

**ETHICS AND THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: A STUDY  
OF IMO STATE CIVIL SERVICE**

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**ABSTRACT:** This work concentrates principally on Ethics and the Nigerian Public Service with the Imo State Civil Service as a case study. It critically examines the level of work ethics among Imo State Civil Servants in the discharge of their official functions. In addition, the study carefully looks at the effects of work ethics on the performance and productivity of civil servants. This paper essentially made use of secondary source of data which were analysed descriptively. It adopted the systems approach as our framework of analysis our choice of systems model is hinged on our belief that organization like Civil Service cannot survive without interactions with its environment and this approach provides a good explanation of the essence of this interaction. The major outcome of this work among other things has in the contribution it will make towards the development and practice of administrative responsibility. The scope of this study covers the period between 2011 and 2019. Finally, it X-rays the measures that could be taken to ameliorate the work ethics and performance/productivity of the workers.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Nigerian Public Service, Imo State Civil Service, Civil Servants.

**INTRODUCTION**

The neglect of ethics and normative principle in modern organisation has been an enduring theme in social and political theory. This was apparently due to the axiomatic belief of earlier scholars notably, Wilson Woodrow who once stated that the “American public administration is inherently moral”. This kind of thought resulted in lack of attention given to work of ethics as well as a sceptical attitude towards the importance and usefulness of any deliberate effort to set out standards of administrative ethics.

Baldwin and Richardson (1976), opine that the nightmare of a highly efficient but a moral system of public administration can be avoided if public administrators’ love affair with efficiency and productivity can be moderated by greater sensitivity to human values. It is, perhaps, in recognition and appreciation of this great sensitivity to human values that made Aguogu (1983), observe that in recent times public sector executives in developing nations and their agents are expected to act more honestly and non-abusive (i.e. not using their official positions to seek personal, class or group advantage at the expense of another person, class or group and/ or the public at large) and their actions not only be perceived as ethical but socially just and morally good. Rosenbloom and Krav (Chuks 2005), stated that administrators should act with much responsibility, because their work consist in many aspects, which can lead to the abuse of public interest and to corruption. It is important that,

the behaviour of the public administrator must be characterised by trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, care, and honesty.

For Nigerians, the admonition is most desirable and noteworthy and if heeded to, will be useful. It will enable the country to make the desired leap from underdevelopment to development. It is very appalling and disgusting to note that the work habits and attitudes to work of public servants are very poor and received unsavoury comments from local observers and the mass media.

As Joseph Omoregbe (1979) succinctly observed, there cannot be development in any society where public fund is diverted into private and selfish ends by unscrupulous and unpatriotic members, where the dominant principle of action is self-interest, self-aggrandisement at expense of common good nor can the economy of any society develop if its members lack a sense of moral obligations and social accountability. The prevalence of the above mentioned laxities in any society very much hampers or even renders its development impossible. The extent to which these negative administrative behaviours are prevalent in Nigeria and the degree to which they affect the productivity of the civil servants in the country is the chief concern of this study.

The strategic role which ethics could perform in the public bureaucracies cannot be over-emphasized. It ensures the creation of an administration that is responsive to the will and aspirations of the people. Suffice it, therefore, to state that ethics is a crucial ingredient in national development. Thompson (1993) states that unethical behaviour is that which subverts the administrative process. Nigeria, equivocally, is blessed with great potentials of natural resources, mineral and agriculture. She is also endowed with abundant human resources. But regrettably, empirical data show that these abundant human, mineral, agricultural and other rich natural resources are not fully exploited, harnessed and utilized for rapid national development. It is further observed that huge sums of money are approved by government in its annual budgets for its services to the people. Yet the roads are bad, taps remain dry, hospitals are poorly manned and they suffer from inadequate drugs, electricity supply remains grossly inadequate and inefficient, housing facilities remain disproportionately insufficient leading to congestion and its natural concomitants such as slum and pollution in most Nigerian cities, etc. It is therefore timely that a detailed research be carried out in order to assist the Government in providing answers to the mounting problem of work ethics of Nigeria workers and the effects on their productivity.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to make a systematic critical and empirical study of the Imo State Civil Service, and based on the findings make concrete recommendation towards improving the impact in Imo State Civil Service. The research will then try to:

- Find the level of work ethics of Imo State Civil Servants.
- Ascertain the factors that influence the work ethics of Imo State Civil Service.
- Identify the effects of work ethics on the productivity of Imo State Civil Servants.

