

Ethical Standards and Public Service Delivery in South East, Nigeria

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Abstract. Public service is responsible for the execution of governmental programmes and provision of social services such as transportation, rural electrification, water etc. However, these services are not adequately provided despite the enormous resources allocated to the MDAs in southeast, Nigeria. It is on these shortcomings that necessitated various reforms in Nigeria and institutionalisation of ethical standards, culture of work ethics, yet output is poorly delivered. The study adopted Descriptive research design. The population was the public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states, Nigeria. The three states were purposively selected with numerical population of 51,102. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select three MDAs (Ministry of Works and Infrastructure/Transport, Civil Service Commission and Water Corporation). The sample size was 786. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection complemented by interview guide. Reliability test of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the construct ranging from 0.77 to 0.82. The response rate was 87%. Data collected were tabulated, while mean as well as standard deviation were calculated, and content analysed. Findings revealed that nonadherence to ethical principles for effective operation, lack of commitment and low sense of integrity leading to conflict of interest, corrupt practices and undue award of contracts to associates as well as recruitment not based on merit were observed in the public service of the three states. State governments of Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo should legislate policies and practices that encourages sense of integrity and commitment, encourage consistent on the job training and development, motivation of public servants to encourage ethical behaviour.

Keywords: Ethical Standard, Public Service, Service Delivery, Culture, Commitment.

1. Introduction

The Nigerian public service is saddled with the responsibility of implementing governmental programmes, assist the political executive to formulate policy and carry out other responsibilities such as registration of companies, collection of tax among others. As a result of these important functions, its significance cannot be overemphasised, therefore, is the substratum on which governmental accomplishments are attained. So, while public service has become the centre of government program, the productivity of its workforce has remained a major determinant of the extent of social-economic development (Ogunkuade, 2016). Conversely, public service may not be able to attain any goal if the officials are not ethically concerned with the norms, ideals and principles of the service. This is the professionalism Nigerian public service lacked shortly after the civil war (1967-1970) that was characterised with unethical behaviours. Service delivery of the civil service was blemished with unethical conducts such as collusion, negligence to duty, extortion, and financial misconduct. This affected the expected performance which undermined socio-economic development in the country. On this note, ethical values like dedication to duty, impartiality, anonymity, and political neutrality, which were the norms in public service before and during the national independence in 1960 was undermined, especially with the incursion of the military in Nigerian government and politics in 1966. Corruption was institutionalised and became a norm in the public service and hampered all aspect of national development.

The preceding condition made it impossible for Public Service to be able to properly direct its aspiration and goals towards improving citizen welfare packages from 1960 to the Fourth Republic.

Different reforms were instituted by successive government to improve the performance of the public service to have the capacity to improve service delivery. These reforms include commissions of enquiry like the Hunt Committee (1934), the Tudor Davies Commission (1945); the Walter Harragin Commission (1947); the Hugh Foot Commission (1948); the Gorsuch Commission (1954); the Mbanefo Commission (1959); the Morgan Commission (1964); the Adebo Commission (1971); the Udoji Commission (1974); the Onosode Commission (1982); the Dotun Philips Commission (1985); the Presidential Task Force on Civil Service (1985); the Ayida Panel (1994); and the Obasanjo Service Delivery Reforms (2003) (Obi, 2007).

The major common grounds discovered from Udoji (1974), Ani (1976), Onosode (1982), Philips (1988), and Ayida (1994) commissions include the need for result-oriented management with unified structure; recruitment and promotion based on merit and skills; revitalized financial management practices; founding of Management by Objectives (MBO); Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS); augmented salary awards, and performance/efficiency in public service. The Obasanjo Service Delivery Initiative (SDI) launched civil service renewal which focused on pension reform and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), restructuring of ministries and departments, monetization, due process in public procurement, down-sizing in the public sector, strong financial regulation, anti-corruption campaign, and quality service delivery initiative. It also established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) with legal support to investigate, arrest, and prosecute corrupt public office holders. Finally, the SDI established the Service Compact (SERVICOM) to guarantee quality service delivery (Olaopa, 2008).

On the above premise ally, it seems these reforms have not impacted to the performance of the public servants. This is the reason the study examined ethical standards and public service delivery in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States from 2011 to 2019.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- Identify the trend and pattern of ethical practices in South East Public Service.
- Examine the commitment and integrity of public servants to service delivery in Southeast, Nigeria.

- Observe different steps taken to reduce ethical violation in Southeast Nigeria from 2011-2019.

3. Conceptual Clarifications

3.1 Ethical Standards

This refers to standard principles that inspire greater values of trust, fairness and kindness in a workplace. It varies base on the individual personal morality and every organisation have ethical standards that regulate behaviour. Ordinarily, it is expected to promote values, good behaviour, work ethics among others. These set principles are established in formal organisations to promote its underlying moral values that serve as a reference point for policy initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. More importantly, it designs the pattern and parameter of ethical conduct required from public servants in the process of policy or programme execution. The aim of ethical standard is to promote a culture of self-discipline, accountability, transparency, exhibition of competence, honesty and commitment to responsibilities to attain the goals and objectives of the organisation in an efficient and effective manner.

