018), occasioned by lack of due process, ethnicity and favouritism that usually characterize such reforms.

Several studies on the effective performance of Nigerian public service with a focus on Akwa Ibom State Civil Service attributed the poor performance of public servants in the country to low morale and poor motivation of the public servants (Chukwu, 2019; Eyo, 2019; Ayandele & Etim, 2020; Mustapha, 2020; Edet, Ebong, & Utok, 2023; Ejere & Utok, 2023). For example, Ejere & Utok (2023) observed that: "Despite the evident link between a robust reward system and effective service delivery, it is discomfiting to observe that the Akwa Ibom State's civil service appears to fall short in adequately addressing financial incentives, timely promotions, opportunities for staff training and development, career progression, workshops, and other motivating factors for its civil servants".

Furthermore, Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, and Yakubu (2023) stated that the Nigerian public service, especially, the universities has been faced with a massive brain drain and high job turn over either to overseas countries or to professions such as politics and industries where they experienced better job satisfaction. The views of the above authors are not different from the massive brain drain that has been ravaging the Nigerian health sector. This trend, if not curtailed, would drastically undermined the nation's strive towards the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

It is in the light of the above that this article attempt to examine the impacts of fringe benefits on job satisfaction among employees of the Nigerian public service, through the adoption of a secondary method of data collection, and a textual analysis technique was employed in the analysis of the collected secondary data.

### **Fringe Benefits and Job Satisfaction: A Conceptual Overview**

Fringe benefit is the reward granted to employees outside the agreed salary payment. It is an extra benefit received by employees which are not based on employee performance in the organization. They are benefits of a broad scope which are provided for employees outside the normal payment of wages and salaries (Ayeniyo, 2015).

According to Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, and Yakubu (2023), fringe benefits are granted to employees at the discretion of the employer. Nisar and Danish (2019) observed that the provision of fringe benefits to employees by organizations translate to job satisfaction. In other words, they established a positive relationship between fringe benefits and job satisfaction. They described fringe benefits as non-discriminatory rewards which organizations give to their members without any attachment of any condition or criteria of eligibility for it. They noted that fringe benefits have the propensity to increase the level of commitment of employees and

causing increase in the level of organizational productivity, and it is provided for all employees irrespective of their level of productivity. They concluded by highlighting several examples of fringe benefits, such as medical insurance, leaves, flexible working hours, a good environment, and so on.

Ayeniyo (2015) added more examples of fringe benefits, such as diverse forms of social security and unemployment insurance, free housing for employees, group insurance covering both health and life coverage, safeguard against disability and failure in income, retirement benefits, day-care, reimbursement of tuition fees paid for self or children as the case may be, sick leave, vacation with or without payment, organizational profit sharing plan, set aside funds for education of employees and other unique benefits considered separately from salary and wages. Other fringe benefits identified by Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, and Yakubu (2023, p. 58) are: “free or subsidized transportation, salary advance, employee stock-ownership scheme, performance awards and prizes, provision of lunchroom, payment of company-picnic, among others.”

Pillar (2023) stated that fringe benefits in the Nigerian public service are of two types, the legally mandated or statutory fringe benefits and the discretionary fringe benefits. The legally mandated fringe benefits comprise pension plans, paid time off, recognition, tuition reimbursement, promotion and annual increments. The discretionary fringe benefits consist of those benefits that each public service organization decides to provide for its members at their discretion, such as the provision of gift items during festive periods like Christmas celebrations, Moslem Salah festivals, and so on. Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, and Yakubu (2023) viewed job satisfaction as the fulfilment an employee derives from his job, and a high level of job satisfaction translates to job embeddedness and commitment of employees to the achievement of organizational goals. They further observed that job satisfaction is concerned with the perception of what employees expect to achieve in their work place vis-a-viz, what they obtained. Korlo and Akintunde (2016) see job satisfaction as the extent to which the hope, desires and aspirations of employees are met by the organization or management.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **The Social Exchange Theory**

The article adopted the Social Exchange Theory (SET) as its theoretical framework. The SET was propounded by George Homans and Peter Blau (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2021, cited in Akintoye & Odeh, 2022). The Social exchange theory is based on a reciprocal work relationship between employees and employers or managers where the action of one party determines the reaction of the other party. It describes a situation where the employees' job satisfaction and motivation for effective performance of their assigned tasks depends on the level of rewards and incentives made available to them by their employers or managers (Akintoye & Odeh, 2022).