- Recommend measures that could be adopted to enhance the productivity of Civil Servants in Imo State.

### **Significance of the Study**

It is a truism that every research work always has something to offer to humanity, if not, the study needs not be undertaken in the first instance. The present study is no exception. A major significance of this work lies in the contribution it will make towards ensuring the development and practice of administrative responsibility.

In addition, the findings of this study will provide materials which could show how the ideals demanded of the public service can be matched by actual practical behaviour of public servants. This is because, it will suggest ways by which public administrators can be made to acquire and imbibe the virtues of humanism, high standard of integrity, honesty, uprightness, impartially and fairness.

Similarly, this work will further provide valuable materials which hopefully assist in the improvement of the work ethics of Nigerian public servants.

Finally, it is hoped that this study would be of immense interest and assistance to authorities concerned with ethics and productivity in Nigerian public service.

### **Theoretical Framework**

David Easton realizes the importance of a theoretical framework in research when he observed that “research untutored by theory may prove trivial and theory unsupported by data futile”. In order to put this study in a proper perspective, we went through ethical theories, which include; Deontology and Utilitarianism, etc.

This paper adopted the system approach as the framework of analysis. Our choice of systems model is hinged on the conviction that an organization like Civil Service cannot survive without interactions with its environment and this approach provides a good explanatory too for understanding the essence of this interaction. The system model represents an analytical framework known to be the most effective for adequately describing what organization is how it functions, and how it should function. The systems analysis states that organizations are open systems in which inputs are taken from the external environment and converted into outputs. These inputs gets into the processor or through-out stage involving the modifier, treating or manipulation of environmental demands into output format in order to satisfy environmental demands. These outputs come out in the form of goods, products and services. It is a cycle of events which activates the backward flow of information through which reactions get back to the organization new inputs.

In the Imo State civil service, the inputs of energies and the conversion of outputs into further energetic inputs involve transaction between the organization and its environment. For the organization to exist, it must continually select those environmental elements that

are sought for and those to be avoided. The Imo state civil service is sustained with public fund essentially generated via taxation. This is an input into the system. The public having given its resources to the government for proper management and equitable distribution of welfare services expect that civil servants employed to handle the business of government should act in a manner that is morally just and fair. The government and its servants are now seen as trustees of public confidence in their possession. Corruption and many other unethical practices are fingered as the bane of Nigerian public administration (Ikeanyibi, 2009). This is because, unethical behaviour stifles efficiency in the public sector thereby generating public theory, hence the various mechanism put in place as a response to check unethical practices in the public sector. Agara and Orimolope (2009) argued that in spite of all the control measures put in place to ensure an ethical bureaucratic system, there seems to be no respite as the various measures have been frustrated, making corruption and unethical behaviour the norms. The increasing rate of inefficiency has led to low productivity and dissatisfaction of the general public.

To keep the system in good form, the internal environment sets out organizational safeguards which offer gate-keeping function so that what permeates the boundaries the organization would be those traits that would enable the system to survive. This will be taken care of with good and effective internal structure, good services, code of ethics with inspiring messages and not stereotyped rules and regulations and good disciplinary control measures.

### **Concept of Ethics**

The term ethics has been variously defined, this is because, apart from the fact that it is subjective, scholars have various and divergent interpretations about it. However, Micheal-Mual (2017) sees it as an attempt to guide human conduct and it is based on standard of rights, obligations, fairness etc.

Ethics is defined as “the standard of character set up by any race or nation or the study and philosophy of human conduct with emphasis on the determination of right or wrong (Funk & Wagnals, 1978).

Similarly, Agara and Olarinmoye (2009) maintain that ethics is the application of moral standard in the course of official work. The implication lies that ethics is avertable instrument that is needed in piloting the affairs of governance.

From the foregoing definitions it implies that ethics is an administrative instrument established in order to enhance government businesses hence Civil Service.