3.2 The Public Service

The concept of public service suggests the thought of government's involvement in service delivery without profit maximization. Nigerian 1999 constitution, Section 318 as amended defines public service as the service of the Federation in one capacity, in respect of the Government of the Federation. Service such as; Service of the federation in a civil capacity as staff of the office of the President, the Vice-President, a Ministry or department of the Government of the Federation allocated with any business responsibility of the Government of the Federation". Similarly, the Constitution describes the public service and civil service of a state to cover people in the service of state governments in the same capacities as those of the federation.

Adamolekun (2013) indicates that public service is of a wider scope than the civil service; it is the totality of services structured under government authority. It comprises central government ministries, departments, and agencies, its field administration, local government, the military, other security forces and the judiciary. According to Olaopa, (2013) Public service of the Federation consists of all government officials at the federal level, State level and Local Government levels that are in the ministries, parastatals, extra-ministerial departments

and the paramilitary organizations while the structure of the government ministries, departments and agencies follow the pattern of the British system of administration.

Conversely, Aroge and Hassan, (2011) in Omolayo (2016) emphasized that every civil servant is called public servants, but not every public servant is called civil servant. He further explained that Public services are set up to deliver essential services to the public without profit maximization in which some are either owned by the state, while others are partially owned with a minority or majority of the shares owned to the state. Peter, (2016) pointed out that public service is a government institution established by law funded by the public, staffed by professionals and administrators mainly for implementing government policies. On this note, public service is wider in scope than the civil service. More importantly, are saddled with the responsibility to effectively and efficiently execute governmental programmes and carry out essential services for the benefit of the populace.

3.3 Service Delivery

Service delivery is the degree at which an individual in an organization discharges their assigned duties. It is also a way of assessing an employee unit input and output level compared to organization goals. World Bank, (2013) define service delivery as the method of business commitment to perform beyond profit-making which is the way man served the society. Parasuraman and Zeithaml (2014) described service delivery as the extent to which an organization meets or exceed the expectation of customers, these expectations are what beneficiaries think service should deliver rather than what would be offered.

Obiora and Ugwu (2016) explained Service delivery as a means by which government provides services of public interest to meet citizen desirable expectation and as a way of having social contract with the citizen. Services of public interest include security, healthcare, education, water, energy, water, and public transport. Nnaeto (2017) suggested that the best way to sustain the channel of public service delivery, if the beneficiaries are to get the best of such services is by making the project a government-citizens project. This entails the involvement of citizen in a project or a service delivery responsibility that suits them, this will likely make it more dynamic and effective as the government dedicated to the actualization of such project. Finally, expectation of public servants is to align with ethical standards which should provide minimum standards on the process of implementation of governmental

programme to meet the needs and desires of the people.

4. The System Theory

The major proponents of this theory among others are Ludwig von Bertalanffy, (1950); David Easton, (1959); Katz and Kahn, (1966); Robert Ghin, (1969); Koontz et al. (1980); and Talcott Parsons, (1951). System theory is the collection of inter-related parts which form one whole. The General Systems Theory was adapted to political science by David Easton. The application of the theory in this context suggest that system theory has a strong emphasis on the pluralistic nature of public service. As a tool of analysis, it understands and simplifies the broadest facts and practices in public service where rules and procedures used in decision making that applies to a situation. This theory can be demonstrated in the southeast public service in areas of work ethics and are swayed by both internal and external environment. A system theory in its interrelatedness nature links the input and conversion process into the final stage as output within the whole system. Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states symbolized the political system that endures so long and therefore produces expectable outcomes.

The states, as an entity comprises; organizations, structures, institutions, processes and subsystems designed to achieve the strategic objectives of government to its citizens. The public service is one of the sub-systems which confirm the overall accomplishment of government goals, which is the provision of essential social services and safeguards the security of lives and properties of its citizens. The three states are open system which receives inputs in the form of expectations, demands and needs from her citizens, use the relevant government institution to act on those demands and then feedback the citizens on government's decision/actions concerning their claims. Thus, the public service is the apparatus through which government (political system) executes policies geared towards addressing the needs and demands of her citizens. It implies that effective and efficient public service delivery could be hampered if the public service is not adequately motivated as well as made to conform to internal control mechanisms to carry out their official responsibilities.

5. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was the public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state, Nigeria.

These three states were purposively selected with numerical population of 51,102. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select three MDAs (Ministry of Works and Infrastructure/Transport, Civil Service Commission and Water Corporation). The sample size was 786. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data

collection complemented by interview guide. Reliability test of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the construct ranging from 0.77 to 0.82. The response rate was 87%. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential (Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient) statistics.

Analysis Research Question One: What are the Trends of Ethical Practices in Selected Southeast Public Service.