The theory argues that the level of incentives provided for employees and the extent of morale boosting circumstances created for them by their employers determine the magnitude of efforts and effective performance they would exhibit in their workplace. In other words, the theory assumes that the behavioural patterns of employees for effective job performance can be predicted by employers and managers, since their actions and reactions towards job satisfaction and performance correlate positively with the level of rewards, especially fringe benefits that are provided for them.

The application of the SET to this article is based on the fact that job satisfaction which is a prerequisite for achieving effective and optimum job performance by the Nigerian public servants is predicated on the provision of adequate fringe benefits provided for them by the government. In other words, a reciprocal relationship exists between the government and public servants, such that the level of fringe benefits provided by the government would determine the amount of effort the public servants would in turn put in their work to achieve organizational productivity.

### **The Impacts of Fringe Benefits on Job Satisfaction in Nigerian Public Service**

Akwaowo (2023, n.p.) observed that “the provision of fringe benefits boosts the morale of the staff, encourages workers to improve their level of productivity in the organization and creates a deeper sense of commitment or affinity in the staff that prevents them from leaving the organization to other competitors”. An empirical study conducted by Odeh (2024) found that the inadequate provision of fringe benefits to Nigerian public servants, such as retirement benefits, was due to ineffectiveness in retirees’ trade union association.

Also, an empirical study conducted by Ejere and Utok (2023), which adopted the Civil Servants in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria as respondents, found “an increase in the regular compensation provided for civil servants in the state would lead to an elevation in the extent and quality of services delivered to taxpayers in Akwa Ibom State”. Iyida (2015) noted that the monetization of fringe benefits in the Nigerian public service translates to enhanced job performance and job satisfaction among public sector employees. However, the author further observed that the gains of monetization of fringe benefits in the Nigerian public service were subsequently eroded by the high inflationary trend in the country, and advised that the government should extend the monetization to all levels of the public service, as well as making efforts not to publicize any future policies of monetization of fringe benefits in the public service to avert a situation where it instigates undue increases in prices of commodities by business owners.

Furthermore, Odeh and Unufe (2019) observed that the existence of an effective due process mechanism in the Nigerian public service is vital for adequate and equitable administration of fringe benefits in the public sector, but the authors added that effective public sector leadership is urgently needed to successfully maximize the applications of the existing due process mechanism in the public sector. In a similar vein, Odeh and Aimuan (2018, p.175) noted that in order for the Nigerian government to stand up to her challenges of provision of adequate fringe benefits to public servants, and to stimulate their effective performance towards the achievement of effective public service delivery, as well as, eventual achievement of national development, “there is the urgent need to cut down her over bloated bureaucracy and strengthen her institutions, entrench due process and accountability, enact social welfare policies, and ensure that there is the availability of reliable data for planning” purposes, and for effective administration of fringe benefits in the public service. Administration in this context simply refers to what Fadia and Fadia, 2009, cited in Ndisika and Odeh, (2021), describe as the act of getting things done.

Despite the above narrative of the import of fringe benefits to job satisfaction, Chimanikire, Mutandwa, Gadzirayi, Muzondo and Mutandwa (2017) observed that a large proportion of academic staff in the country lack job satisfaction sequel to poor remuneration, high volume of work without a corresponding compensation, and the absence of affordable housing and car loans. Similarly, Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, and Yakubu (2023, p. 65) identify “a high volume of work, inadequate salaries, inadequate allowances, inadequate loans to facilities purchase of housing, and cars and poor organization culture were among the challenges affecting staff job satisfaction in Ogun State owned universities”. Further findings by these authors show that

both retirement benefits and health insurance schemes translate to employees' job satisfaction. In addition, Nisar and Danish (2019) observed a positive correlation between granting of leave for recreation and health insurance on one side and employees' job satisfaction on the other hand. The above findings imply that the provision of adequate pension schemes and health insurance are potent instruments for stimulating employees' job satisfaction. This view was aptly captured by (Nisar & Danish, 2019; Osime, Agbonna, Oluyode, & Yakubu, 2023; Akwaowo, 2023).