**Public Service:** This term can be used in a broad and restricted sense. Broadly speaking, the term “Public Service” covers all segments of the public sector which include, the three organs of government (the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary), the Military, the police, all parastatals and statutory corporations and any other institutions whose employees draw their remuneration including allowances, directly and indirectly from government

coffers, the local government service, in the statutory corporations, the State owned companies, the police and the judiciary (Public Service Rules, Revised Edition 2001).

**Civil Service:** It is a service comprising all servants of the state, other than holders of political or judicial offices, who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid out of money voted by parliament.

Civil service defined as “a large-scale organization of Permanent government paid officials who are recruited in a civil capacity by the Civil Service Commission, charged with the responsibility of exercising the executive authority of government and whose activities are guided by certain rules of procedure and operating in a systematically inter-related pattern to achieve the complex objectives government” (Ogunna1999, P. 57). Akpan (1983) sees the civil service as that branch of the public office which is made up of career and contract officers appointed on the basis of merit, professional qualification, technical skill, educational background or experience and deployed in Government Ministries or Departments, to advise or assist the executive arm of government (including local government) in the implementation and execution of Public policy and programmes.

For our purpose, in this study, the term civil service will be taken to mean “ a service of the federation or of a state in a Ministry or department based on appointment by the Civil Service Commission” (Chijioke 1985).

Some practitioners have insisted however, that despite the generally accepted distinction between the public service and the civil service, “the realities of the field in practice defy the differences which, if strictly adhered to their analysis impoverishes analysis” (Ogunlowo 1987). In this study, therefore, the two terms (public and civil services) would be used interchangeably and some generalizations may be made about them.

**Work Ethics:** Ogunna (1999) defines work ethnics as a set of values, norms and attitudes, or standard of behaviour, which guide the workers’ organizational behaviours. Similarly, Denga (1986) defines work ethics as “ethical standards which guide the performances of group members, governs their preparation or training, and serves as legal or constitutional and ethical control”. On his own part, Iwu (1995) perceives work ethics as “behaviour code of conduct which involves both the desirable and undesirable activities of workers in various occupations and associations. This definition shows that work ethics could be positive or negative.

### **Unethical Behaviour**

This term negates administrative responsibility. Unethical behaviour is an administrative act which although, not against the letter of law, which seeks to exploit the loopholes in the law. There are numerous cases of unethical behaviours in Nigeria. For instance, officials place orders for supply of inferior goods and services instead of the most superior ones.

**Morality:** This is the doctrine of man's moral duties, virtuous conduct, conformity or degree of conformity to conventional rules, without or apart from inspiration and guidance by religions or other spiritual influence. Durkheim, for example, suggests that moral development involves the acquisition of respect for rules and institution of society.

**Administrative Responsibility:** Administrative responsibility is a state in which public officials discharge their official duties in strict compliance with public laws and regulations and in keeping with public will. It is a moral and legal liability of public officers to discharge their lawful duties for which they are paid from the public purse in accordance with the terms of their appointment and in accordance with all the statutory provisions governing the lawful performance of their duties. It involves public accountability, great responsiveness to public interest and general public satisfaction.

**Productivity:** Ogunna (1999) defines Productivity as the capacity or a situation where an individual or organization produces maximum results with available human, financial and material resources to achieve set organizational objective. Productivity is a goal of every organization.

Any organization that cannot operate to a degree of significant productivity is an impotent entity. Such an organization would produce a wholesome disappointment to its owners and a widespread classification and disaffection among its entire workers. A productive organization enriches the owners, the management and the workers. It serves as a source of inspiration and motivation to the workers as they would be very proud of their organization and appreciate the fruits of their labour. Productivity is dependent on two crucial factors, namely: technology relevant to the organization, and employees' performance. The employee's performance, on the other hand, is dependent on two variables, namely: professional and technical competence of the workers (this involves possession of relevant knowledge, skills and techniques), and motivation.