Table 1: Trends and Patterns of Ethical Practice in South-East Public Service

	E BONYI						ENUGU						IMO						ALL	
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn /SD	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn/SD	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn/SD	Mean & SD for the 3 states	
My department formally evaluated its ethics training for effectiveness and is constantly updated and improved.	17 15.2%	18 16.1%	27 24.1%	30 26.8%	20 17.9%	28/ 1.37%	87 26.9%	115 35.5%	47 14.5%	35 10.8%	40 12.3%	3.48 /1.38	62 17.7%	94 26.9%	39 11.1%	98 28%	57 16.3%	3.24/ .23	3.27/ 1.33	
The support from my supervisor in following organization ethical behavior is not encouraging	28(25)	37(33)	16 (14.3)	2017. 9)	11 (9.8)	3.45 /1.34	77 (23.8)	78(2 4.1)	33 (10.2)	101(31.2)	35 10.8	3.40 /1.24	79 (22.6)	88 (25.1)	15 (4.3)	99 (28.3)	69(19. 7)	3.42/ 16	3.42/ 1.22	
There is fairness in rewards and promotion system in my organization	40 (35.7)	22 (19.6)	25 (22.3)	17 (15.2)	8 (7.1)	3.39/ .56	42 (13)	97(2 9.9)	10 (3.1)	120(37)	55 17)	3.33 /1.00	66 (18.9)	45 (12.9)	69 (19.7)	92 (26.3)	78 (22.3)	2.89/ .37	3.14/ 1.28	
Enforcement of code of conduct help public servant moral reasoning of doing thing right	42 (37.5)	30(26.8)	14 (12.5)	17 (15.2)	9 (8.0)	3.69/ .37	75 (23.1)	103(31.8)	49 (15.1)	72(2 2.2)	25 (7.7)	3.40 /1.33	110 (31.4)	76 (21.7)	41 (11.7)	78 (22.3)	45 (12.9)	3.48/ .35	3.48/ 1.35	
There is continuity of initiative even when there is changing in administration regime	6 (5.4)	23(20.5)	32 (28.6)	32 (28.6)	19 (17.0)	2.57/ .25	69 (21.3)	62(1 9.1)	50 (15.4)	98(3 0.2)	69 (21.3)	2.95 /1.257	65 (18.6)	56 (16.0)	110 (31.4)	110 (31.4)	43 (12.3)	3.07/ .26	2.95/ 1.26	
Overall mean	3.18		SD=1.38			3.31						SD=1.24		3.22			SD = 1.28			
Grand Mean	3.23																			Standard Deviation= 1.30

Source = Field Study, 2019. NB. With 5-point Likert scale
Decision rule: If mean is ≤ 1.49 = poor, 1.5-2.49= fair, 2.5-3.99= good, 4.0-5.0= very good

Table 1 reveals that 72 (64.3%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean scores of 3.69; 178 (54.3%) respondents in Enugu State with mean scores of 3.40 and 186 (53.1%) respondents in Imo State with a mean scores of 3.48 agreed respectively that enforcement of code of conduct help public servant moral reasoning in executing their responsibilities. Also, 65(58%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean scores of 3.45 and 155(54.9%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean scores of 3.40; agreed that the support from their supervisors in following organization ethical behavior are not encouraging, on the contrary 168(48%) respondents in Imo State with a mean scores of 3.42 disagreed that the support from their supervisors in following organization ethical behavior are not encouraging. Similarly, 62(53.3%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.39 agreed that there is fairness in rewards and promotion system in the service. Differently, 175(54%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.33 and 170 (48.6%) respondents in Imo State with a mean scores of 2.89 disagreed that there is fairness in rewards and promotion system in the service. More so, 50(44.7%) respondents in Ebonyi State with mean scores of 2.80; 202(62.4%) respondents in Enugu State with mean scores 3.48 and 156(44.6%) respondents in Imo State agreed that the departments formally evaluated its ethical training for effectiveness and is constantly updated and improved. However, 51 (45.6%) respondents in Ebonyi State, with mean scores 2.57; 167(51.5%) respondents in Enugu state with a mean scores of 2.95 and 161 (48.6%) disagreed that there is continuity of initiative even when there is change in administration.

Furthermore, the result reveals that in Ebonyi state, the trend of ethical practice is good (grand mean=3.18) as the respondents indicated that enforcement of code of conduct help public servant moral reasoning of doing thing right (mean=3.69), however, the support from supervisors in following organization ethical behavior is not encouraging (mean=3.45). In Enugu state, ethical practice implementation was also good (grand mean =3.31, SD=1.243) in which the respondents indicated that their departments formally evaluates its ethics training for effectiveness and is constantly updated and improved (mean=3.48); they also agreed that enforcement of code of conduct help public servants’ moral reasoning and practice (mean=3.40), however, the support from supervisors in following organization ethical behavior is not encouraging (mean=3.40). The result also shows that the trend of ethical practice in Imo state was also good (grand mean=3.22), and the respondents indicated that enforcement of code of conduct help public servant moral reasoning and practice (mean=3.48), and that the support from supervisors in following organization ethical behavior is not encouraging (mean=3.42).