### **The Implications of Job Satisfaction to Effective Public Service Delivery**

Effective performance of public servants translates to effective public service delivery. Ifaka and Unufe (2021, p. 21) viewed performance as "the measurement of actual output, results or total products against the expected or anticipated target". They view performance as an evaluatory framework to determine the extent to which public service successfully achieves the implementation of targeted public policies and programmes. In other words, performance is result-oriented which is contrary to the traditional approach of measuring the achievement of public service simply by considering public service activities and rules adherence, rather than emphasizing measurement of tangible and concrete results.

Service delivery has been viewed by Davidson (2016) as a systematic framework structured towards meeting the needs, desires, and satisfaction of the citizenry in an efficient and effective manner. Oyedeji and Odeh (2022, p. 377) noted that "with high level ethical standards, the Nigerian public servants would be committed to performing its duties competently, upholding the ethics of their profession and displaying a high level of probity, accountability, integrity, openness, selflessness, objectivity and efficiency in service delivery." The realization of the above would require a well-motivated public service work force through adequate provision of fringe benefits in the public service.

Ifaka and Odigie (2021) opined that besides provision of incentives to public servants, merit based recruitment is another potent instrument for realizing the achievement of effective public service performance. Olowu (2010) noted that the provision of public services is particularly targeted at those who cannot afford the provision of goods and services at competitive market prices. This view implies that the provision of public services is aimed at subsidizing the basic items needed by ordinary citizens and other vulnerable groups in the society. Ejere and Utok (2023) noted that the term public service refers to services such as: "hospitals, roads, electricity, water supply, markets, customs, licensing, sanitation, physical infrastructure, town planning, public safety, and housing" Adequate compensation of employees and provision of rewards have been identified as a factor responsible for effective performance of Nigerian public servants (Awotunde & Ojo, 2022, cited in Pillar, 2023). In a nutshell, the prerequisite for effective public service delivery and achievements of its maximum out rest on the extent to which public sector employees attain job satisfaction.

### **Conclusion**

Public service refers to the totality of government agencies saddled with the responsibility of implementing public policies and programmes for the improvement of the lives of the citizenry. It is the agency that is entrusted with the management of public affairs and coordination of day to day actions and activities of the government. Fringe benefits refer to the extra rewards received by employees that are not based on their performance in the organization. They are benefits of a broad scope that are provided for employees outside the normal payment of wages and salaries.

Findings from the study showed that the provision of fringe benefits boosts the morale of employees of the public service, and enhance their job satisfaction. The adequate provision of fringe benefits to public servants has been found to cause an increase in job satisfaction and increase in job satisfaction translates to effective public service delivery. It was revealed in the study that monetization of fringe benefits in the Nigerian public service is a potent instrument for enhanced job satisfaction among public service employees, and it also contributes to effective public service delivery. Other fringe benefits identified in the study as having greater potency towards the stimulation of job satisfaction and enhanced public sector performance are pension benefits, health insurance schemes, and granting of leave for recreation. Findings from the study also show that the lack of provision of mandatory fringe benefits for employees, such as retirement benefits, is caused by the failure of retirees to effectively organize themselves into trade union association through which they could have a common voice and purpose.

### **Recommendations**

Several recommendations aimed at the effective motivation of employees of Nigerian public service for the achievement of job satisfaction and effective public service productivity have been suggested below:

1. Since fringe benefits serve as an adjunct to the payment of salary and wages, it will therefore, make more sense for the government to provide an enhanced salary payment for public servants. In this way, additional fringe benefits would easily translate to job satisfaction.
2. The government should guide against default in the provision of legally mandated fringe benefits, such as pension benefits, since such default would not only demotivate the affected employees, but would send a wrong signal to the entire public sector work force. And the effect of such occurrence would be counter-productive to national development.
3. There is therefore, the urgent need for government at all levels to address the challenges of over bloated bureaucracy and eliminate excessive and unnecessary public spending to realize enough funds to implement satisfactory fringe benefits.
4. To achieve the effective performance of public servants, certain fringe benefits should be provided in accordance with each employee's job performance. This approach would go a long way in stimulating public servants to strive towards enhanced job performance.

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