**Effectiveness:** Effectiveness is an important value of any organization whether private or public. While private organizations emphasize profitability, public organizations lay stress on efficiency. There is little agreement among authors on the definition of effectiveness. While some authors conceive effectiveness as strictly confined to the achievement of organizational objectives, others perceive it as a totality of organizational goodness. Few others consider it to be synonymous with efficiency. In the words of Riggs, (1964) effectiveness is the same as achievement of organizational objective. Therefore, Riggs defines effectiveness as the extent to which a given objective is carried out. Similarly, Etzioni (1964) states that actual effectiveness of a specific organization is determined by the degree to which it realizes its goals. In this study, the term "effectiveness" would be taken to mean the extent or degree to which an organization achieves its objectives.

**Efficiency:** Efficiency is a major component of effectiveness. The efficiency of an organization refers to the ratio of its energetic output (product) to its energetic input (cost). Katz & Khan (1966) efficiency thus serves as an index which indicates how much of the energetic inputs of an organization emerge as product and how much is absorbed.

**Non-Ministerial Departments:** These are government departments that are not headed by commissioners or ministers. They are also known as extra-ministerial departments or parastatals. Samples include the National Archives, National Population Commission, office of the Auditor-General, Civil Service Commission etc.

### **Empirical Review**

Gleen (2017) notes that government officials are not only committed to loyal and effective performance but are obligated to carry out a public objective. He argues that those who look upon the public service as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement and as a means to favour their friends obstruct the interest of the commonwealth both as to efficiency and as service rendered to the people. He observes that the greatest attention on moral behaviour within public employment is focused on officials on the top where discretion and judgement are exercised in the execution of public policy. These group of influential public servants are obliged to carry out public objective, then it becomes fundamental for them to constantly bear in mind the objective of the organization for which they are working-service in the interest of the general public. It becomes morally wrong and unethical for an individual public servant to appropriate the common good to satisfy selfish interest.

Gation (1983) observes that the task of creating an administration that is accountable and responsive to the will and aspirations of the people has proved elusive in many developing countries and that this problem is more compounded in post-colonial states where revelations of rampant and wide scale corruption, tribalism, inefficiency and general institutional ineffectiveness have contradicted the anti-colonial rhetoric and the promise of moral and transparent honesty and dedicated leadership. Bureaucracies in the developing countries, as Lungu observes, rather than being agents of development, have exhibited characteristics of aloofness and remoteness from public.

Lungu's observations are insightful and revealing. The maladies he identified are common with the Nigerian experience even though he was writing with Zambia in mind. From his analysis, it becomes evident that many administrative problems in developing countries results from failures in responsibility.

Adamolekun (1983) observes that in theory; practically every modern state has an administrative system whose primary responsibility is service to the people, more or less in the same way as the government of every modern state claims to be democratic. He argues that a closer examination of the actual mission of an administrative system will reveal significant differences in the interpretation given to the idea of serving the people. He contends that two other missions compete with the people oriented administration. One is a concern for self-service by which administrators see their major concern as maintaining their job and deriving as much benefit from it as possible. It is only in a secondary sense that service to the people is given some attention. A second source of competition is when a political regime in a given society defines the primary duty of the administration as consisting of maintaining itself in power. In many cases an emphasis on regime maintenance

provides a cover for administrators to look after their selfish interest, leaving the idea of service to the people as subsidiary or minor concern.

Dvorin and Simons (1972) argue that moral and ethical considerations are aspects of responsible administration. Writing from a radical perspective, they maintain that for too long now public bureaucracy has ignored the “centrality” of human dignity and consequently has failed to meet the genuine needs of the people. For them “as long as public administration elevates technique and process over issues of morality, human dignity is doomed to remain a peripheral consideration”. The implication of these arguments is that for a bureaucracy to be responsible there must be a balance between techniques and ethics. We must marry the two aspects.

Anyim (2013) investigated ethics in Nigeria Civil Service where he argued that ethics in Nigeria Civil Service is synonymous with service delivery. In contrast, lack of ethics leads to economic stagnation, weak institutions and endemic corruption.

The findings the work showed that there is no promotion of ethics in the Nigeria Civil Service hence the author recommended strict ethical standards and practices in Imo State (Nigeria) civil service, government’s support and commitment towards implementation of code of conducts.