Objective Two: The Commitment and Integrity of Public Servants to the Service Delivery in the Selected States in Southeast, Nigeria

Table 2: Commitment and Integrity of Public Servants to Service Delivery

	EBONYI						ENUGU						IMO						ALL
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn /SD	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn./SD	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn/SD	Mean & SD
We are well acquainted with the ethics of our job	27(24.1)	48(42.9)	15(13.4)	22(19.6)		3.64/1.23	116(35.8)	68(21)	32(9.9)	65(20.1)	43(13.3)	3.60/1.34	97(27.7)	159(45.4)	33(9.4)	39(11.1)	22(6.3)	3.76/1.19	3.67/1.26
Awards of contract is offered to friends and relatives of the administrators	9(8)	37(33)	29(25.9)	32(28.6)	5(4.5)	2.93/1.32	107(33)	87(26.9)	26(8)	56(17.3)	48(14.8)	3.62/1.29	96(27.4)	143(40.9)	55(15.7)	35(10)	21(6)	3.58/1.36	3.51/1.34
Receiving additional money and gifts is well accepted as a way of adding to our pecuniary income	11(9.8)	33(29.5)	21(18.8)	29(25.9)	18(16.1)	2.96/1.26	45(13.9)	122(37)	46(14.2)	62(19.1)	49(15.1)	3.22/1.26	108(30.9)	89(25.4)	64(18.3)	69(19.7)	20(5.7)	3.45/1.44	3.28/1.35
Signing of conflict of interest is renew every year in my organization	20(17.9)	46(41.1)	16(14.3)	21(18.8)	9(8)	3.40/1.27	125(38.6)	95(29.3)	40(12.3)	64(19.8)		3.82/1.29	120(34.3)	96(27.4)	29(8.3)	80(22.9)	25(7.1)	3.72/1.23	3.72/1.27
I have strong attachment to my structural workplace	36(32.1)	20(17.9)	25(22.3)	27(24.1)	4(3.6)	3.34/1.51	78(24.1)	99(30.6)	16(4.9)	86(26.5)	45(13.9)	3.55/1.14	92(26.3)	76(21.7)	62(17.7)	75(21.4)	45(12.9)	3.26/1.43	3.39/1.33
Recruitment and selection of new employees is based on bias	12(10.7)	22(19.6)	49(43.8)	18(16.1)	11(9.8)	2.44/1.47	135(41.7)	37(11.4)	30(9.3)	68(21)	54(16.7)	3.60/1.40	84(24)	99(28.3)	58(16.6)	69(19.7)	40(11.4)	3.32/1.38	3.31/1.45
My organization has an institution or dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of the ethics policy	39(34.8)	48(42.9)	13(11.6)	12(10.7)	-	3.89/1.22	116(35.8)	79(24.4)	24(7.4)	77(23.8)	28(8.6)	3.73/1.24	119(34)	87(24.9)	35(10)	69(19.7)	40(11.4)	3.61/1.32	3.70/1.27
Overall mean/SD	3.22/1.33						3.59/1.28						3.52/1.34						
	Grand Mean =3.44						Standard Deviation = 1.31												

Source = Field Study, 2019. NB. With 5-point Likert scale
 Decision If mean is ≤ 1.49 = low, 1.5-2.49= average, 2.5-3.99= high, 4.0-5.0= very high

Table 2 reveals that 89(77.7%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.89; 195(60.2%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.73 and 206(58.9%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.61 agreed that state public service have an institution or dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the

implementation of the policy on ethical practice. Similarly, 75(67%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.64; 184(56.8%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.60; 256(73.1%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.75 agreed that they are well acquainted with the code of ethics in the service. In the same vein, 66(59%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.40; 220(67.9%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.82; and 216(61.7%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score 3.72 agreed that Signing of conflict of interest is renew every year in the service. More so, 56(50%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score 3.34; 177(54.7%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score 3.55; 168(48%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.26 agreed that they have strong attachment to their structural workplace. In addition, 47(42%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.96 disagreed that receiving additional money and gifts is well accepted as a way of adding to their pecuniary income. On the contrary 167(51.6%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.22; and 197(56.3%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.45 agreed that receiving additional money and gifts is well accepted as a way of adding to their pecuniary income. Also, 46(41%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.94; 172(53.1%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.62; and 234(68.3%) respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 3.58 agreed respectively that awards of contract is offered to friends and relatives of the administrators. In the same vein, 34(30.3%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score 2.44; 163(59.9%) respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 3.60; and 183(52.3%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.32 agreed respectively that recruitment and selection of new employees is based on favouritism.

Table 2 is on the level of commitment of public servants to service delivery in the selected states of the south east. The result reveals that the level of commitment is high in Ebonyi (grand mean= 3.22, SD=1.33) in which the respondents agreed that the service have an institution or dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of the policy on ethical conduct (mean=3.89), and that they are well acquainted with the ethical behaviour required in the course of carrying out their responsibilities (mean=3.64). In order to strengthen their commitment, signing of conflict of interest is renew every year (mean=3.34). In Enugu state, the level of commitment is also high (grand mean=3.59, SD=1.284). In this state, the respondents indicated that signing of conflict of interest is renew every year in the service (mean=3.82), as MDAs have dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of the ethical policy (mean=3.73). However, they also noted that awards of contracts are offered to friends and relatives of the administrators (mean=3.62). The result equally has it that the level of commitment of public servants to service delivery in Imo state is high (grand mean=3.52, SD=1.340) as the respondents indicated that they are acquainted with the ethical requirement of the job (mean=3.76) and that signing of conflict of interest is renew every year in the state’s public service (mean=3.72). The respondents also indicated that they have dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of the ethical policy (mean=3.61). It can therefore be concluded that public servants in Enugu and Imo states have a higher degree of commitment to service delivery than their counterparts in Ebonyi State.

Objective Three: Observe Steps taken to Reduce Ethical Violation in the Selected Southeast States from 2011-2019

Table 3: Steps taken to Reduce Ethical Violation

	EBONYI						ENUGU						IMO						ALL Mean & SD for the 3 states
	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	
Our organisation has written guidelines for their operations in the state	48 (42.9)	59(52.7)	5(4.5)	-	-	4.29/866	148(45.7)	90 (27.8)	29(9)	37(11.4)	20(6.2)	3.95/1.27	98 (28)	16 (9)	31(8.9)	33 (9.4)	19(5.4)	3.81/1.16	3.94/1.18
The ethical expectation of the organization is usually communicated to employees when they are hired.	30 (26.8)	22(19.6)	4 (3.6)	18(16.1)	38(33.9)	3.32/1.28	83(25.6)	12 (8)	34(10.5)	52(16)	27(8.3)	3.61/1.24	97 (28)	12 (8)	31(8.9)	69 (19.7)	25(7.1)	3.66/1.23	3.59/1.24
public servants is encouraged to report misconduct/suspected corruption committed by public servants without fear of reprisal or	10(8.9)	29(25.9)	26(23.2)	32(28.6)	15(13.4)	2.84/1.29	66(20.4)	93 (28.7)	36(11.1)	76(23.5)	53(16.4)	3.31/1.27	68 (19)	11 (6)	31(8.9)	82 (23.4)	53(15.1)	3.39/1.21	3.28/1.26

retaliation																			
Inspection teams were often sent to evaluate public service delivery of the different arms of the public service in the state	18 (16.1)	28(25)	14(12.5)	37(33)	15(13.4)	3.19/ 1.22	110(34)	65 (20.1)	36(11.1)	64(19.8)	49(15.1)	3.51/ 1.38	86 (24.6)	98 (28)	34(9.7)	54 (15.4)	78(22.3)	3.35/ 1.32	3.39/ 1.33
There is supporting institutions available and publicized for the public to expose wrongdoing committed by public servants	19(17)	37(33)	29(25.9)	18(16.1)	9(8)	3.07/ 1.46	116(35.8)	92 28.4	45(13.9)	54(16.7)	17(5.2)	3.67/ 1.37	12 5 (35.7)	98 (28)	27(7.7)	65 (18.6)	35(10)	3.74/ 1.25	3.62/ 1.35
We receive regular on-the-job training on ethical standards concerning our operations	20 (17.9)	22(19.6)	7(6.3)	34(30.4)	29(25.9)	3.17/ 1.18	57(17.6)	60 (18.5)	22(6.8)	109(33.6)	76(23.5)	3.17/ 1.17	88 (25.1)	67 (19.1)	19(5.4)	13 (38)	43(12.3)	3.46/ 1.15	3.30/ 1.17
There is a periodic report on the state of ethics in the public service	18(16.1)	27(24.1)	27(24.1)	29(25.9)	11(9.8)	2.98/ 1.40	104(32.1)	67 (20.7)	26(8)	73(22.5)	54(16.7)	3.52/ 1.30	79 (22.6)	92 (26.3)	58(16.6)	79 (22.6)	42(12)	3.26/ 1.37	3.33/ 1.36