Ibeagu and Utobo (2017) in their study sought to establish the development of politics, low professional ethics, and moral principles on the development of education in public schools in Nigeria. The study established that callousness of leaders (politics), corruption, loss of professional ethics, and low moral principles by the government, parents, teachers, students, and public institutions brought about the fallen standard of education in public schools. They recommended that leaders should imbibe the spirit of selflessness, eschew corrupt practices, stop favouritism, and pay teachers adequately as and when due.

Ogunna (1999) looked at violations of Administrative Responsibility and observed that the management of public affairs in Nigeria is grossly afflicted by various abuses of administrative powers and malpractices which are here described as violations of administrative responsibility. Some of these are:

- Bribery and corruption
- Dishonesty
- Unethical behaviour
- Acting without legal Authority
- Violation of procedural due process
- Gross inefficiency
- Denial of rights
- Failure to exercise administrative initiative

James Madison ( 1961:337) once remarked in one of the federalist papers thus:

*“If men were angels no, government would be necessary; if angels were to govern men neither internal nor external control on government would be necessary”.*

But men are not angels nor are angels governing men and at the same time, civil servants should act responsibility. This implies that in every state in the world, certain control measures statutory and regulated controls, administrative control, legislative control, judicial control are provided to ensure administrative responsibility and good government.

### **Ethics in Imo State Service (2011-2020)**

The civil Service is one institution through which the government (both State and Federal) uses to render service to the people. It is also the apron in which the Civil Servants think on how they can consistently and regularly improve themselves to render better service. The rendering of these services must be in the prescribed code of conducts. The Constitution of Nigeria made provision for a general code of conducts of Public Officers. The States Public Services are guided by the same operational code of conducts and ethics. In all, these ethics are the operational parameters of evaluating the success and failure of the public service.

Imo State Public Service remains an integral part of the service evaluated on the premise of these codes of ethics. These ethical Principles that guides a good Civil Servant(s) and portray the State in good public glare are among but not limited to certain concepts which according to Nwachukwu (2005, pp 20-24). They are summarized thus:

- ❖ **Good Conduct:** This is a Primary criterion for promotion, apart from possession of requisite qualifications, merit, hard-work and experience. In the matter of Imo State – 2011-2019, the service was destroyed. Ethics for good conduct was thrown to the wind. The requisite merit and ethics, qualifications, hard-work and experience was rejected in the entire fabric and gave room for sycophancy, political profligacy and blackmail became the merit for promotion and the **Ethics of Merit, Hard and Experience**, Gave Way As **“Ethics”** for promotion. The effect now, is that the Higher Echelon of Imo State Civil Service, are now occupied by officers, and made from the by-product of naivety and rubber stamp.
- ❖ **Courage:** This constitutes the greatest assets of a Civil Servant. The exhibition of courage takes many forms and a great attribute for hard-work. It subsumes doing things that are morally right, even when one does not gain anything from it. Within this period under review Imo State Civil Service was a ghost of itself. In the bid to inflict fears on the workforce, the Administration from 2011-2019 retired thirteen (13 No.) Permanent Secretaries, whom the Administration felt had courage and suspended them, thereto inflicted fears on the workforce. Thereafter, “Yes” Public Servants were appointed to replace them. The action massively destroyed Imo State Civil Service and drew the service forty (40) years backward. The spirit of “Dog eat Dog” became the instrument of

promotion. In Imo State Superior Officers whom the Administration was not sure of what may be their conduct were promoted in the total bid to weaken the system.

- ❖ **Courtesy:** This is an essential attribute of work ethics in an ideal situation. Heavy schedule of duty (ies) or any other circumstances should not justify bad temper or nasty ego in the service. The Public Servant must see himself as a servant and not master of the public. Members of the public are always at ease when Government policies are courteously explained to them and are treated with a high sense of decorum. However, the Administration under review used it as a weapon of usurpation of function through the supplanting of officers and creation of irresponsible ministries outside the realm of functionality.
- ❖ **Tact:** This is an operative word in handling difficult situation without creating offensive situation around the people affected. The Administration from 2011-2019 lacked facts. It created pains not only for the service but the generality of the state. It was pleasurable for the administration when the people are in agony and pains. All these actions were merely impressionistic.
- ❖ **Industry:** The hallmark of industry is hard work. Some workers work furiously to achieve little or nothing. They only waste their energy and often give false impression. Imo State administration of 2011-2019 was well fitted into the above norm as a measure a failed administration. The following are necessary guides for Public Servants. :
  - Understand the scope of work
  - Have a clear knowledge of the schedule of duty.
  - Set a target.
  - Work towards achieving the set target.
  - Decide other of sequence to handle various stages of work
  - Have rough idea on when to finish the assignment.
  - Avoid unnecessary delay.
  - Ensure your style is clear and direct.
  - Be punctual to duty.