Source: Field Study, 2019. NB. With 5-point Likert scale

Table 3 reveals that 107(95.6%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 4.29; 238(73.5%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.95 and 267(76.3%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.81 agreed correspondingly that the public service has written guidelines that is operational in the state’s public service. More so, 211(65.1%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.61 and 225(64.3%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.66 agreed that the ethical expectation of the organization is usually communicated to employees when they are hired, while 56(50%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.32 disagreed that the ethical expectation of MDAs is usually communicated to employees when they are hired. In the same vein, 52(46.4%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.19 disagreed that Inspection teams often sent to evaluate public service delivery of the different arms of the public service in the state while on the contrary 175(54.1%) respondents in Enugu state with mean score of 3.51 and 184(52.6%) respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 3.35 agreed that Inspection teams were often sent to evaluate public service delivery of the different arms of the public service in the state. Also, 63(56.3%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.17 agreed that they receive regular on-the-job training on ethical standards concerning their operations while on the contrary, 185(57.1%) respondents in Enugu State and 176(50.3%) respondents in Imo State disagreed that they receive

regular on-the-job training on ethical standards in the execution of their duties. 56(50%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.67; 208(64.2%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.67 and 223(63.7%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.74 agreed respectively that there is supporting institutions available and publicized for the public to expose wrongdoing committed by public servants. Similarly, 45(40.2%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.98; 171(52.8%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.52 and 171(48.9%) respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.26 agreed that there are periodic report on the state of ethics in the public service. in the same vein, 159(49.1%) respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.31 and 184(52.5%) respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 3.39 agreed that public servants are encouraged to report misconduct/suspected corrupt practices committed by public servants without fear of reprisal or retaliation. On the contrary, 47(42%) respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.84 disagreed that public servants are encouraged to report misconduct/suspected corruption committed by public servants without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

The result in table 5.3 has it that in Ebonyi state, the steps taken to reduce ethical violation include written guidelines for operations in the state (mean=4.29), communication of ethical expectations to newly hired employees (mean=3.32); and Inspection teams are also often sent to evaluate public service delivery in

the state (mean=3.19). In Enugu state, there are written guidelines for the operations in the state (mean=3.95), there are also supporting institutions available to the public through which wrongdoings of public servants can be exposed (mean=3.67) as well as communicating ethical expectations to newly hired employees. The situation is not different in Imo state as the respondents also indicated that there are written guidelines of the operations in the state (mean=3.81). There are also supporting institutions through which wrong doings of public servants can be exposed by the public (mean=3.74); also, ethical expectations are communicated to new employees.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data analysed are discussed in this section in tandem with other researcher's views and opinions in the related literature presented in this study.

Objective one: Identify the Trend and Pattern of Ethical Practices in Selected States in Southeast Public Service.

In view of research question analysed in table 5.7 which revealed the respondent's opinion on trend and pattern of work ethics in the selected states in southeast, the analysed data shows that the respondents from the states unanimously agreed that enforcement of code of conduct help public servant moral and ethical behaviour. This finding shows that the public servant in southeast were aware that applying code of ethics has positive effect on behaviour and attitudes of public servants. This findings were corroborated by Ebutu and Beredugo (2015) who maintained that ethics serves as ethical reasoning and considerations for decisions and actions taken during the completion of duties when working to provide general organization services. Also, an organization performance depends on the ethical work climate which often reflects in the collective moral reasoning such as attitude and behaviour of workers, communication skills, honesty and accountability of public servants. The findings in this research affirm Agi (2017) position that the fundamental basis of ethics is morality; ethics are moral rules or principles of noble behaviour governing the conduct of individual or society for deciding what is right and wrong.

However, in term of supervisors' ethical behaviour, majority of the respondents from the three states agreed that the support from their supervisors in following organization ethical behavior are not encouraging. This finding contradicts Beetseh and Kohol (2013) position where he emphasized the need

for leaders to shows good example through adherence to ethical standards for the junior ones to follows. There is need for disciplined, selfless and purposeful leadership that has the capacity to propel civil service towards attainment of ethics and integrity in the modern society. In the same way, respondents from the three states with average mean score of 3.14 agreed that there is no fairness in the rewards and promotion system in the MDAs.

On training of ethical behaviour and conduct, respondents from the three states with average mean score of 3.27 agreed that the departments and agencies formally evaluate the behavioural conduct and train the public servants, especially on code of ethics. The essence of the exercise is to improve the effectiveness and to consistently remind them that ethical conduct is key to stability and productivity. More so, to equip them with adequate information on ethical issues so they will not claim to be ignorant.

In term of continuity of initiative, respondents from the three states with average mean score of 2.95 disagreed that there is continuity of initiative even when there is change in administration. This often led to abandoned projects because the new administration will intentionally starve such projects of fund. The implication of abandoned projects is that fund and resources allocated in the past will be wasted.

In an interviewed with the director of units, it revealed that ethical practices in the MDAs has improved within the period of study because there is awareness and serious monitoring in day to day activities of the public servants. It was acknowledged that they have not attained the expected standard but there is room for improvement in relation to ethical practices. Another interview conducted with the public about the trend of public servants' ethical practices in the states under investigation, revealed that public ethical practices has greatly improved for the fear of reprimand and termination of appointment. On the other hand, majority also highlighted the issues of persistent corruption, collection of bribes before services is delivered. This is the reason Manzel, (2010) opined that an ethical officers must be committed to high standards and professional behaviour, have knowledge about the essentials codes of ethics and law; must be able to involve in ethical reasoning during ethical dilemmas, identify and act on public service ethics and values, promotes ethical conduct and attitude in public institutions.

Objective Two: Examine the Commitment and Integrity of Public Servants to Service Delivery in the Selected States in Southeast Nigeria.

According to the research question analysed in Table 5.2, respondents from the three states with average score of 3.67 agreed that they are well acquainted with the ethical standards in the service. This is in line with the interview response from the permanent secretary and directors of units. There is evidence that MDAs have employee handbook for public service employees. This handbook outlines the ethical standard of the public service, disciplines and reports of misconduct in the service. However it was observed that not all the employee in the public service have access to civil service rules, especially some of the junior workers do not have personal copy of the handbook, therefore, some do not understand what the book contain and expectation toward ethical standard for effective service delivery. This finding corroborated Ananti and Umeifekwen (2012) position that Public servants must understand public policy and adequate ethical standard required in the service. It will help public servants to know how to execute their duties as well as limitations.

In an interview responses from the public on whether the public servants are well acquainted with the ethics of the job. Majority of the responses indicated that the attitudes among the public servants many a times contradict the ethical principles of their job. For instance, they engaged in selling during office hour, lateness to office, collection of bribes and favouritism, there is no respect for the public and clientele, insulting and abusing during concession.

On awards of contract, respondents from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States with average mean scores of 3.51 agreed that the awards of contract are offered to friends and relatives of the administrators. This finding corroborates Fukuyama (2014) position who highlighted the strong feelings people in power have for nepotism. He argues that the natural feelings of using power to promote self, family, relatives, religious group, business, and political party are already part of the service. Therefore, ethics help to consider others first with the commitment to the public interest.

On acceptance of gratification through receiving additional money and gift, Respondents from Ebonyi, with average mean score of 2.9 disagreed while average score of 3.22 from Enugu and 3.45 from Imo States agreed that receiving additional money and gifts is well accepted as a way of adding to their pecuniary income. This is purely against the ethical standard of the civil servants with the fact that they

were acquainted with the ethics of their job. As a result of insufficient remuneration, receiving money and some other gifts to supplement their income has become the order of the day. This finding is in contrast with Public Service Rules (2008) that lays emphasis on the following: discipline and strict adherence to the rules and regulations guiding the public service; diligence in the discharge of duties; shunning official misconducts such as demanding or receiving monetary or other form of material compensation for services rendered.

Concerning signing of conflict of interest, respondent from the three states with total mean score of 3.72 agreed that Signing of conflict of interest is renew every year in the MDAs. The findings supported the application to the rules that guides public servants based on the Fifth Schedule of 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) that public servants should avoid conflict of interest during discharge of duties; public officers neither must engage in personal business during an official hour. Based on the finding Ssonko (2010) assert that conflict of interest arises when personal interest of an employee conflicts with his/her official position. This is a situation whereby the duties of the public official are not properly discharge according to the interest and mission statement of the organization. It was gathered from the interviewed conducted with the public that signing of conflict of interest is just like signing ordinary paper, there is no full commitment to the application. The public officers' behaviour contradicts the promises made through signing of conflict of interest in the organization. It was discovered that public servants go against ethical values of honesty, courtesy, integrity, respect and neutrality during implementation of policies.

As regards organization attachment, respondents from the three states with mean score of 3.39 agreed that they have strong attachment to their structural workplace. This implies that they have certain level of commitment to their organization. This finding affirms the position of Price (2011) where he stated that organizational commitment is the extent of employee involvement and identification with organization values, mission and objectives.

In an interview with the public on the issues of commitment and integrity of the public service towards service delivery, findings reveal that not all the public servants follow the laid down rules and regulations for effective public service delivery. Majority of the public servants are in the service but are not part of the service, many used official hour for their personal job, and their personal interests

supersede that of the public. Some challenges to the public servants commitment are payment of stipends to the public servants compared to their counterpart in private organizations, many highlighted a situation when earned salaries is not enough to take care of their family responsibility, therefore, many ride tricycle and some other business to complement their income.

Respondents from the three states with mean score of 3.32 agreed that the process of recruitment and selection of new employees is bias. The implication of this finding is that the inefficiency that characterized poor service delivery in Nigeria public service can be attributed to undue interference in the employee recruitment processes which led to emergent of wrong candidates. This is not in line with Section 2 of the public Service rules which states that appointment into the public service should be based on merit.

Finally, in the area of coordinate and implementation of ethical policy, the respondents from the three states with mean score of 3.70 agreed that MDAs have dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of the ethical policy. This finding align with the provision of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) that promoted high standard of decency in the conduct of government business and to monitor public officers' actions and behaviour in conformity with the highest standards of public ethics and accountability, it is structured to indorse the spirit of dedication and service, contribute to more efficient and effective service delivery and eradicate corruption in the public service. In an interview in the ministry with directors of units, it was revealed that the agencies have a human resources department that handles cases on ethical issues and implementation of policy.