Within the period of 2011-2019, the ethical conducts as enunciated herein were all thrown to the wind. It operated on a pedestal of failure.

- ❖ **Attitude to Public Funds:** There is the growing tendency to treat public funds as national cake. Any opportunity one finds himself, he uses it to enrich himself. This is one of the serious lapses on the part of public servants. The following should therefore strictly guide public servants attitude to public funds:
  - Do not waste funds. Be frugal in spending public funds just as you spend your own funds.
  - Collectors of government revenue should be diligent conscientious and honest. They should pay all monies collected into Government treasury. It is an offence to collect and spend government revenue.

- Every expenditure must be justified and great care and economy must be employed in spending public funds.

❖ **General Public Image:** Civil Servants should keep not only tidy but their offices and environment. An orderly office and environment favourably impress visitors. An orderly office often gives an idea of the state of mind of the users.

Among others, it enhances:

- Efficiently if files and equipment are placed, so that they are easily located.
- Workers should always ensure they are properly dressed to their duty or workshop.

The Imo State Administration of 2011-2019 was a failure on issue of efficiency. It is mindboggling to say that the government of 2011-2019 was a disaster. It only tried pretentiously to introduce “Dress Code” for which was made from a deceitful intent of fashioning of a Dressing Code.

Generally, the ethics of Imo State Public Service from 2011-2019 was far from the realities on ground. It was a compendium of false Administration buried on false premise.

### **Challenges of Ethics in Civil Service**

Ethical conducts in the Nigerian civil service are undermined by certain factors. Among them include:

- Corruption – Omisore and Adeleke (2015) assert that it connotes solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly of any goods of monetary, or other benefits such as (induced) gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or for another person or entity in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his public functions. Ikeanyibe (2006) agreed that corruption is an antithesis to ethics in administration. Ikejiani-Clerk (2001) adds that the complexities of modernity and the fact of cultural transmission which have resulted to unsettled value system accounts for corruption. The point is that corruption undermines ethical values and moral conduct in the public service. It manifests in different forms such as lack of accountability, misappropriation of resources, self-seeking interest etc. the civil service derogatory appellation of “oru oyibo” or white man’s jobs, a vestige of colonialism had remained with the civil servants attitudinal display, giving rise to some kind of nonchalance towards public fund, public property and indeed public service.
- Weak public institutions – the measures that the central government have taken over the years in halting the of unethical behaviours in the Nigerian public service are found in the creation of institutions and reorientation programmes such as war Against Indiscipline/corruption, Economic and Financial

Commission (EFCC), CODE of Conduct Bureau (CB), Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), Public Complaints Commission, Nigeria's Ombudsman Institution, Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligent unit (BMPIU) otherwise known as "Due Process Mechanism". Most of these are very weak and ineffective. This is because they are subject to executive influence (Ogunna 1999) and possess poor procedures and ineffective organizational patterns that give room for manipulation and abuse. This gap is not likely a guarantee organizational ethics (Aninofose 2002 cited in Ikeanyibe and Imhanlahimi 2006).

### **The Implication of Ethics for Imo Civil Service**

The need for the introduction of ethics and code of conduct cannot be overemphasized. First, it is believed that ethics will guarantee moral leadership and true commitment of the civil service (Aghodalo, 2001). Without ethics, there will not be sanity and serenity in the civil service. In other words, ethics provides underlying force for individual and group action. It showcases the "dos and don'ts" or guidelines that dictates how an organization conducts its business (Omisore et al, 2015).