Objective Three: Observe Different Steps taken to Reduce Ethical Violation in Selected States in Southeast Nigeria from 2011-2019

The analysed research data shows that the respondents from the three selected states Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states agreed that their MDAs have written guidelines for operations in the state. This finding is supported by Ibietan & Joshua (2013) that ethics serve as guidelines used to regulate and control the behaviours of public servants for quality services and to make a profession values judgment when necessary. In addition, Daniel (2015) see ethics as essential tools for checks and balances of public servants against the arbitrary use of public power in their stewardship of public resources, at the border

with citizens, and in the function of policy-making context. It is a dynamic way of creating and preserving confidence in government and its institutions. It provides a basis to check practices, conventions, and conduct, against which the public can be assured its interest served and that due process practiced.

On the basis of ethical communication, respondents in Ebonyi with mean score of 4.29 disagreed while respondent from Enugu state with mean score of 3.95 and Imo State with mean score of 3.81 agreed that the ethical expectation of the public service is usually communicated to employees when they are hired, The implication of not communicating the ethical expectation of the organization to the employee in the first place shows that they were not fully prepared to face any ethical dilemma that may arise during the discharge of the duties. Equally, respondents from Ebonyi with mean score of 3.32, disagreed while Enugu with means score of 3.61 and Imo state with mean score of 3.66 agreed that Inspection teams were often sent to evaluate public service delivery of the MDAs in the state. this finding agrees with Cherrington (1980) that high quality work supervision can have a dramatic impact on work values. Supervisors hold top employees' expectations, including a commitment to excellence, are likely to develop employees who exhibit a strong work ethic.

In term of training, respondents from Ebonyi with mean score of 3.17 agreed while respondents from Enugu with mean score of 3.17 and 3.46 in Imo State disagreed that they receive regular on-the-job training on ethical standards concerning the operations. Aroge and Hassan (2011) affirms these findings and submitted that the important reason while most employees failed in their duties since the necessary training needed to function correctly were not identify as a management responsibility. Training means basic skills instruction and the needed knowledge by employees to perform their primary task, while development is the ability to improve on the necessary training, for better performance of relevant functions in the organization which may lead to the gaining of better rank within the organization

On the issue of exposure of wrongdoing, respondents from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states with mean score of 3.62 agreed respectively that there is supporting institutions available and publicized for the public to expose wrongdoing committed by public servants. As regards periodic report on situation of ethics, respondents from the three states with mean score of 3.33 agreed that there are periodic reports about ethics in the public service. This finding supports the

view of Wilson (2013) where he stated that good ethics codes draw public servants' attention to the result of doing things accurately; by examining their actions alongside with expected standards.

Finally, respondents from the three states with average mean score of 3.28 agreed that public servants are encouraged to report misconduct/suspected corruption committed by public servants without fear of reprisal or retaliation. The implication of this finding is that employee will cease from misconduct for fear of reporting and punishment, therefore it will help them to be compliant to the ethical practices. To this end, Nigeria has established a system for disclosure of misconduct and corruption, which, "inter alia," (among other things) encourages and protects whistle-blowers under the principle of confidentiality of official information, while providing adequate avenues and procedures for facilitating disclosure and investigation of misconduct or corruption cases.

7. Conclusion and Findings

It was discovered that public servants in these states are aware of the importance of codes of ethics to effective service delivery but, not all the public servants adhere the ethical principles for effective operation. Support received from supervisors concerning ethical practices are not encouraging, and the ethical principles are not properly implemented. Some public servants do not have personal copy of Public Service Handbook, therefore, were not familiar with the written codes of ethics.

The level of commitment of the public servants in the states is moderately high because there is dedicated committee assigned to co-ordinate and manage the implementation of ethical policy in the MDAs, therefore, public servants are acquainted with the ethics of their job but with low sense of integrity. Therefore, evidence on conflict of interest, corrupt practices, award of contracts to friends and relatives without due process, recruitment and selection of new employees are not based on merit.

Suggested steps taken to reduce ethical violation were not properly adhered to, despite that MDAs have guidelines for operation and ethical principles are been communicated to the employee when hired. However, regular on job training is not carried out consistently which are met to increase public servants' basic skill, ensure public servants meet the required attitude to enhance performance, and also to bring awareness on the risk of corruption inherent in public service delivery.

8. Recommendations

- State governments of Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo should put in place policies and practices that will encourage public servant to develop sense of integrity and commitment with the view to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. In the view of this the researcher has made the following recommendation.
- The various government in southeast, Nigeria should adopt both compliance and integrity-based ethics management through consistent training, workshop, coaching on code of ethics in interactive and practical methods will improve public servants' awareness on the nature of public service ethical principles and its implication on service delivery.
- There is the need for government to encourage commitment by motivating employee morale and welfare packages and incorporate integrity into day to day operation of public servants in order to promote employee ethical behaviour, preventing destructive gaps when faced with ethical dilemmas as well as enhanced sustained productivity.

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