Ethics in the civil service is a measure to install the appropriate conduct and ethics in conduct of government business. These appropriate conduct include discipline, loyalty, honest, co-operation, accountability, respect and integrity.

This paper finds that vast majority of Imo State Civil Servants are not conscientious or morally committed in the performance of their respective functions. Thus they lack the required sound moral principles in the discharge of their functions. Secondly, it was discovered that majority of the Civil Servants don't find their work interesting and enjoyable, this is owing to absence of good and enabling working conditions for them. This has resulted in dissatisfaction, frustration and the apathy in the state's civil service. It was discovered that the performance and productivity of the greater number of Imo State civil servants is poor owing mainly to low level of work ethics among them. The attendant outcome of the above situation as deduced from responses is the poor quality of services always rendered by most of the civil servants to their clients. This is also due mainly to lack of good work ethics among the civil servants.

Thirdly, on the issue of corruption, it was also found out that the greater number of Imo State Civil Servants is corrupt and this, no doubt, affects their level of work ethics. It was further discovered that there is gross inadequate delegation of duties and functions in Imo State civil service. This is as a result of the reluctance of many superior officers to delegate some of their functions to their subordinates. Experience shows that the main delegation problem in the state's civil service is the trust/control dilemma. Consequently, there is increased delegation of duties and functions in Imo State civil service can enhance the productivity of the civil servants. This is because, the practice, which entails new job challenges on the part of the subordinates, will no doubt, encourage their initiative and innovation, increase their commitment and devotion to the aims and objectives of their

various organizations. Individual initiative is rarely allowed in the state's civil service. This is because Imo State civil servants, like their colleagues in other states of the Federation, are only allowed to operate strictly according to laid down rules, regulations and procedures. Thus, they are not permitted to deviate from such rules and procedures by introducing new ideas which could be injected into the system. Lastly, increased individuals initiative can enhance productivity in Imo State civil service. This is because this practice will encourage creativity among the civil servants and will also lead to the introduction of new and more result-oriented management techniques in the operation of the state's civil service.

Furthermore, it was observed that official misconduct in the state's civil service is not appropriately and adequately punished. This means that there is absolute inconsistency in the administration of disciplinary action. Also, in the words of Ogunna (1999) is of the view that standards required of subordinates vary depending on the face, sex and relationship of official concerned. Those officials who have "god father" in the service or who are related to top officials violate civil service regulations with impunity. This situation very often dampens the morale of the few virtuous and diligent civil servants and fails to deter others from engaging in misconduct or unethical practices. Vast majority of the civil servants do not receive or undergo regular and adequate training which is capable of improving their work ethics, performance and productivity. This is due to absence of a systematized and well coordinated training programme for the civil servants, which enables employees to become effective and efficient in their jobs and also brings about a positive change in their behaviour and conduct.

In addition, it was observed that the negative and bad leadership and management styles of the Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries under whom they (civil servants) work grossly influence the workers. These superior officers see themselves as "tin gods" and use commands as their chief tools of management and often intimidate and threaten their subordinates.

### **Conclusion**

The means through which a change can be positively brought to bear on the work ethics of the Nigerian workers should be informed by the fact that the civil servants are grossly poorly paid working in a society that is materialistic in values but possesses a traditional culture of hard work and discipline. Based on the above the paper recommends that salaries, wages and allowances should be fixed at a level where they would be adequate enough to always motivate the workers so that the workers would always release their full energies for efficient performance of their duties. Pensions and gratuities should be paid promptly to show the serving workers that the civil service recognises services rendered by employees and they could be treated with dignity at their own retirement.

There is urgent need to remould the thought and conducts of Nigerians, especially Civil/Public Servants and government officials through the development of ethics and re-orientation that is anchored on the virtues of accountability and transparency in civil service. The anti-graft war should be pursued with vigour and without selection. This has the

potency of exposing corrupt public office holders and ensuring that justice is not only done, but seen to be upheld. This can assist redressing the magnitude of corruption and other forms of unethical conduct in the civil service. There is also the need for establishment of re-orientation campaign agency in order to educate government officials on the need to imbibe ethics as a cardinal objective towards realizing government set goals.

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